

Rest and Roots
Made for Rhythm
Matthew 6:34

Introduction

Good morning, my name is Brad and I'm one of the pastors here. A couple months we introduced something at Antioch called Sabbath Year, a commitment to intentionally rest from May 2017 to May 2018. During this season we would fight to avoid starting any new high-energy initiatives; instead, we would choose to rest in Christ, remembering he is the One who has written Antioch's story and produced Antioch's fruit thus far. And hopefully that would lead us to trust and expect that he will continue to write our story and produce our fruit, far beyond what we would do in our own strength.

The Sabbath Year came in part because of the weighty transition from founding pastor Todd Robertson to myself. But not only has transition been tiring, but transience too. Because of the unique vision for the whole world from the very beginning of Antioch, our church has been a hub for people on the move, like an airport. That's a good thing, not a bad thing. But if we never stop to take rest and remember why and reconnect deeply with Jesus, then the future of Antioch will feel too overwhelming for most of us. It will become way too costly to stay, especially with so many good churches in Louisville with more services and programs and staff members.

So a significant part of the Sabbath Year has been kicking it off with the sermon series called Rest and Roots, an exploration of the many different ways in which we can rest in Christ and root our lives in him. Today we come to the message, "Made for Rhythm," a consideration of how worry keeps us from rest. We'll be looking primarily at one verse from Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount, which will lead us to two important truths and one big application. The truths are that God allows each day's measure of trouble, and God gives each day's measure of grace. The application, then, is that God gives Jesus as our example of daily rhythm. With that said, if you are able, please stand with me to honor the reading of God's word. Today's passage is Matthew 6:34. You may follow along in your Bible or on the screen. Hear the word of the Lord:

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

May the Word preached here today echo among the nations. You may be seated.

Exposition

Now, you might be wondering, and you probably should be wondering, ‘Why in the world are we only looking at one verse, and especially when that verse starts with “Therefore”? Don’t you know, Brad, that when someone says “Therefore,” they are building on what they’ve said before that?!’ I agree, so let me explain.

First, this verse comes from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, which he gives shortly after calling his first disciples to follow him. Everything about him is oozing with the announcement that the kingdom of God has come. Think of the term “kingdom of God” as a way of saying life with God under the rule of God. There are crowds of people following him, so he goes up on a mountain and preaches this sermon.

The sermon basically teaches, ‘For those of you already in God’s kingdom, this is how Jesus will empower you to live.’ It’s not, ‘Live this way and then you can enter the kingdom of God.’ Knowing Jesus is the way into the kingdom, and he will be the one to change your heart so that you can live according to its otherwise impossible standards.¹ And because the standards are so high for the behavior of kingdom people, if you take in too much of the Sermon on the Mount at once, it can easily get you back into the death grip of performing for God.

My second reason for preaching from one verse is that all of Jesus’ sermon builds on itself. It’s almost as though every line could start with “Therefore”. I just assumed you would rather not be here until this time tomorrow as I preached through the entire sermon, so I landed on verse 34--this way we can finish up by 1:00 or 1:30 this afternoon...

In the two sections leading up to verse 34 Jesus has been talking about a kingdom lifestyle, life with God under the rule of God, in two ways: first, by not laying up treasures for ourselves on earth, hoarding possessions; but instead laying up treasure in heaven, or in other words, seeking God as our treasure instead of money. But that’s not the only way to live with God under the rule of God.

The second way is to not worry about that stuff, whether you’re worrying about how to keep the stuff you already have, or worrying about how to get the stuff you don’t yet have.² The worldly ways of focusing on possessions and worrying about possessions,

¹ *Gospel Transformation Bible*, 1274

² Martin Lloyd-Jones, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 107-108

which by the way are common in the hearts of both rich and poor, show that God is not on the throne of that person's life; he's not king to them; he himself is not enough, nor can he provide for his people. So Jesus concludes with these famous words in verse 33:

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

This is conclusive; it's poetic; it's a mic-dropping statement. The world says, 'Hey consumers: consume!' 'Hey people of a material world, be materialistic!' It screams it out to you constantly, as studies have shown that you encounter around 10,000 ads every day. Think about the commercials you see and the creepy way that online ads seem to read your mind and the magazine covers you pass every time you check out at the grocery store. They're saying, 'This is what you need for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness: this new style and this new diet and this glimpse into a celebrity's life that is much more interesting than yours.'³

And yet Jesus says, 'That's upside down. You've taken things that were created for your enjoyment and God's glory and you've made them first. No, no, seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will find their proper place in your life.' This isn't 'seek first the kingdom of God, and then seek these other things just to a lesser extent'. No, this is 'let kingdom life with God under the rule of God be *everything* to you.'⁴

For a real-life example, consider Scrat, the saber tooth squirrel from the Ice Age movies. Now, whether you have seen any of these movies or not, it's clear to see that Scrat lives for one thing: his acorn. We can say with confidence that Scrat was made to pursue his acorn, from his claws to grasp it to his teeth to crunch it to his tiny pea brain to chase it no matter how many different ways he might die trying. This is the picture of a citizen of the kingdom of God: to most of the world, he's a complete idiot; nevertheless, he's an idiot who has been made new in order to pursue one thing: the glory of King Jesus.

So with a word so conclusive as verse 33, why not stop there? Why not just drop the mic? Because, in the way that only Jesus can, he takes his teaching yet another step further and applies it not just to the present, but to the future, and to all of life.⁵ He says,

³ Lloyd-Jones, 117

⁴ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 314

⁵ Lloyd-Jones, 146-147

*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*

I. God Allows Each Day's Measure of Trouble

Here we find not only Jesus' command to not be anxious about the future, but also a couple of really great reasons why we shouldn't be. Here's the first one: God allows each day's measure of trouble. Let's be honest, for some of us that may not necessarily sound like an anxiety-reducing statement. 'God allows the troubles I face? I thought they came from Satan?'

So let's be clear, God is the sovereign ruler over all things. In other words, everything goes according to plan--his plan. And yet he is not the creator of evil. He did not cause sin to come into the world. It came from the hearts of creatures who wanted their own way. And not just Satan, but a man and woman. And not just any man and woman, but the first man and woman, the ones to whom we are all related. The rebellious woman to whom God said with a broken heart,

*"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be contrary to your husband,
but he shall rule over you." Genesis 3:16*

And the rebellious man to whom God said,

*"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
19 By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return." Genesis 3:17-19*

The troubles we face--pain and sweat and conflict and death--come from the troubles chosen by our great grandparents, Adam and Eve--troubles that if it had been us, we would have chosen too. He says, 'Yes, you brought this on yourself. Yes, you stirred up the hornet's nest and deserve to die a slow, painful death by a million stings--but here's the kind of God I am: I'm going to send my perfect Son and let the hornets take it all out on him. And if that's not enough, from now on I'm only going to let any trouble come your way that can make you more like my Son. I'm going to put boundaries around your troubles and I'm going to give purpose to them. I'm the One who says to the oceans, 'You can come this far, but no more' (Job 38:8-11). I'm the One who said to Satan, 'You may test Job this far, but no more' (Job 1:12),' and 'You may get this close to sifting Peter like wheat, but no more' (Luke 22:31-32).

"The righteous person faces many troubles," says the psalmist (Psalm 34:19 NLT), perhaps even more troubles than you would have outside the kingdom of God. But God sets their limits according to a daily rhythm. "Sorrow may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). Therefore, you are *never* required by God to carry more than one day's troubles at a time. "Sufficient for the day is its own troubles." Or in other words, "Each day has enough trouble of its own" (NIV).

But "worry" or "anxiety" doesn't get that memo. Worry breaks into your house and takes you hostage. No, it's not a person, but it's almost like a person, a thief, stealing life from you. It convinces you not just of something bad, but that *the worst* is going to happen. And though some of us are more prone to it than others, all of us worry. In fact, the famous preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones said, "Nothing seems to be more natural to mankind in this world than to become anxious, to become burdened and worried."⁶

We worry about our children and our finances and our health. One of the most common and most toxic worries we have in marriage is that our spouse will never change. My most common worry is that *I* will never change. Why? Why do we do this?

Consider this example. You put your child to bed. A few minutes later she cries out for you. You go in and she says, "There's a monster in the closet and it's gonna get me." What do you do? Perhaps open the closet door to prove there's no monster, and then you say, "There is no monster--*trust me*." Her ability to go to sleep without anxious fears depends on how much she trusts *you* to protect her.

⁶ Lloyd-Jones, 112

This gets at the heart issue involved in worry and anxiety. Though there might be many complex factors involved, at the most basic level, worry happens because trust doesn't.⁷ We don't trust that God can handle our tomorrows. So we lie down at night and our worries about the next day begin to surface and fester and burst, so that when we finally do get to sleep we toss and turn in a soiled subconscious. No wonder we often wake up feeling exhausted already! And all the while our heavenly Father stands beside our bed and says, "Child...

It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. Psalm 127:2

...Trust me!" he says. "Trust me with one day at a time. I allow only a certain measure of trouble to come your way each day and it is exactly enough for my purposes for you."

II. God Allows Each Day's Measure of Grace

And this brings us to our second big truth of the day. The reason why God can say that it is exactly enough, is that just as God allows each day's measure of trouble, God also allows each day's measure of grace. Much of the basis for this goes back to something Jesus said earlier in his sermon.⁸ In teaching us how to pray as people under his kingdom rule, he gives the example we refer to as the Lord's Prayer. Many of you know it: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10). But pay special attention to the next line:

Give us this day our daily bread, Matthew 6:11

Not weekly bread. Not monthly bread. *Daily* bread. Just-enough bread. The perfect ration that keeps you needing to come back every day. Why would God do this? Is he incompetent, trying to make sure he's got enough to go around? Is he just stingy? What would it say about him if his children had to beg for bread? No! We know God is eager to show us "the immeasurable riches of his grace" (Ephesians 2:7). The point of this whole kingdom sermon is not how to live life *like a king*, but how to live life *with the King*.

Earlier this week I had planned on sharing the story of the lead missions pastor at Brook Hills Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Years ago he battled brain cancer and went into

⁷ D.A. Carson, *Matthew & Mark*, 216

⁸ Nolland, 315-316

remission, but recently it came back with a vengeance. I saw an update this week on Jonathan, a blog post written by his wife, titled, “One Day At A Time”. Come to find out, the tumors had progressed so severely that Jonathan was now in hospice care. His wife wrote this:

Recently, I have thought about and better understood the words that first our doctor, and later nurses and social workers kept repeating when they explained hospice care to us: our goal is to take one day at a time. That goal is very real to us right now. It is not just what we say when we feel tired after a long day of work, or when we are overwhelmed trying to finalize a project, or when our children get the best of our otherwise normal personality. In those moments, the phrase is valid, don't get me wrong. But under hospice care, that phrase is different because it is totally deprived of the possibility of switching gears. There is no further plan, there is no break. One day at a time has a very literal meaning these days. It is not easy, but surprisingly, it is helping us appreciate God's new mercies in a deeper way every morning. We get our [bread] for today. There are no left overs. But fresh [bread] for tomorrow is guaranteed.⁹

This weekend Jonathan passed away. In the coming days many will probably remember him for the amazing things he did on mission in dangerous places overseas, or the many people he mobilized to go do the same. And some may hold that as far less than the way he lived his final days, and even struggle with why God would take such a fruitful person. But finishing his race more dependent than he had ever been on God, finding enough grace for one day at time, *that is not less in the kingdom of God.*

Sometimes our worries take on the form of the question, “What if I got cancer? What if I lost a child? What if I was held at gunpoint and asked if I was a Christian?” The answer lies not in false realities. God has not given you the grace for such things, he has given you the grace for today. Will you release your anxiety over such things to him today and ask him for the grace if that terrible moment ever comes? Then surely he can still your worries now, and give you the grace if that day ever comes.

Conclusion

And now, for how to apply this. I could more or less just say, “So stop worrying,” and that would send you out with a religious rule to make you worry even more because you can't keep it. Instead, I want to point to the way the Psalms break down the portions of a

⁹ Eyes on the Unseen, “One Day At A Time,” <https://eyesontheunseen.com/2017/09/06/one-day-at-a-time/>

day, and show this daily rhythm was lived out by Jesus himself.¹⁰ There are four biblical portions in a day:

- Morning (sunrise to noon; 6:00 AM - 12:00 PM)
- Noon (noon to sunset; 12:00 PM - 6:00 PM)
- Evening (sunset to bedtime [first night watches]; 6:00 PM - 10:00 PM)
- The night watches (bedtime to sunrise; 10:00 PM - 6:00 AM)

Morning is used in the Psalms as a time for joy and the end of sorrow (Psalm 30:5). ‘We made it through the night and the darkness and the cold!’ The sun warms and wakes you. For Jesus this was often the time he rose early to be with the Father, which may have helped prepare him for the morning he would be bound like a criminal (Mark 15:1), and the morning he would rise.

Noon is used in the Psalms as the time for virtue to shine (Psalm 37:6). It’s the portion for work, and struggling to use the time most effectively and push through the post-lunch fatigue and the grind (Matthew 20:12). We see Jesus in this portion being wearied from his journey (John 4:6). It was also at this time that Pilate failed in virtue and condemned the Son of God (John 19:14-15), and the time when Jesus died and the sun stopped shining (Luke 23:44), our world’s greatest vice.

Evening is shown to be the time for hospitality, withdrawing from work to spend time in the company of others. The Psalms also describe it as a time for shadows, shady hospitality, happy hour lusts becoming a reality. In it we see Jesus drawing near to others in really normal settings. It was at this time he appeared to the disciples in the upper room after his resurrection and spoke to them “Peace be with you” and showed them his hands and his side (John 20:19-23).

The night watches--shouldn’t that be when we’re asleep? Yes, but we all know well that sleep doesn’t always come. The Psalms show this portion to be a time for remembering the Lord upon our beds (Psalm 63:5-6), but also a time for nightmares and worries (Psalm 91:5). This is when in the silence things come to the surface. We see Jesus sometime withdrawing by himself and praying all night to his Father.

So what’s the point of this? Are we supposed to start praying four or five times a day to make sure God is pleased with us in each part of the day? No way! I think the point is described with these words:

¹⁰ Zack Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor*, 169-184

“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” Lamentations 3:24

Through the troubles we face in each part of our day, we are given a portion to bear them. That portion is Jesus himself! The One who reminds us in the morning that he rose for us. The One who encourages us at noon that he overcome fatigue for us to his dying breath. The One who sits among us in the evening and speaks, “Peace be with you!” The One who invites us in the cruel night watches to talk with the Father, because he has given us a way back to the Father.

The One who on the night he was betrayed, when he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to his disciples and said to them, “This is my body, which is broken for you; eat this in remembrance of me.” He also took a cup of wine, and after blessing it, gave it to his disciples and said, “This cup is the new covenant marked by the shedding of my blood. For as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you announce the Lord’s death until he returns.” **We are announcing that Jesus Christ is our portion and our only way to make it through each day.** Our tradition here at Antioch is to come forward and break off a piece of bread and dip it in the juice. There will be stations here in the front; gluten-free bread will be available to my left, your right. If you’re not a Christian, this sacred symbol is not for you, but rather than taking communion, we encourage you to take Christ. He has made himself available to you this very moment. There will be pastors in the back and people to pray with you on the sides. Let’s pray.

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