



Christmas 2021 – Part 4
Preparing for the Unknown
By Pastor Mike Fabarez

One point six million, 1.6 million. That's how many traffic collisions there are because of people fiddling with their phones every year, which is a big number when you think about it. And kind of ironic too, because when people are getting into these accidents while they're driving on the road, messing with their phones, often they're texting about what's going to happen when they get where they're going or what their plans are for the evening or tomorrow. Sometimes, even ironically, they're fiddling with the app that is the map, the directions that they have on their phone. They're thinking what kind of turns they've got to make down the road. And here's the thing if you're so concerned about two or three miles down the road or your plans for tomorrow, none of that really matters, if you can't navigate the next 50 yards in front of your bumper, right?

That's the problem, too, in so many areas of life, especially this time of year. You think about people this week making all kinds of plans, resolutions, of course, this is the week people start making resolutions for the future. And you think about that recognizing that while it may be good to think down the road and say, well, here's my plan for the next 12 months, none of that really matters if you can't navigate this afternoon. Everything that you do in this next, you know, set of hours that you have before your head gets to the pillow tonight, I mean, these are the things that you have to make decisions today about. These are the todays that end up piling up into what tomorrow becomes. And we've got to realize that Jesus had a lot of things to say about tomorrows and todays. He said a lot about that because he knows that tomorrow and maybe your fixation on tomorrow, you're concern about tomorrow, all of that can derail what God is expecting of you and what you could accomplish today. God wants you not to have tomorrows in your thinking be some kind of obstacle for you doing what needs to happen now. And all of that ends up being most important for what happens tomorrow.

I think it's a good week for us, particularly this year in such a tumultuous time for us, to spend a little bit of our focus this last weekend of the year looking at Jesus' words in Matthew Chapter 6, where he talks about tomorrows and todays. He talks about how we ought to think through our tomorrows that we could settle into what we're supposed to be doing today. Take a look at this text and remember that this is the longest recorded sermon of Christ in the prelude to what is going to become some pretty hard times for the people he's preaching to. A lot is going to happen that is going to derail their life as they knew it. These Israelites listening on this grassy hill up on the banks of the Sea of Galilee were going to end up being routed by the Romans, and Titus, the general from Rome, would come through and he would decimate their society. I mean, he would destroy and burn their worship center and things were going to be bad. And Jesus, of course, knew that, the Son of God, the one in whom the fullness of deity dwelt in bodily form knew what was coming. And yet he gives this extended discussion, which we will only take a part of today in Matthew Chapter 6 and look at it. But it's an extended discussion about them not freaking out about the future.



Now that's an important message, particularly so coming from one who knows the future. And he starts this section with a discussion about money because we're all concerned about money, because money matters, right? Money matters whether I can pay my mortgage or get a house or, you know, deal with my retirement, whatever it might be. I've got things that would naturally lend me to be concerned about and discouraged if I'm having issues with money or as he gets into, then just the matters of life, the things that money buys. The things that we care about, where we live, whether we're going to have enough money to feed our kids or buy clothes. These are just the fundamentals of life that he says you need to realize a very simple prohibition from heaven, and this is from one who knows the future, and that is you cannot be preoccupied with your tomorrows.

Look at how he puts it here. Go to the bottom of Chapter 6 when he says in verse 31, I know we're breaking into really the culmination of this theme in the Sermon on the Mount. But he says, "Therefore do not be anxious," right? The bottom line is don't be concerned, stop worrying. Stop being frustrated and anxious and worried and concerned about "what you're going to eat, what you're going to drink, what you're going to wear. For the Gentiles seek after all these things." And of course, remember, that's a categorical nomenclature for people who don't know God. Of course, later as the ministry of the gospel would go from the Jew first also to the Greek, to the rest of the nations, we're making a distinction here, not about your ethnicity, but whether or not you know the God that he's preaching about. Whether or not you know ultimately Christ, who is the only way to the Father, and he's saying there are people who don't have that connection to God. They're chasing after all those things. They care a lot about what they're going to eat, what they're going to drink, what they're going to wear in the future. They're looking to the future.

But here's the deal. If you're not somewhat alienated from God, you need to understand your heavenly Father knows you need all of them and you do need them. I mean, your retort to me, your response to me might be, "Hey, these are real issues. I mean, I don't know what I'm going to do if I don't have enough money for these medical bills. I'm not sure how I'm going to conquer this crisis in my life if I can't pay a lawyer." I mean, there are lots of real concerns you might have, but he says your Father knows you need those things. But your concern needs to be very present and focused on this. He says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things, they'll be added to you. Therefore," bottom line, "do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will," this is clever, "be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

It's a very profound teaching from Christ here that we desperately need. It's a good time of year for us to think about this, and it's good for us to realize that there's much that we justify in our own minds and give excuse to that really stands in sharp contrast to this passage. And while I start to talk in terms of anxious and worried and concerned, some of you may lean back and think, "Well, it's not my problem. I hope that my wife hears this." You know, you think, "Well, it's not my issue." Well, remember, it's all related to a disconnection from our understanding about God and our tomorrows that would lead us, maybe on the other side of the coin of missing the point, that we fall under the concern of James when he writes that you should really think about you in your planning about the future when you say, "Tomorrow,



we're going to go to such and such a city, do business there, make a profit and return." And here is heaven's perspective on that. Stop.

It's not that you can't make good business plans, it's that you don't know what your life holds. You don't know what tomorrow holds. And so you need to stop concerning yourselves with a kind of, in that case, say a thoughtlessness about God. Maybe a pompous, even pridefulness about what you're going to do. You may say I'm not worried about the next year. Matter of fact, I can't wait to get into it, cause I'm going to conquer this thing. I got plans, we're going to do big... Well, OK. That unfortunately, though, you may say it's not the sin of worry and anxiety, it is a disconnection from the reality of what Jesus is trying to underpin here in this text. And that is that we don't know what tomorrow holds, but we have a Father who does and therefore we cannot have this preoccupation with tomorrow. We just can't. Because we know this about tomorrow, according to this text, if you look at it as a whole, twice we're told, at the beginning of the text and the end of the text, "Don't be anxious." You cannot have your mind scattered into tomorrow.

And I say that because when I say anxiety, I use "worry" almost as a synonym, but the word itself, "anxiety," as I've often taught from this platform is a Greek word that at its root regards having your mind split into different directions. And of course, the focus is on tomorrow. I'm thinking about all these things and my energy, my focus, my concentration is on all these things down the road. That's our mind being scattered. And he's basically saying in this text, take your mind and you got to focus it. More on that in a minute. But right now, we can't scatter our thinking into tomorrow with this concern because ultimately God says, in essence, "I've got tomorrow. Tomorrow's my domain. Tomorrow is the domain that I am in charge of and that you really have no power over."

As a matter of fact, go back up in the context here just a little bit to grab a couple of things. How about verse 27, "Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life span?" Maybe you're worried about your health and you're thinking about your life, and so you're concerned about what might happen, and you've got to do these things trying to kind of salvage your bad health. Others may be saying, "Oh, this is the year I'm getting back to the gym and I'm going to get healthy." And so there's still this thought about that you have some control over this and you don't. I don't care what your ambition is for the next year. I don't care what your concerns are for the next year. You don't know what this next year holds. You don't have any power over it, you don't have any control over it. God ultimately has tomorrow whether the world is going to end tomorrow or whether it's going to allow for your thriving or whether it's going to lead you into some kind of trouble. God's got tomorrow, and he's going to cover whatever the needs are between this sermon right now and the time you take your last breath. Between now this morning and the time you die and you leave this planet. Between now and then, God says, "If you're my child, you can have this assurance that your Father knows and he's got your needs covered."

So you've got to put this in perspective. If you're taking notes and I wish you would, here's the brief on these four verses. If you were to put it in the first point here covering the whole concept, let's just say this: you need to be sure as a Christian "That God Will Cover



Tomorrow's Needs." You got to be sure of that. And what that excludes, if you're sure that God will cover tomorrow's needs, is your mind being scattered into a concern for the future, particularly, let's talk first about anxiety. And by that I mean the worry and the fretting about what tomorrow might hold. I hope you know, and if you've had any trouble with worry and you've been a Christian any amount of time, I'm sure people have directed you to Philippians Chapter 4. We don't take time to turn there, but you know that God categorically takes this concept of worry and anxiety and fretting and he basically says, "I don't care what it is, you do not have permission to do it." He says, "You ought to be anxious for," and I'm quoting now Philippians Chapter 4, "be anxious for" do you know it Sunday school grads? "Nothing." Be anxious for nothing.

Now he gives us some things to do there, but categorically, you're not to be anxious for anything and this passage says, because you have a Father and that Father is covenantally connected to you, and he basically says, "You worry about what I want you to worry about and I'll take care of tomorrow." Now we'll put an addendum to that at the end of the message, but let's just start with that basic truth. I have no concern for tomorrow the way someone who does not know God and they live basically in futility in their thinking and they're concerned about tomorrow because it all really rides on them. And I get that. I even quoted Dawkins on Christmas Eve if you were here and he talks about this random chance that we're all the product of and all you really are as an organism with DNA and all it cares about is replication and survival, and there's no meaning, there's no purpose. There's no higher order, there's no design. You're just here random colliding molecules. And so, you know, good luck with that. And then that, OK, I guess that's a logically consistent way to think of reality if you are a naturalist and an evolutionist and you're a follower of the intellectual elites of our day.

But, if you understand, as Schaefer would say, that there is a God and he has revealed himself. And he said in his word, I'm going to send my Messiah, my Messiah is going to come. He is going to die for your sins. He's going to eradicate those sins. He's going to collect a citizenry of submissive servants in the kingdom and then even come back and set up a kingdom and bless those people. If that is the reality, there is a God, he's clearly revealed himself. He's broken into space and time. He's redeemed his people and he's collecting them through repentance and faith, and he's going to usher them into a kingdom where everything is the way it should be, then you have a whole different worldview and that presupposition, that a priori understanding of reality: there is God, he revealed himself and all these things that he says are true, then I'm living in a whole different mindset than those who think that we're kind of out here all on our own.

Let's put it this way. If I were to say to you, we're going to go to downtown L.A., we're going to go up into a really tall building. We're going to get out on the 46th floor of this big building. And I know it's kind of rainy and wet and blustery, but I found a place where we can get out of the window of this at the 46th floor and we're going to get out on the ledge. It's about four inches, is all there is. I know it's wet and it has been raining, but we're going to get out and it'll be really, really a good thing and important. So you follow me and we're going to kind of scoot our way around, all the way around the building. Now you hear some traffic down there in L.A. and you know, the pavement is hard 46 floors down, but you just follow me. Here we go. Trust



me. OK. If you're concerned and nervous about that little exercise with me after church, you should be. OK? Because that's scary. And you could fall and you could die, and this could be the end of your life. And like, Wow, I suppose as far as being concerned, you would say you've got a right to be concerned. Maybe you should refuse to do it.

If we were to fly to Chicago, we were to go down to Michigan Avenue, Chicago Michigan Avenue, go down to the John Hancock building, go up to the 103rd floor and on the Skydeck there if I said we're going to go out here into what they call the Ledge. They got a couple of them there. Maybe you've been there. And it's this plexiglass box of really thick plexiglass that's all built by engineers that hangs out over the edge of the 103rd floor. It's 1,300 feet above the hard surface of Michigan Avenue, and it's about four feet deep and hangs over the edge. If I said, "Well come out here, I'm going to take your hand, we're going to walk out onto this plexiglass and we're going to stand out here." If you're concerned about that, like my mother would be, just horrified and terrified to step out because it's like, you know, you can see right down to the street. A lot of people would have that fear. I would say, you have no need to be afraid. Matter of fact, they have these sometimes you can get in one and there's somebody way down. Then there could be like a 400-pound guy on that other one over there that's built by the same people with the same materials as this one is. I said, "Look over there. Look, mom, look. Look at that. That guy, he's perfectly fine. Nothing's budging. It's fine.

It might be snowing. It might be sleeting. It might be blustery. It might be windy. But let's step out. It's OK. I would say your fear and anxiety and nervousness are rational if we're on a four-inch ledge, a windy, wet ledge on the 46th floor of an L.A. building, and all I'm doing is saying, "trust me." I would say, "Yeah, I get it." If I said stand on the plexiglass, you should not be afraid and you are afraid, I would say, well, that's an irrational fear. And it may be a real fear, but I'm going to say we need to eradicate that, right? I mean, there's no need to do that just for a photo op. But if this were life and God said, here's where you have to live. And people say, "Well, life is scary. We don't know what's going to happen." I get that. We don't know what the weather is going to be. But you're stepping into this engineered, constructed, proven plexiglass box. You'll be OK. You'll be OK. And if you know anybody, if you have anybody in your sphere of life, your family, who is petrified of heights, you know that that's an irrational fear in some cases, and in other cases, it makes perfect sense.

And all I'm saying is, if you're a naturalist and you believe you're nothing more than colliding molecules and it's, you know, it's the Dawkins reality that we're just, I mean, "live or die," I guess, right? Just get out there and scramble to get your DNA reproduced. If that's really is all there is then I have no words for you, except you should be afraid, right? You should be very afraid. Because, I mean, who knows? There's no plan. There's no purpose. There's no meaning. There's no design. There's no God. There's no caregiver. There's no heavenly Father. There's none of that. So I don't know. Let's eat, drink, tomorrow we die.

But if there is a God and he has revealed himself and he sent his Son and his Son has collected you into his family, and now he says, you're sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, to quote the passage I quoted from Second Corinthians 8 on Christmas Eve, you would say, OK, that changes everything. It feels the same. That gut feeling of this is scary up



here. It may feel the same, but it's radically different. Because you're held up by a God who not only knows the future. You believe that, right? He knows the end from the beginning. Well, if you know that passage from Isaiah, you know the next verse, it says, not only does he know it, he's planned it. To quote Psalm 139 to make it very specific, "Before there was yet one of them, the days of your life all written in a book," which is a poetic way to say it's all been recorded, it's all been planned.

I'm not a fatalist. I'm not saying you're a robot and don't bring up your philosophical or theological concerns about trying to somehow mesh God's sovereignty and human responsibility and freedom. Let's not talk about that now if you're using it as an excuse to not believe what I'm saying, and that is tomorrow is held by a God who has planned tomorrow and works out everything after the counsel of his will and whatever tomorrow holds is what tomorrow holds and you, by worrying, can't add an hour to your life. You can't. You are more valuable than the birds. If you look at the passage right before that, verse 26, I quoted verse 27, look at verse 26, "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them." Right? You're more important. That's why he says YOUR heavenly Father feeds the birds and they're just birds. And in Matthew 10, he says the same thing, "You're way more valuable than sparrows." And the point is, look at how he cares for them.

I guess because it was Christmas we started watching some weird shows yesterday, and one of them was this show I'd never seen where they drop these people off in, like the forests of Vancouver or in Canada, somewhere in the northwest, and they're supposed to just make it. And it's funny because they're all like tough, rough guys and they go out there and they're trying to conquer the elements. We just watched the first couple of them, maybe you know that show. But what was funny is that these people tap out early on, at least in the episodes we watched, because they're afraid. They're afraid because they start hearing bears and mountain lions or cougars or whatever they were, and they're afraid. And what was funny, what struck me after studying this passage and studying it more after I watched that, I thought, it's interesting to me that here are all these animals as people are trying to build their little shelters and trying to start their little fires and trying to find drinking water and boil it and all that. It's funny that those bears are, you know, they're not concerned about any of that. The mountain lions, they're not out there trying to start fires. They're fine. They're fine. They are absolutely fine. They're not worried. They're not gathering together, they're not fretting. They're not carrying around their cameras and recording their angst in the forest. I mean, they're just living their lives hunting for fish, right? That's it.

And I'm thinking, it's like you say, "Well, they're designed for that." You're designed for this. Do you understand that? You're designed for life, you're designed for life where you make a living, you have to get grocery money, you have to have your place to live, you've got to pay a mortgage. You're designed just like the bear is designed for the forest. And here's the deal. God takes care of them, and God says, "If I take care of the animals out there in the wild, don't you think I'm going to take care of you?" Why are you concerned about tomorrow? Why is your mind constantly stressed about what's coming? You have to be sure that God will cover tomorrow's needs, and you have to realize that's his domain, it's not your domain, it's



not your domain at all. You can't change it. You have to realize fear is completely prohibited for the Christian because you affirm God's knowledge, you affirm God's power and you affirm God's plan. At least I think you do, right? You don't know tomorrow. Proverbs 27:1, right? "You don't know what tomorrow holds." You don't know that, but God does. And God is a God who has mapped it out. And he says, he is your Father. Right?

That's the passage that I quoted on Christmas Eve. God is your Father, and he is the Lord Almighty. If you believe that, then don't be, look at our passage here, don't be a Gentile. What's a Gentile? That's the word categorically illustrating people who don't have a knowledge or connection with God. I've said it many times from the platform, but let me say it again. The thing that defines Christians versus non-Christians, at least in passages like Romans Chapter 1, is that they are aware that things that are going on in the world, including their needs being met, is the fact that God is the God giving them those things. Christians recognize it and they give thanks for it. Non-Christians, they live in God's world. They're endowed with God's blessings. They're designed to live as we live in this world. And if they make it another day, they don't give thanks. They don't honor God and they don't give thanks. You're supposed to make the connection. God sends his sun to rise on the fields and the crops of the evil and the good. He sends the rains so that the crops and the harvest of the people can be grown up in the farms of the just and the unjust. The difference is the righteous or the just and those who know God are supposed to see that connection and affirm that connection.

And if they confirm it today in terms of what God has given you, well, then we look to the future and we affirm that God has got all that covered. God is a God who takes care of his children. Matter of fact, he takes care of people who shine him on and don't give a rip about him. He continues to provide them with meals and food and all that they need as long as he's recorded in his book and decreed that they would be alive on his planet. And we're having to recognize that I think afresh in times like this when some of us, I'm sure, either through a prideful forgetfulness of God are focused on the future or an anxious, fretting, worried disposition, we're forgetting God when we think about the future. You have to affirm God's knowledge and power, and we can't think like the Gentiles do. I wanted to turn you there, but this sermon got longer than I want it to be. But Ephesians Chapter 4. Study that this week, Ephesians 4 verses 17 through 24. The mental activity of the Christian is radically different. The non-Christian doesn't think in these terms. And that's why our presuppositions about reality are so important.

Does it make sense that there's a God? Does it make sense that he would reveal himself? If it doesn't make sense and there is no evidence of that, well, then I guess you're stuck with where the rest of the world is stuck, and that is, they don't give thanks, they don't see the connection, they don't think there's any involvement of God in their lives, and therefore they're worried and they're fretting and they're anxious and I get it. I get it. But it's not reality. Our reality is something that should send our minds focused on something else. Look at verse 33 in our passage. Verse 31, "don't be anxious," verse 34, "don't be anxious." Verse 33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things," that other people



are worried about, that the Gentiles are chasing after, guess what? "All these things will be added to you."

In a passage like this, it's interesting that there's one imperative verb. When I teach a little bit about how I use my Bible software, one of the things I do as a default is I make sure that every, in the Greek New Testament in particular, when every underlying Greek word is in the imperative mood, I want it to jump off the page. So I do a couple of things to visually markup the text of Scripture, but I always make sure that those imperative verbs are double-underlined. So just reading through the Bible on my computer software, it's like, BAM, there's another one. And in a passage like this, there are plenty of participles and words that have an imperatival force, a commanding voice of some kind. But there are those that God has decided in the five ways that he goes about describing the tense of a verb and the mood of the verb, he's showing us that this is the thing you got to do, right? And so in this passage, the only one double-underlined is verse 33, which is this very strong verb for us to do something. And the do here is you got to seek God's kingdom, "You got to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness." You got to seek it.

That verb if you were to do a little word study on it you'll find is at the root of it is what we have transliterated into our language. If you were to say it in the Greek language, it sounds a lot like this word because it's transliterated in some passages and into our vocabulary. It's transliterated "zeal" or "zealot." If you were to be a zealot, if you were to have zeal, a passion, a focus. Talk about your mind being merizomai. This word that's scattered about. No, no, no. It's focused, and it's focused. It comes into a place of absolute like unity and focus. And what is that passionate focus? To seek, here's how it's described, "God's kingdom and his righteousness." God's kingdom and his righteousness. Those are eternal realities. And God is saying this, "Hey Christians, you can focus your mental energies on tomorrows, or you can do what I'm asking you to do and that is to trust that God's got tomorrow's needs covered. You need to work today, particularly starting with your mental activity, on what lasts for eternity."

If you're taking notes, let's summarize verse 33 that way. "Work Today on What Lasts for Eternity." Work today with your thinking in your mind and your effort on what lasts for eternity. It doesn't mean you quit your job, become a missionary or a pastor, or... No, that's not what I'm saying, right? It may be that but I doubt for most of you it's going to be that. What you're supposed to do is start with the mindset of a passionate zeal for the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Well how? What does that? Let me try to summarize, give you three things. If you're taking notes here, ABC. What does it mean to work today on something that lasts for eternity? What does it mean to have this kingdom first, right? This prioritized passion for the kingdom of God. If I'm to focus on that, I'm going to see the arena for it in the last verse, which is today, working on it to today. What are the facets of that?

Let's start with this one. OK? I wrote it down this way. Putting the spotlight on the king. I'm seeking the kingdom first. What does that mean? Well, if I'm a subject of the kingdom, if I'm a child of God, what I care about, and this is why we're supposed to be called Christians or why we are called Christians, it was used as a pejorative term at first, but it means these people are all about Christ. We are supposed to be all about Christ. Christ is the reigning king in



heaven, but one day he'll come and reign on earth, and my mind is supposed to be fixated on getting people to realize that, to exalt Christ. Here's the reality in heaven right now, he's been given a name which is above every name. He's been given authority, which is above every authority, "so that at the name," the authority, "of Christ every knee will bow, of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," he's the boss, he's the king, "to the glory of God the Father." and God will be happy. So my goal is to do that. I was quoting, by the way, Philippians Chapter 2. The idea of Christianity is to say, I'm going to make sure that people realize I'm a part of a kingdom and we have a king.

We just had our kids' Christmas musical. If I were to say, I'm going to employ you to come in at the very rich rate of zero dollars an hour, you're going to volunteer here, but I'm going to task you with the task of being the spotlight operator. And you know, we rent these spotlights and they're like cannons, right? Put it on a box. And so you're going to do that. You're going to have this big beam of light in the back of the room. Maybe we got a couple of them, but your job is to really, it should go without defining, it's to keep the spotlight on where the focus should be. And so a little girl comes out here and she sings a solo, right? You are in the back going, BAM, I'm going to put that spotlight on her. OK. That's your job. Right? If I ever caught you, at this very high-paying job, if ever caught you taking the spotlight and putting it on yourself, "Look, everybody, I'm the spotlight operator." I'd go, "you're fired." You can't. That's not the job.

Or if I found you going, "I've never really looked at the corner over there," and you took the spotlight, you started looking over there, or found some people over here that you liked and you put the spotlight on them, "You're fired, you're fired, you're fired, you're fired." Why? Because the goal of a spotlight operator is to put the spotlight where it belongs and it belongs on the star. It belongs on the person the focus is supposed to be on. And it's not you and it's not your friends and it's not the room you're in. It's to be on the person who is to be the center of attention.

Christianity, by the way, is perverted all over the world where people see Christ as a butler, a life coach, some kind of advantage that you get in your orbit. And so he becomes like a lot of things, your education and your upbringing and your clothes and your whatever, to all make you be the star, right? You can get all that stuff that you want and Christ will help you get there. That plan that you have for your life, he is going to make it happen. Your dreams? Dream big. Just ask and the Lord is going to do it for you, right? You know this. Right? The prosperity gospel is the most rank addition of that kind of heresy that you're at the center. It is about you getting a spotlight so you can shine it on yourself in one way or another, so you can take advantage of what you want by having Christ be the means to that end. But that's not Christianity.

Christianity, is you knowing that he has the name that is above every name "so that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow," everywhere. Everyone you bump into, they're going to bow to Christ and your goal, whether it's through evangelism, through your discipleship with Christians, whatever it is, you're trying to be someone who directs people's focus to him.



Some of you grew up in formal churches and you learn like the Westminster Catechism, the question and answer to train people in the basics of the Christian faith. Right? The shorter catechism starts this way. It's a question and answer, and the question is "what is the chief end of man?" Did you learn that? What is the chief end of man? What is the most primary, highest priority of human beings? And if you know the answer, it is to... What's the first phrase? "Glorify God."

Let's start with that. Glorify God. Glorify is one of those Bible words, and I often talk about how we say it but don't know what it means. But the idea is, we'll put it on my terms, throwing the spotlight on Christ. There are lots of ways to do that, but it's putting the spotlight on him, it's about him. If you want to seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, we know, and we're going to see it in a minute, it's today. And today you should be asking, how can I put the spotlight on Christ? How can I make him, to use John the Baptist's term, increase, even if it means that I decrease? How can I say all I care about, whether by life or death is that he is exalted, that he will be glorified in my body? That's what Paul said when he was facing death in Philippians 1. Or the heroes in Revelation we're reading in our Daily Bible Reading at the end of the year, it says they didn't love their life, even unto death. All they cared about is overcoming by the testimony of Christ. They just wanted to testify to Christ. That's it. That's real Christianity. And some of us, unfortunately are so influenced by heretical Christianity, it's just not clear in our minds. The chief end of your life today is to put the spotlight on Christ. How am I going to do that?

A couple of ways, Letter "B." Right? And I'll just put one word here but there are aspects to it. Prayer. Prayer. You should be praying, which by the way, is an exercise of showing that you believe there is a God, and he actually has bearing on the reality that you experience every day. Prayer. Here's how it's put, by the way, for people who don't believe. They believe they're walking on the ledge at the 46th floor in the rain thinking, "Oh, I got to do this." They don't think there's a God. They don't see God as their heavenly Father. They don't realize that he cares. They don't think he's sovereign. They don't think he's planned. Because of that they never even give thanks and honor him. And they're worried and anxious. The Bible says that you should be anxious for nothing. I already quoted that in Philippians Chapter 4 verse 6. The next line is, "but in everything with prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." It doesn't mean there aren't going to be things that scare you like stepping into that plexiglass box or going into the corner of it. It may be scary. But here's the thing you can't be anxious. You've got a heavenly Father who has tomorrow figured out. You are supposed to put the spotlight on him. And one way you practically do that even to yourself in your own mind is your praying.

"Prayer and petition with thanksgiving," here's another aspect of it, "with thanksgiving." How often do you thank God for what's going on in your life? If you want to honor God today, here's the thing. Why don't you say this afternoon, I'm going to thank God more than I did yesterday? I can't do anything about yesterday, but today I can put the spotlight more on Christ, not just by pointing people's attention to him that I run into, but in my mind, I'm going to pray and it's going to be punctuated with thanksgiving. I mean, I was just talking to someone before the first service and we talked about their Thanksgiving and their family and just what a



great day they had. And I just couldn't help but say, and it was just second nature to him as well, but it's like, just think about that and what a gift of God that is, right? Think about that. The day you had, the family that you have. I mean, not everybody has that. That's a gift from God. Every good and perfect gift is from God. And the natural should be reflexive response of Christians is to say thanks. And not just say that to each other, though we said that to you. Oh, it's good. We should be thankful for that. Isn't it great? Isn't God good to do that for you, right?

Real kingdom seeking first is for that mind to exercise and engage in a kind of vigilant, aware prayer to quote Colossians Chapter 4 verse 2, which says that we ought to be "steadfast in prayer," committed to this prayer, devoted to prayer some translations put it. Right? We're supposed to have that with this sobriety, this vigilance, with this sense of alertness, be devoted to prayer, with this alert mind. I'm aware of things and I'm connecting them to God. I'm seeing that and I'm thanking God for it. And if I see something, I'm thinking, "Wow, this is perilous." Well, it's not really perilous because God is sovereign, God's in control and God is your Father. But here's what you should do when you're tempted to be afraid. Pray. Pray. You should be praying. That's seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. That's a righteous act. That's the fundamental righteous act of a Christian's life. Non-Christians don't honor God, they don't give him thanks. You honor God and you give him thanks. And you can do that today. You can start right now, even in your own mind. Even as I'm preaching, say, "Thank you, God. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you." There are so many things that we should be able to connect to the God who is the giver of all good things.

This light that has no shadow, no shifting variation. This immutable God who is good and he's good even to his fallen creatures on this planet. Non-Christians will never give him thanks. They'll never connect the dots. You're to connect the dots. Prayer connects the dots. A prayerful vigilance which is, by the way, I threw this down too on my notes. First Thessalonians 5:18, it is God's will for your life. It's great when you can go to church, hear a pastor and he's telling you exactly what God says you should do. Here it comes. Ready? "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." That's exactly what you should be doing today, giving thanks to God. That is a promotion in your own mind of the priority of Christ the King, and Christ having an influence and effect in all that you have and all that you do. You're constantly aware of him in your prayer life.

That's "B," how about "C"? How about this? You should "Have a Confidence in the King's Provision." It's about the settledness of your heart. It's about you saying, "how can I seek first the kingdom?" Well, let's put in contrast to the rest of that verse, "and all these things will be added to you." I know this: that if I'm trusting in God's agenda for my life, which is to promote Christ, it's to see the connections and connect the dots and to be prayerful and thankful, well, then here's the idea about tomorrow and the needs that you still have on your shopping list of requirements. Good health, legal counsel, whatever it might be for you. Here's the thing. Well, you need be confident, right now, confident that whether you've been given a lot or been made low, as Paul puts it in Philippians 4, "You'll know the secret of contentment." You'll know that you can have that resolve. The opposite of this anxiety is this word "Eirene" in Greek. Not that it matters what it says in Greek, but eirene is the word for "peace." You'll have



this peace, you'll be content. You won't be bound up and balled up inside. You will demonstrate the firstness of the kingdom and God's righteousness with you as his child being in your heart at peace. Christ in the boat, asleep in the storm. The ability for you to rest in the fact that God has tomorrow. So you're going to get busy with today, which is prioritizing things that are his kingdom. His kingdom provision.

I said three, but let me add a fourth. Can add a fourth? "You got the microphone." OK, I'll add a fourth, Letter, "D." The passage I have down, I put it this way. "We Need to Work For Christ." Some of you are waiting for that. "It sounds like I'm supposed to be a, you know, a monk in a monastery and just I'll pray all the time and be thankful and sing songs." OK, you're going to go to work, right? Hopefully not today, but you're going to go to work and you're going to go to work and I want you, as Colossians says, to work, Colossians Chapter 3, for Christ. Let me quote it for you. You'll get there real quick. Colossians Chapter 3 verse 23. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord." I know the Lord is not your boss even though you might have that bumper sticker, "My boss is a carpenter from Galilee" or whatever. Right? Your boss is whatever, Mr. Smith. But you're going to work for Mr. Smith as though you're working for the Lord, "as for the Lord, not for men, knowing that it is from the Lord that you will receive the inheritance as your reward."

So you're serving the Lord Christ. I even love the combo in the sequence of that, "you're serving the Lord Christ," you're serving the boss, Christ the Messiah. I want you to go to work and I want you to be busy about work with excellence, "heartily." It's the Greek word to have your soul in it, right? Put all of yourself into your work. Go be the best employee you can be. If you're a boss, be the best boss you can be. If you've got a small business, make it the best small business it can be. But to "seek first the kingdom" is to do the assignment that you're called to do in our society, in the marketplace, in the world, but to do it with a sense that I'm doing it for God, I'm doing it for Christ. It changes the focus. Most people get out there and say, "I going to make this the best small business in the world." And if you took the flow chart and said "Why, why, why, why, why?" Ultimately it's for their own like satisfaction, their own enrichment, their own security. That's why they do it. I want you to do it for none of those things. Really, I want you to do it because the kingdom is first and if you do what God wants you to do, which is to work heartily as though you're working directly for him, then what you're going to end up doing is really good work. And guess what? Just like the passage says, all these things will be added to you.

You'll probably do fine financially, at least enough to feed your family. I mean, enough for you to be content because you have food and shelter. "With these we will be content," to quote First Timothy Chapter 6. Well, if that's true, then you just worry about making your work every day an offering to God as the most excellent hardy work that you can give it. And God's going to take care of paying your bills. So you just trust in that and you focus on that. That's the kingdom first. I'm not asking you to run away into a monastery and pray all day long. I'm asking you to pray all day long in all the circumstances you face because even at work you're going to be praying. How can this glorify God? To do it right, to do it well. God loves beauty. God loves excellence. God loves things done in order. He loves good sequence. He loves all



the things that I probably bet your work is wanting you to do. All the way down to ergonomics, God loves all that.

He loves economics, he loves business, he loves all those things if they're done right. I want to give him glory by, in my little sphere of the domain that I've been given, made in image of God, to be someone exercising dominion in this world, I'd like to do it in a way that is for God. To God, here's the present that I've made for you today, my work, my 10 hours, my 8 hours. Here it is. I'm presenting it to you today and I did it. I did it. I did it for you. I did it as though I'm serving you. If you want to seek first the kingdom do that and all the other things that will probably come in a more generous way than you would even imagine, but do it and God will take care of your needs. Which in the context is, "Are we going have enough to eat? Are we going to have enough to drink? Are we going have food to put on our kids?" Yes. And you should trust that, because in the past, God has made that clear. As David said, "I was young, now I'm old. I've never seen the righteous forsaken, never seen their children begging for bread." You'll probably not be under the underpass. Trust me on this. Just seek first the kingdom.

Verse 34. Our passage is ending with a clever way for Christ and a witty way for Christ to put this, but look at it. "Therefore," bottom line, "do not be anxious about tomorrow." Now we've said that in two different ways now. But then he says, "For tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." There are plenty of things today you ought to be focused on today. It's not saying you have the right to worry about today. "Well, I'm worrying in the morning about the afternoon, and I'm worried in the afternoon about the evening." No, no, that's not the point. The point is you've got challenges today and there is something in the sequence of hours as they unfold, you have a chance to deal with those one at a time. Deal with those, seeking first the kingdom, prioritizing the things we've just talked about I tried to summarize. You can make a list of 40. I gave you 4. But you can see what spiritual kingdom first living is like. And now he's basically saying, just don't get tripped up today because you're so focused on tomorrow.

Let's put it that way. Number three, "Never Let Tomorrow Disrupt Today." Because tomorrow, whatever it is, whether it's prideful planning or whether it's worry and fretting, I don't want it ever to get in the way of me doing today what I'm called to do. If I'm diagnosed with cancer in the morning, I got a sermon to preach in the afternoon, I'm going to preach that sermon for the glory of God as best that I can. That's my job. Regardless of what the fretting and fearing that I could have to say, "Hey, tomorrow is going to take care of itself. I got enough trouble today and my trouble the day is preaching a good sermon. That's my job." And whatever your job is, do that.

Now I said I'd give a caveat at the end of this sermon, and we're almost to the end. No applause, almost to the end. And here's what I want to tell you. God is all about planning. Right? All you have to do is read like Proverbs Chapter 6, "Look at the ant, O sluggard." If you're lazy and you don't want to plan, you're wrong. You should plan. The ants go out. They don't have somebody with a whip over their shoulder, making them store up food in the summer, in the harvest so that they can have food in the winter. But they do it. And they do it



in God's design, because God wants you to be that kind of person to plan for the future. You have no right to fret about the future, but you should have, if you got kids, you should have insurance, right? If you're growing older, which you all are and you're working in a gainful employment situation, you should be putting money away for unknown situations in the future. You should never fear because God has shown that he'll take care of those things, but to seek first the kingdom is to live by his principles and the principles of God are for you to plan.

Matter of fact, in Ecclesiastes sometimes working out in the field, working in your house, you should do both because you never know what might happen. But you're going to do that without being merizomai'd, without your mind being like fretting and stressing about the future or pridefully planning about the future. We see both errors in the Scripture. "I got big silos, I'll build bigger ones, I'll put all this up. I have plenty to live on for the rest of my life." Never think that way. And never say, "I don't care about tomorrow because, you know, if God's got tomorrow, I guess I don't have to do anything." You've got to do a lot, but you're never going to fret about any of that. Your sequence of today's which are going to be God's wisdom about preparing for the future, even though you don't know what the future holds. So never let tomorrow disrupt today. Which means that when I'm going about the planning process, I look at the way God has proven in my past, as well as in the past of the biblical characters, to show that it doesn't matter how prepared you are, it's not based on that.

Psalms 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the house," you know this passage, "the laborers are building in vain." If God does not want you to retire with money in your bank account, I don't care how much you're putting away in your 403b or your 401k or what your investments in Bitcoin are. I don't care. You will be broke if God wants you broke when you retire. "Unless the Lord builds the house, the laborer will labor in vain." And then, the other side is if you're a fretter and you're a worrier, not the one saying, "I want to go to the city, make this profit. Invest in this stuff. I'll be fine." You're the one who's afraid about getting broken into, "unless the Lord guards the city. The Watchmen, they keep awake in vain." So you just need to know, no matter what, offensive or defensive, it's a God thing. The next line is in verse 2 if you know that passage. So you're not going to fret, you're not going to fret. You're not going to engage in fretful, toiling labor because "God can give to his beloved even in their sleep." So I'm not fretting.

Jesus tried to make this point super clear with a bunch of disciples who were raised, I assume, in Sabbath school learning the principles of Proverbs 6 and Ecclesiastes 4 and all the rest of the Bible. They knew these things. They weren't teachers of the law, but they knew these principles. Christ comes on the scene and says, "We're going to do ministry, we're going to go into the towns, we're going to the villages. Matter of fact, I'm going to send you now without me two-by-two into the villages. You preach the gospel. I'll show up there and you tell them I'm coming. Oh but, your wallets and your backpacks, your staff, extra pair of sandals, now don't bring any of that. Matter of fact, for three and a half years of ministry don't bring any of that. I don't want you even taking a wallet on a missions trip." That's like bizarre. Matter of fact, I might raise my hand, maybe Peter did, "What about Proverbs 6? That doesn't make sense." But they did it.



At the end of his ministry, do you remember what happens? Jesus is, "Hey, hey, by the way, I told you not to take a wallet, a money sack. Did you lack anything?" And they said, "Nope, didn't lack a thing." Great. He said now we're back to the Proverbs 6 life. "I want you to take your money sack, I want you to take your knapsack, I want you to take an extra pair of sandals, I want you to take a cloak. Matter of fact, if you don't have a sword you ought to sell a cloak and get a sword. You've got to have all these provisions." What was that all about? For three years, you showed us we could do it without this. David becomes the king, Saul becomes king, Solomon becomes king. Not in that order but let's say that we're one of the kings of Israel. You got the Philistines and you've got all kinds of the Edomites. You've got people all around you. Syrians. And it's like they're threatening to attack our borders. Should I have a standing army? The answer is yes.

But I got to go back in biblical history and remember people like Gideon. Gideon was called by God. God went to the weakest clan and found one of the most frightened people and he makes Gideon the captain of the army. So he calls the army together, he has 32,000 warriors of fighting age and they're ready to go. Except a lot of them aren't ready to go because they don't really want to fight. And God says, "You've got too many people. Because you're going to think you did this, so send anybody home who doesn't want to be there." His ranks go from 32,000 to 10,000. Wow. Reluctant army but OK. Now I've got 10,000. They're committed. They don't care if they die for Israel. They're ready to go and give their lives for the country. God says, "You still have too many. Because you'll think you did this. You'll think your men did this." So we're going to have this weird drinking, you know, thing, not a contest, but that sounds really bad. They're going to go drink water, nonalcoholic water from this brook. Watch how they drink. Right? We're going to separate those who lap like a dog and those who cup their water. And he takes the guys that are lapping like dogs and says, "There's your army."

We went from 32,000 before we're done with this story to 300 guys. And then he routs the Midianites with 300 guys. They didn't even have to strategize. God said, "See, I showed you." Now is David and Saul, his predecessor, and Solomon, his son, are they supposed to have armies? Of course they are. But here's what David continually said. "I don't trust them. I don't put my trust in them." Are you supposed to save for your future? Yes. Save for your future. Are you supposed to have insurance, you know, if you've got a family? You should have insurance, right? This is good, sound biblical advice, fatherly advice, pastoral advice. Do that. That's good. Should you have locks on your doors? Have locks on your doors. That's a good thing. But unless the Lord builds a house, it's not going to be built. Unless the Lord watches your house, it's not going to be safe. So just know this. You're not trusting in those things because a horse is a vain hope for winning a battle, even though horses are better than donkeys and camels. So get horses if you can get them, but it's not the key to victory.

And all I'm telling you is that's the kind of thing that keeps you focused on today, even if it's paying an insurance premium. And even if it's you putting some money away in a 401k. Yeah, there's nothing wrong with that. As long as in your mind, in your heart, you realize this. I'm keeping first the kingdom. It's my obsession to put the spotlight on Christ, to pray, to give thanks to have me give myself heartily to my work because I know I'm serving the Lord and he's the recipient of my work. I'm presenting him in my work every day. And now I'm going to



go about today and today is never going to be disrupted by my concerns about tomorrow and today will include things like planning. But I'm always trusting in God, not in the things that I am, not in the things that I do, not my alarm system, not my medicines, not any of that. I'm trusting in God. That's hard. I know it's hard for some of you. You can say, "Pastor Mike, you don't know my situation. I've just been diagnosed with this or my spouse just left me or something terrible just happened to me."

I know you may have been called to the corner of the plexiglass, and I understand that your senses are saying this is scary and you should be afraid. And I'm saying this: instead of you throwing a pity party, instead of you turning in on yourself and going, "I guess I have the right to be anxious." Here's one. Instead of a pity party, why don't you throw a throwing party? A very strong verb in First Peter 5. It's a word that is used as a word for, in Greek, for throwing "Ballo". It's not that word, it is a stronger word. It's a word to cast something down, to throw it down hard. And it's the word that's used in this passage when it says "casting all of your anxieties on the Lord, because he cares for you." You got to let go of this. You have to take this and throw it down hard at Christ's feet and say, "I know that the things that concern me about my future, I'm tempted to be scared and tempted to be afraid. Pastor Mike's talking like, you know, I have a normal life. I don't. I have a terrible life right now." I'm just saying then you got to get good at throwing it down.

Do you prepare? Sure. Do you fulfill this subscription and go to the pharmacy? Take that? Sure. Do. Fine, great. But you're never going to panic. You're never going to fret. You're never going to think tomorrow is something that you can control. You're never going to trust in anything that you do in this life to think that somehow you're going to assure and guarantee tomorrow, you're just not. You have to live like you are a Christian, and a Christian puts his trust in God and non-Christians don't. And do we see that difference in your life even when it gets hard? And if it gets hard throw that down. Casting, casting, throwing, throw it down hard, throwing down hard all your anxieties on him. Because, if you believe it or not, he cares for you.

I was up last night reading a book by Packer, J.I. Packer, and he's reminding me of an old book that most of us pastors have read about a guy who went and wrote a book on the 23rd Psalm. He had been a shepherd himself. He'd spent years doing the work of a shepherd in Scotland or somewhere over there in Europe. He wrote this very insightful book. And it was funny, there's one line that jumped out at me late last night as I was reading this, and Parker said, "It's no surprise the 23rd Psalm has become this precious favored psalm of Christians for 2,000 years now. Christians love that psalm because it ties so well into obviously John 10, where Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd." But Psalm 23, which even non-Christians know this, is a rich text that is the sum of everything I'm trying to say to you this morning. And that is that if you're a Christian and you believe God, which, by the way, the context here, the five words that precede the text we're studying if you look at it, "O you of little faith," you have to believe, you've got to have big faith that says this, "The Lord is my shepherd." Do you know, the next line? "I shall not want."



Now that is it. If I'm a Christian, I'm saying I'm connected to God through the Good Shepherd Christ, and he is caring for me, I'm a part of his flock. And I look to him and I trust him. "His rod and his staff, they comfort me. He prepares a table for me," sometimes, "in the presence of my enemies." He doesn't vanquish my enemies. He sets me down and wants me to enjoy a meal and give thanks for that meal and to be enriched with contentment, even though I'm surrounded by the bad things that are happening. Sometimes he'll "walk me through the valley of the shadow of death." But here's the thing, "I'm going to fear no evil." I mean, there are so many aspects of that wonderful psalm that all comes back to this simple phrase, "The Lord is my shepherd." I believe that. "I shall not want." That's an old English way to say it and most translations today that translate that text from the Hebrew, they don't change that because it's such a beloved phrase. But think about what that says, think about what that means. I don't need anything else. I mean, ultimately, it's going to be OK.

I want you and I to trust God and to prove that we are Christians. If you are a Christian, I want you to put your trust in the Good Shepherd. Because in the end, here's how it all works out. "Surely, goodness and mercy will follow me." I often say this when I quote that the Hebrew word "Radap" is a really strong word for "chase me down." "Surely goodness and mercy are going to chase me down, shall follow me all the days of my life." And one day they're going to catch me because I'm going to cross over from this life to that one when the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. And he's going to reign forever and ever, and I will live in the House of the Lord forever. If you believe that then stop worrying. If you believe that do not be anxious. If you believe that, don't plan for this next year with some kind of indifference toward the God who holds the future. Don't be prideful. You better say, as James says, "If the Lord wills." Because God holds your future. Let's live life.

God, help us in a day, a tumultuous day, where if I were preaching the sermon five years ago, people might have a different perspective, because life seemed to be going on as normal. But here we are in a day of unprecedented turbulence. I mean, really for us, at least in our lifetime, things are really, really uncertain. And it's in those times where real Christianity shines, where we are going to show the world that we believe what we say we believe that the Lord is our shepherd and we're OK. We're not obsessed with tomorrows because we're focused on doing what is right today and we know God holds our future. So for those in this room who are facing all kinds of things, a variety of things that are challenging, let them not be tempted to give themselves license or excuse for worry or concern or any kind of independent thinking. Let them put themselves clearly under your mighty hand, humbling themselves. And when there are anxieties, let them cast them on you because they know that you as the Good Shepherd you care for them. Make that clear to them, I pray, in a new and fresh way today.

In Jesus name. Amen.