

Good morning, family. It is a joy and an honor to be with you this morning. I really am humbled to be with you this morning. I've prayed all morning long that my lips would just drip with encouragement and with comfort as we talk together, as we worship together and as we sit and meditate on the Scriptures together. There are two things that I want to encourage you and affirm you in today as a pastor and as one of your elders. The first one is what Josh and Matt have both said this morning, and that is the way that you have responded to no doubt the biggest trial in the history of last seven years of our church family has been almost overwhelming. In fact, I woke up this morning (as I'm sure you did) thinking about Paul's letter of Philemon. There are two Scriptures that I thought about. The first one is 1 Corinthians 13 where it talks about faith, hope and love and how we're to pursue those things. And day in and day out this week, that's what I've just heard from the e-mails to the phone conversations to the prayer time on Wednesday night across all the campuses. Just how you've responded with faith, hope and love.

And then Paul wrote this to Philemon and I woke up with this on my heart and just wanted to affirm to you. "I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith. . ." He's not talking about evangelizing here; he's talking about the way you come together as a family and share your faith. He says, ". . . I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you." And that, my friends, is you. And I'll just tell you, you have a lot of elders and pastors who are proud of you and what the Lord has done in you. You have responded because your faith is real, and you have proven that this week. And I just want to praise the Lord for that, for the work that He's done in you, and I want to affirm and encourage you in that. You have responded in the way that we hope and pray that you would. And so praise the Lord for that and for the work that He continues to do in you. That's the first thing. I just wanted to affirm that in you as one of your shepherds. The real work the Lord's doing in our hearts has been proven as we walk through this test together this week.

And then the second thing I wanted to talk about is really what Matt said at the end of his video there. I want to encourage us as we continue to move forward through this test. Because it's not over, and it's not going to be the only one that comes to us. And by the way, I'm not only talking corporately, but I'm talking also about the dozens and dozens of tests you are walking through right now on a daily basis in your own personal lives. But I want to encourage us to continue, by God's grace and through the power of His Spirit, to guard against fear and anxiety dominating our hearts. In fact, I was talking to one of my mentors this week. I do this often before I have the opportunity to stand in front of our family and share the gospel. I was talking to him this week and he said, "Beau, it's amazing if you look through the history of God's people from Genesis to Relation, that every time God is leading His people into or through something that really is massive for their sanctification and for His glory, you'll find the commandment, 'Do not fear.'" Over and over and over again, you'll find the commandment "Do not fear," or something similar like, "Peace be with you." Even when Jesus Christ was telling the disciples that the Holy Spirit was about to come upon them, He says, "Peace be with you." So I just want to stand in front of you and, as the Lord's mouthpiece this morning, encourage you in that. Do not fear, not in regards to Matt and not in regards to the dozens and dozens of things that we all have going on in our lives personally. And so the best way I know how to do that is simply meditate on the words of Jesus together, because He has much to say on this topic.

And I don't know if you know this, but America really is being devoured by fear and anxiety. In fact, I read this article in the New York Times a few weeks back. It said that anxiety is "the most common mental illness in America, affecting an estimated 40 million adults, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. And that figure doesn't even count the far greater swath who are garden-variety worriers, people who fret when a child is late, who worry when they hear a siren headed toward home, who are sure that a phone call in the middle of the night means someone is dead. . .The tenuousness of modern life can make anyone feel overwrought. And in societal moments like the one we are in — thousands losing jobs and homes, our futures threatened by everything from diminishing retirement funds to global warming [to brain tumors] — it often feels as if ours is the Age of Anxiety." I'm telling you, no generation or ethnicity is excluded in this. And these 40 million people are people who have been diagnosed. These aren't just people who worry about different things. These are people who have gone to a doctor and have been diagnosed with an anxiety disease. It literally is eating up hearts all around us. In fact, I think it's literally killing people. I read this in a Rolling Stone article. This was about the late, award winning actor, Heath Ledger who starred in The Dark Knight. This is what it said in this tribute to him, "Profiles began to circle around the same words: wary, restless. (A London Times writer, who interviewed him on six occasions, wrote simply that Ledger had "worried himself to death.")" Dr. Charles Mayo (of the Mayo Clinic) wrote, "Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands, the whole nervous system, and profoundly affects the health. I have never known a man who died from overwork, but many who died from doubt and worry." And so anxiety, fear, worry, these things are devouring America, killing people all around us. And it's not just America; this is happening inside the church. A pastor once said, "I think the dirty little secret of the American church is fear and anxiety." How many men and women are in our churches that fear and anxiety are quietly strangling them every single day?

And so here I am in this moment where, if there's ever been a week for fear and anxiety to rear it's head within our family, it's now. And then walking with so many people day in and day out, I just know that this is a temptation. So as an elder and a pastor, if you want to get into my heart and my mind here, I don't want this to happen to us. I don't want us to be devoured, I don't want us to be overwhelmed and I don't want us to be controlled. And if you think about how many of our sins come from anxiety, how many of them spring out from a heart that is anxious, I don't want that to happen to us. And I guess I should make a distinction here, but surely you know I'm not talking about merely being troubled. It's not wrong to be troubled, because the Scriptures say that Jesus Christ Himself was troubled even to the point of death. That's what Matthew 26 says. He gathers His disciples, He knows what's coming and it says that He was troubled and He was grieved to the point of death. And so being troubled as circumstances come, as they crash in on our lives, as they press down on us, as visibly distressing things happen day in and day out, both corporately and individually, to be troubled when those things happen, there's nothing wrong with that. That's part of the human experience. And really, trouble is a friend of sorts or at least it can be. Because here is what these troubling circumstances do. Here's what they've always done in the lives of God's people. They tap you on the shoulder and they walk you to this point where you have a choice. The choice in the middle of your trouble, in the middle of your grief, is to either choose, by God's grace and with the help of His Spirit, to trust the Lord in that trouble, in that pain or to let your heart wander off and be dominated and ruled by anxiety. And I don't want us to go that direction.

So let's look at the words of Jesus, because the phenomenal news for us this morning is that Jesus Christ doesn't either. In one of His greatest discourses, He devotes an entire section of thought to anxiety and He teaches us how to guard against it. So look with me in Matthew 6. This is the Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus is preaching to followers of His. These are His disciples, which is going to be encourage for us because He's going to talk to them about anxiety. Which tells me that Jesus doesn't assume that we're not going to struggle with anxiety. In fact, maybe He assumes the opposite, and then He teaches how to get through it in faith, by God's grace. Jesus is teaching His followers that there are two ways to live life, there are two paths to walk down to try to have a relationship with God. The first path is religion, and He says that's not the path you want to walk down. Religion is this path where you try to get to God by obeying Him. It's an outside-in way of trying to relate to God and try to have a relationship with God, and religious people operate

under the principle of "I obey God, therefore He accepts me." And this is how many of us live our lives or this is how we try to live our spiritual lives. This is also how many people in Jesus' day, including the religious leaders, were trying to relate to God. And so Jesus is saying, "This path is going to get you nowhere." At the end of the sermon, He's going to say, "This path is sinking sand, and if you build your house on it, the whole house is going to crumble." And then He makes the distinction between the other path, the path that He's encouraging His followers to walk down. And that's the path of Christianity. It's not outside-in, it's inside-out. Out of hearts that have been changed by the grace of God, we obey. So religion is, "I obey, therefore God accepts me," and Christianity is, "We've been accepted by Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection, and therefore we obey God because we understand that it has changed our hearts." It's an inside-out way, and Jesus is saying, "This is how I want you to live life. I don't want you to be like the religious people; I want you to live like this."

And then He's going to tell them in chapter 6 a few things that will keep them from living on that path. So it kind of goes in line with what we've been talking about these last few weeks in this series. Matt has taken us through this series called "The Path," and Jesus is talking about the same thing here. He's saying, "There are a few things that will choke you from being able to walk down the path of life." And one of them unsurprisingly is fear and anxiety. So let's look in Matthew 6, starting in verse 19. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 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." Jesus is basically saying here, "What rules your heart will rule your life." And if something other than the Lord Jesus Christ is ruling your heart and controlling you, you will be anxious. That's why He gives these examples. He's saying, "Make your treasure Jesus Christ, fix your eyes on Jesus Christ, make your Master Jesus Christ, not these things of the world, not these idols that are so easy for us to replace God with." He says don't do that because it's going to lead you into anxiety.

And then he says this in verse 25, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious. . ." And He's going to say this three times in the next seven verses. So undoubtedly in this this is what He's trying to get across to His followers. And again, take comfort in the fact that these are His followers who have come up against distressing circumstances. So in they're distressing circumstances, Jesus is stepping in and saying, "Do not be anxious. . .do not be anxious. . .do not fear." And He's echoing what God has said to His people all throughout history. And maybe that's a negative way to say that. A positive way that you could say that is, "Trust the Lord." This is what He's saying and this is His exhortation. And you really see Jesus' heart as a shepherd here, because He's looking at these people that He has compassion on and He's saying, "Trust the Lord. Don't be anxious. Trust Him."

And He's going to tell them and remind them that the Father is worthy of their trust. But three times in the next seven verses, He says this, "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." I want to point out that He's telling them not to be anxious over things that are necessities. He's not talking about the things that you and I normally get anxious about, such as other people's opinion of us or what color we're going to paint the house. That's not what He's talking about. He's talking about the bare essentials, He's talking about food, water and clothing. And even these necessities, even life itself, Jesus is saying to His followers, "Don't be anxious about these things," much less the superfluous things that you and I are so prone to let dominate our heart. "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?" Here you just see Jesus is such a phenomenal preacher. Whatever you and I are prone to be anxious about, whether this week it's our lead pastor or whether it's our bank account or whether it's our homes or whether it's our children, whatever we're tempted to

be anxious about and let that anxiety control you, Jesus would say to you and me this morning, "Is life not more than _____?" And it's a rhetorical question. Obviously the answer is, "Yes, life is more than that."

He continues and gives them an example. "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?" So now He really begins to get into the guts of our anxiety and fear. He's saying, "Don't be anxious or fearful. Trust the Father. Life is more than this. Look at the birds. Nobody cares about birds. People hunt birds for sport and then don't even keep them to eat. Nobody cares about birds, but your heavenly Father cares for them. And look how He feeds them. Faithfully, day in and day out, He provides for these birds. And you who are His children, you who have been adopted into His family as His sons and daughters, if He takes care of birds like this, is He not going to take care of you? Does He not care more about you?" And here's where I think we get into the guts of it, because we struggle to believe that. We know it theologically, but at the bottom of our hearts, we really do struggle in those moments where we have the choice to trust him or wander off and let our hearts be dominated and ruled by anxiety. We struggle to believe that He really does care for those who are His children. And those of you who are believers of Jesus Christ, He loves you. The Father loves you. This is what Jesus is trying to get across. He cares for you. He knows food is needed, He knows clothing is needed, He knows what's going on in your life and He loves you, more than He loves the birds.

And then He asks this, which is so practical. "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" So not only does He say, "Don't be anxious because life is more than this and because you can look all around and creation screams to you how much God cares for His children," but now He says, "By the way, it doesn't work. Fear and anxiety doesn't work. It doesn't do anything. You sit around and get anxious about being anxious and nothing happens. It doesn't change anything. It kind of gives you this facade that maybe you're in control because you're so worried about it, but you're not." That's what Jesus is saying, and I love Him because He speaks my language. I'm sort of a simple man, and He's saying, "Beau, it just doesn't work. You being dominated by this fear is not going to do anything." So I just love that He says that. He continues, "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." Now maybe if you're new to church, Solomon was a king in the history of Israel at the height of Israel's power and wealth. Solomon is this king who had everything that he wanted, so Jesus uses him as an example here to these people who would have known who he was. "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." Probably as I've meditated on this Scripture over the last few months, as I've meditated over what Jesus says about anxiety, verse 32 has been the verse that has not only surprised me, but it has impacted me more than any other verse that we just read. Because what Jesus Christ said to His followers was, "When you worry like this, you act like an unbeliever. This is what the Gentiles worry about." The Gentiles were the men and women that were not in the family of God. They didn't have a heavenly Father, and so they were anxious. But He says to Israel, "But you who know you have a heavenly Father who cares for you more than birds and more than grass, you don't act like this. This is what Gentiles do."

A few weeks ago, we talked about how one of the areas of our lives where we should be different from the world around us is money. That should be one of the areas of our lives that marks us as different from unbelievers. Matt made reference to the book by Tim Keller called Counterfeit Gods where he talks about money, sex, power and these areas of our lives that we have to be counter-cultural and we have to act different than the world around us. Well apparently Jesus just said that anxiety is another one of those areas. That's profound. I almost can't believe that He said it really. Do not be anxious. This is what Gentiles worry about. You trust your Father. You have a heavenly Father. You don't

function like an atheist here. Do you struggle? Absolutely. Are you grieved? Absolutely. Are you troubled? Absolutely. Do you have days where you just have to go plead with other people to remind you of God's faithfulness and goodness? Absolutely. In fact, we're going to get to that here in a minute. But Jesus Christ is saying here, "This should mark you." And just to encourage you, it has marked us this week corporately. This has marked our family in the midst of a crooked, perverse and dark generation, and I continue to praise the Lord for that.

Verse 32, "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." One of the things that I do almost weekly whenever I come either this room or up in Denton is I think about the collective anxiety that is in this room right now. I think about the collective fear that we bring into this room right now, about a thousand different things. It's almost overwhelming. And I know some of you are here this morning, and you did good just to get out of the bed. I know exactly how you feel. I'm preaching this sermon for me just as much for anyone else. Because I know just how it feels to be so paralyzed by anxiety. Even this week, I know how it feels to be so paralyzed that you don't even want to get out of bed. I know the pain of that. So if that's you and that's where you're at this morning, there is help and there is hope of God.

But what do we do if we're walking in a way where we really are being dominated and controlled by anxiety? And I'm not even talking as much corporately as I'm talking about our personal lives. What do we do? Because I think so many of us quietly are there. And we've been there for so many years that maybe we don't even recognize that we are there. And so what do you do? And there's no four step process and there's no formula. I just want to take the rest of our time together and encourage you and exhort you and give you a few thoughts. When the Holy Spirit leads us to these moments in our lives daily and when He leads us to these moments in our life corporately and we really do have the choice to either choose to trust the Lord like people in God's family have done throughout the ages or to wander off in anxiety, what do we do to guard our hearts from wandering off in anxiety? And then if we're already there, how do we begin to repent and find healing? So let me share just a few thoughts on that.

If you're there, if you're dominated and ruled and controlled by anxiety, don't medicate your anxiety, get to the heart of it. But this is what we do, right? We're there and we want it to go away, so we just medicate it and we never get to the heart of it. We just don't go there. And do you know what we want more than anything? We really want painlessness. That's absolutely what we want. God is comfort, we want painlessness and so we're brought to this point where God really shows us that we need to trust Him more. And really we don't want to learn to trust Him more, but we want the pain to go away.

So we end up just medicating our anxiety and never getting past that to get to the heart of it. And we can medicate in a thousand different ways. We can medicate through medication. And if you just heard me say that medication is bad, you misheard me. Medication is not bad; it's just bad if you're looking to it to be your savior. And that's coming from someone who was addicted to medication for 20 years. You've got to get past medicating it and get to the heart of it. We medicate with relationships, codependency and relationships within our family. I've even found how easy it is for me, in my moment of grief and worry, to run to him and start playing with him and watch him smile and just let that be my savior. Especially men, I think a lot of us medicate by working out and exercising. Again, there's nothing wrong with exercise. In fact, I think the church should be doing more of that. It's just wrong if you're looking to that to save you from your fear and anxiety. Because studies have shown it helps. So go exercise and then afterwards sit down with the Lord and ask Him to help you reveal what the idols really are in your heart that are causing you to be anxious. And on and on and on we could go. So don't merely medicate your anxiety. Get to the heart of it.

So how do you get to the heart of it? Well here's where I think you have to start. I think you have to start by admitting that you have a problem. We don't like to do this because it makes us look less spiritual. Or we just say that anxiety is part of our personality. We've taken the Myers-Briggs test and go, "I'm just more prone to anxiety because I like to control things. I'm type-A." But no, it actually goes far deeper than your personality, and until you're willing to admit that I don't think that you're ever going to get any traction and ever have any real chance to heal. Because then it's not that big of a deal and you can handle it. If you want to get to the heart of it, you have to admit that you really do have a problem and really do need help. You can tell me all you want about how some people are just more prone to anxiety and how you just can't do anything about it. Well, I've also seen the studies that some people are just more prone to alcoholism, but none of us in this room would say it would be good for them, for their families and for society for them to just wander off and be dominated by alcoholism. So first you have to admit that anxiety is a problem for you. And then once you're there, you can go and confess to a brother and a sister and say, "I need help." And then with them walking next to you, you can begin to ask the Holy Spirit, "Reveal to me why. Where does my heart not believe that You love me and that You're going to take care of me? What idol in my heart is causing me to not trust You?" And as He's faithful to do that and as other men and women are walking along side you, then you begin to lay those things down, you begin to repent of those things and say, "I'm going to replace those lies with the truth, and then I'm going to meditate on the Scriptures because this is what the Scriptures teach me about God and His character." So get to the heart of your anxiety. Don't just medicate it. So corporately, as we're walking and we continue to walk through this trial regarding our pastor, don't just medicate it, don't just busy yourself, don't just work more. Sit down, wrestle with the Lord with the help of other believers and get to the heart of why you're being dominated and controlled by this anxiety. Ask the Lord to help you and reveal to you where you can trust Him more and where He has led you to this moment to trust Him more.

The second thing I wrote down is that you need others to help you. If you're in this place where you're being ruled by anxiety, you cannot guard against anxiety by yourself. You just can't do it. And I know we're individualistic and we try and think we can, but do it. I think one of the most beautiful things that hopefully you've seen this last week is the way the body of Christ, specifically the elders and the friends of the Chandlers, have come around them and their families. I think it would be really easy to miss that, but the elders really have modeled well for you what community looks like. And so if you're trying to do it alone, you can't do it. So I would just exhort you, if you're in this place and being dominated, to find someone and talk about it. You can't do it alone. If you're trying to do it alone, you'll sit in your anxiety and you'll convince yourself inwardly that it's not really that big of a deal and you will never get help. I need someone, I need the men that are in my life and my beautiful wife to be able to lean into me and say, "No Beau, you are fearful here. You're fearful because you don't trust the Lord. You're anxious because because you care too much about what these people think about you, and let me just remind you why there's a better way." You have to have that. We have to have that moving forward in our Christian lives.

And finally, guarding against anxiety is a daily, lifelong process. Don't hear me getting up in front of you this morning and saying, "You know what you need to do? Let's meditate on Scripture, go look at some birds as soon as you get out of this service and it will all be better and you'll trust the Lord with everything." No, it's a daily, lifelong process. And I just started this journey in my own heart and really getting to the root of some of these things a year and a half ago, and I'm further along than I was a year and a half ago. But it was still a struggle for me this week at times to want to get up, to want to leave the house, to want to have and engage in conversations with other people. And so the Holy Spirit is faithful to bring us along. It's not going to be painless and it's not going to be quick, but the Holy Spirit will be faithful.

So I hope that I've communicated my heart today, that as we move forward corporately and as you move forward individually, anxiety and fear must not dominate our family. It must not devour us like it has devoured the world around us. It must not strangle us. And I say that trusting in God's grace, not in our own strength. It can't happen here. It just can't be our family. So if that's where you are, can I just plead with you and exhort you to find help? We want to help. This

is not just me getting up and saying, "Don't be anxious, and if you are, you had better repent." I'm saying that we must not be anxious in this moment and we must trust the Lord moving forward. He is faithful. And if you need our help, it would be our privilege to serve you, to walk with you, to help you and encourage you.

John Piper took all the commands of Jesus and put them into a book called *What Jesus Demands of the World*. This is what he said in his book about the commandment "Do not be anxious." He says, "There have been kings who find it very effective to keep their subjects in constant anxiety. If the people are anxious about their life and worry about where their next meal is coming from, then perhaps they will be more willing to do the king's bidding in order to get the food they need from the king's storehouse. Anxiety keeps them in their place. Fear makes their monarchy firm." We see this all over the world even today. It happened in Jesus' day and it's happening in ours. Piper continues, "But one of the greatest things about Jesus is that he does not want His people to be anxious. He does not secure His kingdom by cultivating anxiety. On the contrary, the aim of Jesus is to free us from anxiety. He doesn't need to keep us anxious in order to establish His power and superiority. They are untouchable and invincible. Instead, he exalts His power and superiority by working to take away our anxiety."

So let me pray for us. "Father, I love Your people. I love this family so much. And so I thank You for the way You have cultivated faith and hope and love for each other, for Matt and Lauren and the family. I thank You for that. That is a gift of Your Spirit that You would sanctify in that way. And Father, I thank You for this moment that You have led us to as a corporate body and as individuals where we have an opportunity to grow in our faith and to trust You. I plead with You to not let us wander into the throws of fear, the throws of an anxiety that would seek to devour and eat us alive. I pray for the men and women in this room right now who feel like they're there, paralyzed, feeling like they're just sitting on this mat and they can't get up. I pray that You would begin the process of healing today. I pray that You would make us a family that is different than the world around us in the way that we deal with these things. I thank You for the way that You're already doing that. So as we respond now, as we contemplate and meditate on the words of Jesus, would You speak to our hearts. Shepherd our hearts in this moment, Holy Spirit. We need You and we trust You. I just continue to thank You for this family and all the wonderful things You're doing in and among us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."