

Matthew 6:25–34 — How Do I Find Peace In A Pandemic World?

March 22, 2020

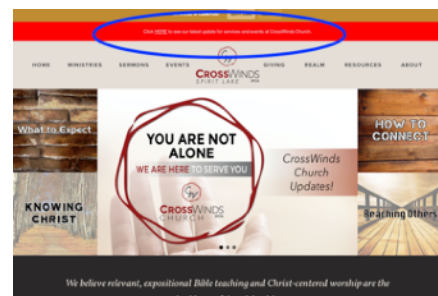
Greetings CrossWinds Church and guests that are joining us online. Before we turn to God's Word, I want to make sure we are on the same page with everything COVID-19 as a church family. So much has changed this week. It is easy to be out of the loop so I want to take a moment to make sure everyone is up to date.

For the next few weeks, we are not physically meeting as a church family on any of our campuses. We are meeting virtually through the Internet. The best way we can love our neighbors right now is by not being in physical contact with one another to stop the spread of this virus.

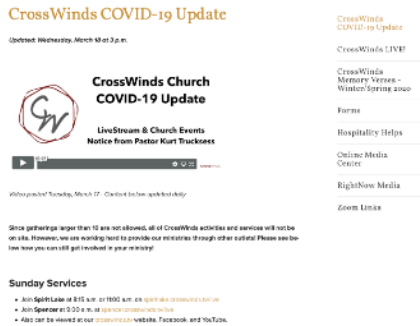
Right now we are streaming our services online through a variety of services. We are live-streaming on Vimeo. You can find that feed at www.crosswinds.tv for both of our campuses. We are also streaming to our Facebook page, and as of this week we are now streaming on YouTube. Something else exciting is the church staff worked extra hard and also brought the Spencer Campus online. They are also streaming their services.

Since the Internet is the way we will meet, let me take a moment to familiarize everyone with the changes we have made because of COVID-19.

Many of you already know about these because you were contacted by our emails, posts on Facebook, and posts on our Realm system. The best way to know the latest information on everything is to visit the www.crosswinds.tv



website. On both of our campuses, you will see a red bar across the top. If you click that bar, it will bring you to a web page that serves as an index for the



changes with all youth, AWANA, Life Groups and other programs at CrossWinds. This page is constantly being updated. It is the first place all new changes are posted.

Let me just mention a few important things you will find on that page. You will find

information on how to join a new weekly prayer meeting we are having via Zoom video chat for our church family, our community, and those suffering with the virus. Information on how to be part of that video prayer meeting is on that page.

You will also find links to all the youth group and AWANA material that is now online. There is also a link to a treasure chest of online teaching resources through Right Now Media, which is a service we have as a church.



As Christians, our forefathers left us a legacy to follow when it comes to handling a pandemic such as the one we are facing. One of the worst pandemics to touch western civilization took place in the years 249-262 in the city of Rome. While the origin of that plague is unknown, the city of Rome lost 5,000 people per day when the plague was at its worst. History tells us there was a huge

difference between the way Christians responded to this plague and the way unbelievers responded.

One ancient historian said that when people began to display symptoms of that plague, since the plague was so feared, people threw their own family members out of the house to live on the streets until they died. The reaction of people in the ancient world was to protect their lives, even if it meant casting their loved ones out of their lives.

Another ancient historian tells us about how Christians faced that epidemic differently. Christians were known for their constant care of the sick, not heartless rejection of the sick. Some Christians, because of their constant unrelenting care of the sick, even contracted that plague and died.

That plague resulted in two things. First, Christian love for the sick stunned the world and showed the world what Christian love looked like in a tangible way. Second, after that epidemic church growth exploded. Everyone wanted to be a Christian, because Christians genuinely cared for the hurting in their time of need.

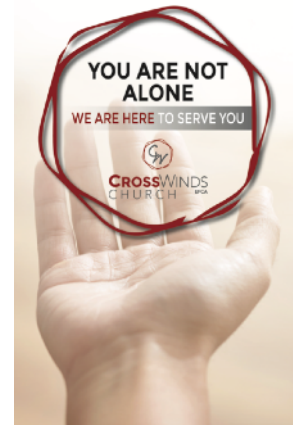
Our forefathers left us an example to follow. Today is our day. Now is our time not just to go to church but to be the church. While we certainly want to take all necessary precautions to avoid COVID-19, we also want to make Jesus' love famous by the way we love our church family and our neighbors in this crisis. I want you to think about loving our neighbors two ways.

1. **Corporately.** Many of you have already contacted the church office to let us know you are willing to deliver food to people who are sick or in other

practical ways. If you are interested in helping others in our church family or community by running to the grocery store or helping with errands, there is a form on our website to fill out to let us know you are interested. We will put you on the list of those who can help. If you are interested in being on this list, we want you to be healthy, young, and not in the high risk group. We will train you on how to serve others responsibly and safely.

2. **Personally.** This week we designed some flyers that are posted on our COVID-19 update page. You can print them out at home and drop them at your neighbor's front door. Do not put them in a mailbox. It is illegal to put anything other than U.S. mail in a mailbox.

You will need to creatively find a way to get this flyer to your neighbor or you can text them a



similar message. The front of the flyer says “You are not alone. We are here to serve you.” The back has a few words letting your neighbors know you are willing to help them in any way, such as running errands, being a friendly voice, dropping off a meal, praying for your neighbors or anything else they need. This is a great way to



reach our neighbors and let them know we care.

In addition, the elders divided the church family up into groups on both campuses. Expect to get a call from an elder, deacon, or pastor this coming week

to pray for you and to keep in contact with you as we head into what may be a very challenging time medically and economically.

Let's pray before we turn to the Word.

Heavenly Father, we come to you personally and nationally desperate for your mercy. We are desperate for your healing and grace. We pray for our leaders. Give them wisdom to protect citizens both from this virus and from economic trouble. Give the researchers wisdom that comes from you. We pray for those who are sick. Give them healing. We pray for protection of our city and community. We especially ask that you will give us as the church wisdom to know how to put your words into practice and love our neighbors well. Now we ask that you will open our eyes to understand your word, which you have given for your glory and our good. Amen.

If your family is like ours, you have seen the empty grocery store shelves. It is not just toilet paper, but other food is missing on the shelves. Our family has also checked our toilet paper supply and estimated how many days until our last roll. There is food in the back of our deep freezer that is so old, two weeks ago we were thinking about throwing it out. Right now we are wondering if it will be a welcome meal in the upcoming months. Others of us are wondering about our jobs. With restaurants closing and factories shutting their doors, how long will paychecks keep coming? Some of you are thinking about your parents who are in the high risk category for this disease. Will this disease take one of their lives? Others of us are in the high risk category. We are older and already have some health complications. We are checking our wills to make sure they are up-to-date. We must admit, these are scary times.

In just over a week, our nation changed. Strong executive powers were used to put our nation on a wartime posture to battle this virus. These are the

kinds of things that fill our hearts with worry and anxiety. What does God's Word tell us about times like this? I want to begin by sharing a verse from the Psalms.

When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul. Psalm 94:19 (ESV)

When our hearts are filled with worry and anxiety because the stress level in our lives is starting to peak, that is when we need to hear from God's Word more than ever. God's words provide us comfort and give our hearts peace when we are filled with anxiety. My friends, now more than ever, we need the comfort and peace that only God's Words can provide.

We were supposed to begin Mark 13 this morning. With everything that happened this week, I felt it appropriate to change our text. As I prayed and researched, the passage that I felt most appropriate for this morning came from the Sermon on the Mount. It is found in Matthew 6:25-34. Let's read this passage and look for God's words to touch our soul.

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:24-34 (ESV)

The theme of these verses is anxiety. As Christians, no matter what happens, we do not need to have anxiety about the future. We do not need to worry about the future. Three times Jesus told us in these verses, “do not be anxious about your life.” As Christians, we need to stop worrying about our lives and what will happen to our lives in the future. “Do not be anxious” is a command from Jesus. It is not optional. The proper attitude of a Christian, the distinctive attitude of a Christian, is when the world faces uncertain times, we are not to be filled with fear about what lies ahead.

When it says “do not be anxious about your life,” the Greek word for life is a reference to our physical life. This means our breath, our bodies. We do not need to worry about making sure our bodies will have all they need to survive. God will provide for our bodies. God will provide for our lives. The tense here is also helpful. It is imperative. It literally says, “Stop your worrying.” If you are a Christian filled with anxiety this morning, God’s Word says, “Stop it!” When you find yourself wanting to go back to anxiety, don’t do it. Jesus says there is no need for a Christian to worry about sustaining physical life.

I know what you are thinking. Why shouldn’t we worry about our physical lives at a time like this? The virus could kill us. The virus could wipe out our savings. Why shouldn’t we be worried about not having the basics of life? Why shouldn’t we be anxious about not having enough to eat, to drink, and to wear? Those are life’s necessities. When the stores run out of toilet paper, I get worried. When there is no meat in the butcher case, I get worried. When the stock market falls through the floor, I get worried. Why shouldn’t I worry?

This passages gives us three reasons why, as Christians, we do not need to worry about not having the necessities of life in uncertain times. 1. We don't need to worry because we have a good father who cares for us. 2. We don't need to worry because that is not what Christians do. 3. We don't need to worry about the future because that is an unwise way to face the future. Let's dive into these verses and see why, as Christians, we don't need to worry about life's necessities.

We don't need to be anxious about the future because we have a heavenly father who cares for us.

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. **Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?** Matthew 6:25 (ESV)

Jesus said our lives are much more than just finding our next meal. Where will we find a hamburger and a Pepsi? As Christians, our lives and our identities are much more than just finding our next meal. We are sons and daughters of God. We are adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. We are the most blessed being in the universe. God is our identity. We are the object of God's love and affection. What sustains our lives is more than just eating. The God who loves us is the one who sustains us. When we understand how significant we are to God through Jesus, and we understand the promises God made to us to care for us because he loves us, that relieves us from a constant preoccupation to find life's necessities.

In fact, once we understand how much God loves us and how he promises to provide our necessities, that frees us from constant anxiety about the future. This makes anxiety not just unnecessary, it makes it sinful. Constant

anxiety about the future reveals that while we trust our heavenly father to save our souls, we are unwilling to trust our heavenly father to sustain our lives. That is a great lack of faith. Jesus gave us three illustrations to show us why we don't need to worry because we have God as our father.

If our heavenly father provides food for the birds, we can be sure he will provide food for us.

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Matthew 6:26 (ESV)

Jesus said, "Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest, yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not worth more than the birds?" Birds are not worried about where to find their next meal. They don't have anxiety about not being able to find food. Birds are not piling up canned goods in their garage. Birds are not at Wal-Mart purchasing food for a year. Birds don't worry about those things. They know their heavenly father will provide their next meal. God always provides what they need, even in the winter.



Don't misunderstand me. I am not excusing laziness. Birds are fed by God but they don't just sit on a branch waiting for God to drop food into their mouths. They search for it, but it is our heavenly father who enables them to find it.

Jesus was making an argument from the lesser to the greater. If birds have no reason to worry about God providing their basic needs, then we should have no reason to worry about God providing our basic needs. Our heavenly father will provide the essentials we need to sustain our lives. We are worth far

more than birds. We are adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus. We are the most blessed beings in the universe.

Should we plan for the future? Yes. We must plan and prepare, but in times of uncertainty, we do not need to face the future with anxiety about our basic needs because in uncertain times like a pandemic, our loving father promises to provide for us.

Think of this from the perspective of Jesus. If our heavenly father always sustained Jesus with the food, water, clothing, and shelter he needed to accomplish the work God the Father had given him to do in his life, why wouldn't our heavenly father also provide the basic necessities of food, water, clothing, and shelter that we need to accomplish the work God has given us for our lives?

If our heavenly father has always provided for all of our spiritual needs, why would he fail to provide for our most basic physical needs? If God gave us our lives to serve him in this world, why would he not also provide for us with the food, drink, and shelter we need to accomplish the work he has given us in this world?

Worrying about the future will not lengthen our lives.

**And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?
Matthew 6:27 (ESV)**

Jesus was talking about our lifespan. A span is a unit of length. Jesus said, "Just as nobody can willingly add to his height, nobody can willingly add to the length of his life." Just as we cannot will ourselves to grow 18 inches taller tonight, we cannot worry ourselves into making our lives last longer. We do not need to worry about prematurely losing our lives. If we lose our lives, that is

because God has decreed the day of our death, just as he has decreed the day of our birth. Nothing can force God's hand and take your life sooner than he has planned.

Since his days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass... Job 14:5 (ESV)

We usually spend a lot of time worrying about our health. We exercise, take vitamins, go to the YMCA — at least while it was still open — we go on a diet, eat organic and a host of other things. There is nothing wrong with being a good steward of your body. The Bible tells us we should be good stewards of the bodies God gave us. However, when all is said and done, there is nothing we can do to change the number of days God has already determined for our lives. The day of your birth was ordained by God, just as the day of your death is ordained by God. No amount of worrying, hand sanitizer and social distancing will change what God has already determined to be the length of our days, so stop worrying about it.

Does this mean we shouldn't practice social distancing and use hand sanitizer? No. We must do those things. That is part of being a good steward of our bodies. That is part of loving our neighbors, but at the end of the day if God has ordained for us to die 20 years from now by a different disease or in the very near future from the COVID-19 disease, no amount of worry or anxiety on our parts will be able to change that.

As I said, this does not mean we act irresponsibly and lick doorknobs. It means we act responsibly but trust God's sovereignty over our lives and God's good plan for our lives.

We see this in the life of Jesus. Jesus' death in Jerusalem was ordained before the foundation of the world. Jesus told his disciples 3 times in the Gospel of Mark that he was going to Jerusalem to die. Nothing was going to change the day of Jesus' death.

Even though Jesus died at age 33, God provided the proper length of time for Jesus to accomplish what God had planned for his life. God has also given us a life. He has given each of us a calling and gifted us to accomplish his calling on our lives. If he has already done all those things, surely he will make sure we have the right length of life to accomplish all he has planned for our lives.

For Jesus, his life was 33 years because the work of his life was complete in 33 years. The same will be true for us. This is why we do not need to worry. We rest in the confidence that God will sustain our lives as long as he has work for us to accomplish in this life. When our work is done, God will take us home. That may be when we are young. It may be when we are old. It may be by a virus. It may when we are hit by a bus. There is no use worrying about it. Just as we cannot make ourselves grow taller, we cannot worry our days into lasting longer.

So we act responsibly. We practice good sanitation procedures. We use good social distancing. We do our best to take care of ourselves and to love others, then we stop worrying about it.

If our heavenly father clothes the flowers, why would he not provide clothing for us.

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which

today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Matthew 6:28–30 (ESV)

Again, Jesus argued from the lesser to the greater. Jesus told us to look at the lilies of the field. Look how God clothes them. If he takes such good care of flowers and makes them so beautiful, why would he not take care of our clothing, and by extension, our shelter? God knows the things we need. He is a good father who loves us. Don't worry about it. God will give us everything we need.

I love the way Jesus argued this. Look at the beauty of the lilies. The color is amazing. The texture is soft and gentle. The intricacy of the beauty holds our attention. Even King Solomon on his best day was not dressed as nice as a simple flower is every day. It is impossible to imitate the beauty of a flower. If you doubt that, compare a plastic flower to a real flower.



Jesus said, "If this is how well God clothes an ordinary flower, which is here today and tomorrow is throw into the fire, why do you think God will not provide clothes for you?" Remember who we are. We are the most blessed beings in the universe and passionately loved by God.

Remember who our father is. Remember what he has done for us through Jesus. God loves you! Jesus died for you! God loves you. Why do you think he will forget about you and not provide life's necessities? Even in a pandemic, when the store shelves are empty, as God's children, we can rest on this promise from God's Word that God will make sure our basic needs will be provided for until the day he decides to call us home.

Jesus ended by saying, “You of little faith.” As Christians, if we are worried that God may not provide the basic necessities of life, that means we lack faith. If we have faith that God sent his son to save us for eternity, we must also have faith that our heavenly father will provide for us in this life as well. Since our heavenly father is in charge, we have nothing to fear. If the economy crashes and the bank loses our money, we still have a heavenly father who cares for us. We don't need to have anxiety about the future. Our heavenly father who loves us holds the future and is involved in our daily lives.

COVID-19 is not in control of our future. Our heavenly father is in full control of our future. He loves us.

Anxiety is a normal part of the unbeliever's life. It is not a normal part of the Christian life.

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Matthew 6:31–32 (ESV)

This is the second time Jesus circled back to the topic of anxiety. For a Christian to be consumed with anxiety is to have a lack of faith. It is to say, “I don't have a father watching over me so I need to hoard and provide for me.” Anxiety and hoarding is normal for unbelievers. Christians, who know about their heavenly father's love for them and their heavenly father's promise to provide for them, do not need to hoard.

We do not need to be like the rich man in Luke 12 who kept building bigger barns to hoard and prepare for the future. What is stored in a barn is not our security for the future. Our heavenly father who promises to provide our necessities is the security for our future.

Do you have faith that our heavenly father knows exactly what is happening right now? Do you believe that our heavenly father knows exactly what we need right now? Do you trust that God is good and that he loves you right now? If we know these things, have faith in the character of God. Do not run around in fear like the rest of the world. We are not unbelievers. We are Christians who have a good father caring for us.

Jesus ended this verse with these words, “your heavenly father knows you need all these things.” All worry is assuming God doesn’t know what we need. All anxiety is assuming God doesn’t care about what we need. All anxiety is assuming God doesn’t have the resources to provide what we need. That is ridiculous. God does care for us. God does love us. God has all the resources necessary to provide for us. The question is, Will you be like an unbeliever and run around in anxiety and fear because there is no father watching over you or will you be like a Christian who can face the future with confidence because we do have a father who will provide for us? Let’s jump to verse 34.

Anxiety about the future is an unwise way to face the future.

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:34 (ESV)

Here, for the third time, Jesus told us do not be anxious. What are we to not be anxious about? Tomorrow. We do not need to be worried about what will happen two months from now. God is just as much in charge of tomorrow as he is in charge of today.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22–23 (ESV)

Constant worrying about tomorrow will make you a short and irritable person. It will steal your joy. It will keep you awake at night. It will ruin your relationships. It will wreck your testimony.

Jesus said, “Don’t scoop into your lap all the imagined troubles of tomorrow. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Take one day at a time. Don’t spend today worrying about tomorrow.” God will give us the grace you need to get through tomorrow when you get to tomorrow. God gives us the grace we need for today, today.

All of us have been through times when the future did not look bright. Maybe you went through a time when you lost your job. You didn’t know where your next paycheck was come from. Maybe you had no idea how you would pay the mortgage. You were up at night worrying about tomorrow. Remember God will provide the grace for tomorrow when we get to tomorrow. If all we do is worry about tomorrow today, we will cripple ourselves for today. God knows what we need to make it through. He will provide for us in the future when we get to the future.

Remember God has not abandoned us. He has not forgotten us. He loves us. He has all the resources in the world at his disposal. God promises to provide the necessities we need to accomplish the work he has given us to do to serve him in this life.

When we focus on loving God and loving people, God promises to provide for our daily needs.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33 (ESV)

This is a very important principle. This is a wonderful verse to memorize. In this verse, God promises to provide for us. What are “these things” God promises to provide? They are the basics of life. Food, drink, clothing, and shelter. Jesus tells us to stop worrying about the future. Seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness. When we do, he promises to provide for us in the future.

What does it mean to seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness? It is the same thing we talked about a few weeks ago in the Gospel of Mark. It is to focus our lives on loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, then loving our neighbors as ourselves. When we focus on loving God and loving people, God promises to provide for our needs.

Conclusion

If you are a Christian, today praise God that you have a loving heavenly father who is watching over you and providing for you. We don’t need to put all our time and energy into anxiety about how we will survive. That is sinful for a Christian. We should give our time and energy in this crisis to loving God and loving people with the confidence that our heavenly father will provide for us as we focus on those things.

If you are not a Christian, today, I urge you to confess your sin to God. Ask Jesus to be your Lord and savior. Become a Christian and have a heavenly father looking out for you and providing for you so you can face the days to come without fear and worry.

This week, stop worrying. Rest your confidence in the God who loves us. He is involved in our lives and promises to provide for us. Give yourself to our

loving God and serving people and God promises to provide you with the necessities to carry you through.



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