

The True Discipleship Broadcast-1983-04 True Discipleship

by William MacDonald

The true discipleship is not about material security, but about investing for God and eternity, and trusting Him to take care of our future.

Duration: 26:40

Topics: "True Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that life is more than just focusing on material possessions like food and clothing. He uses the analogy of birds in the air, who do not sow or reap, yet are provided for by God. The preacher encourages the audience not to worry about their future needs, as God knows what they need and will provide for them. He emphasizes that worrying about the future takes away from serving the Lord and reminds the audience that it is impossible to control and plan every aspect of their lives.

Transcript

The person who lays up treasures in heaven is the one who has the carefree life. People think that you're carefree when you have a lot of material security on earth, but the Lord Jesus teaches the very opposite. He teaches that to be really carefree invest for God and for eternity.

He also teaches that where your treasure is, your heart will be also. And, according to this passage, your heart is either on earth or your heart is in heaven, and it can't be in both places. He uses the illustration of the eye, the lamp of the body being the eye, to drive home the point that if we have a single, pure desire to obey the Lord in this matter, our whole beings will be flooded with illumination.

But if we have an evil eye, an unhealthy eye, a bad eye, that is, as Christians, if we want to live for this world and accumulate a pile of loot, our whole being will lack the direction and the guidance of God. Our body will be full of darkness. And then, finally, he taught us that no one can serve two masters.

Either he'll hate the one and love the other, or else he'll be loyal to the one and despise the other. And the two masters are God and Mammon. I'd like to surprise you to know that the Lord Jesus spoke more about Mammon, about Silphilucca, about money, than he did about almost any other subject.

He spoke more about this than he did about personal salvation. It's astounding, isn't it? But he did. And it comes into his parables and into all his teachings.

Now, in verse 25, he goes on to say, Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink. Now, when he says this, he's not referring to today. He's referring to the worry as to what's going to happen to me 20, 30, 40 years from now.

That's the type of concern he's warning against. We are supposed to work hard for our daily needs. No question about that.

But he's talking about worry. Worry about the dim, indistinct future. He says, Don't worry 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? Well, the point here, of course, is that man is put into this world for bigger business than to be connoisseurs of food and clothes horses parading the latest fashion. Now, actually, those are two of the things that the world lives most for. If you go to the average shopping mall, you'll find that most of the stores are dealing with either food or clothing.

And life for many people is sailing forth from their houses in the morning like a gallant bark, traveling from one shopping mall to another, or sitting by the fire scanning the Sears robot catalog with the vain delusion that if I could just have everything in the catalog, I'd be supremely happy. And, of course, the Lord Jesus is teaching here that life is more than that. Is that all we're here for, to eat and to wear clothes? Makes you think of the cattle out in the field, munching the grass.

We're warned in the poem, Be not like dumb-driven cattle, be like heroes in the strife. And then he changes the figure. He says, Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they? Look at the birds of the air. I like this. The Lord Jesus was always using illustrations from common everyday life, and he taught in so many words that everything in life preaches a sermon if you only have eyes to see and ears to hear, and that's true.

So, today he's going to preach a sermon to us from the birds of the air. You're sitting at your breakfast nook, and you're looking out the window, and you're watching the sparrows, and they're out there on the ground, busily hopping about and getting their daily food. He says, Now learn a lesson from those little sparrows.

They neither sow nor reap nor gather into... That doesn't mean you shouldn't sow or reap. They can't. This adds to the argument.

The fact that they can't sow and reap for the provision of their daily needs adds to the argument. You can, and you ought to do it. But God cares for them in spite of the fact that they can't sow and reap.

Makes it all the more marvelous. But it also says, Nor gather into barns, and that's an interesting thing to me. You can study birds' nests all over the world.

You can study the robin's nest here in the United States, and then go to England and study the robin's nest there, and they're all alike. All the robin's nests are alike. Sparrows' nests are all alike.

One thing you'll never find is a barn or a silo next to it. They never build barns or silos. What it really means is they look to the Lord day by day for their needs, if they have the capacity of looking to the Lord.

Speaking figuratively, they look to the Lord for the daily supply of their needs, and they don't worry about tomorrow. The sparrows don't. You never see a sparrow rushing off to the psychiatrist or the psychologist or developing ulcers from worry.

Sparrows never do. Human beings do. The birds never do.

And Jesus says, Learn a lesson from the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. That's a remarkable thing.

You think that God is interested in those little sparrows. They are one of the most insignificant of all his creatures, aren't they? I don't know if when you were young you ever held a sparrow in your hand, but it's mostly feathers. When you take the feathers off a sparrow, there really isn't enough meat left to make soup for a sick grasshopper, and yet God cares for them.

He really does care for them, and it says, Are you not of more value than they? We never should be so spiritual that we can't learn lessons from God's little creatures, should we? We're very perilous. We go through life, but we don't even listen to what they're saying to us. Then the Lord Jesus says, Which of you, by worrying, can add one cubit to his stature? A cubit in the Bible is about 18 inches.

It's the distance from your elbow to the tip of your finger. Generally about 18 inches. And the Lord is saying here, Now worry hard and grow 18 inches.

Do you know it? Some of your Bibles don't say that. Some of your translations say, And which of you, by worry or by taking thought, can add a cubit to his life, the length of his life? There, life is viewed as a distance of so many miles. And the Lord is saying, Now worry, now go ahead and worry, and add 18 inches to the miles of your life.

And you say, Okay, please, you can't do that. The Lord says, No, that's right, you can't do it. That's the right answer.

If you say that's impossible, if you say that's ridiculous, bizarre, ludicrous, you've got the right answer. And it's just as impossible for you to provide for your future. Now let me explain why that's so.

Most of you are in your 20s today. How long are you going to live? I don't know. Supposing you live to be 65 and retire, how much is a dollar going to be worth then? I don't know.

If that's true, you don't know. How much money would be enough? If you're going to lay aside now for your future, how much money would be enough? There's no way of knowing. It's impossible.

We have no idea what the financial situation will be 10, 20, 30, 40 years from today. Just think of Germany at the end of the First World War. They had inflation of Brazilian proportions.

A little girl says to her mother, Mother, may we take the train to Berlin? And the mother says, No dear, we only have a few million left. In other words, they carried the marks around in baskets. And it would take a few million to do the most simple thing.

So, it's absolutely impossible. Jesus said, don't worry about your future. You couldn't do it if you wanted to anyway.

So, that's true. It's absolutely true. There's no way you can provide security for your future and be sure of it.

But that isn't the worst of it. So, he says, So, why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil.

They neither toil nor spin. And yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. The Lord Jesus not only says that the birds preach sermons, but even the flowers preach sermons.

Now, when we read this in our country, we're apt to think of the beautiful Easter lily, or the calla lily that grows so beautifully here in California, or even the lilies of the valley. But that's not what the Lord is speaking about here. When it says the lilies of the field, he's really speaking about the wild anemones that grew in profusion on the hillsides of Israel.

If you ever go to Israel in the springtime and look on the hills, there's just a mass of wildflowers, millions of them, growing in profusion there. Scoop over and pick one up and look at it and see the beauty of it. See the intricate design.

Then put it under a microscope, and the more closely you look at it, the more beautiful it is. Now, don't do that with wax flowers, please. Because when you put them under a microscope, they're pretty terrible.

I mean, they were made by man. But God, the supreme artist, takes those little wildflowers and he bestows such care upon them. It says here that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

That's true. That's true. Once again, I say, don't be too spiritual to admire the beauty of God in the flowers around us.

Now, he says, consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Now, that doesn't mean you shouldn't toil or spin.

They can't. And God clothed them. You can.

How much more will God clothe you? Yet, I say to you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Well, Solomon's glory was so great that it took away the breath of the Queen of Sheba. He was just overcome.

He says, the harp has not been told me. And yet, we travel on flowers that are more glorious, according to the Word of God. Now, notice verse 30.

It says, Now, if God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Now, I never really did appreciate this verse until a few years ago I was in Israel and some friends took me over to a city near Haifa. It's called Acre, or Ako, A-C-C-O or A-C-R-E. It's the Ptolemaeus of the New Testament.

It's an Arab city, really. Mostly Arabs that are living there. It's surrounded by walls that were built by the Crusaders.

And we went and visited some Christian people in this little town. And I learned something there. The ladies in the homes don't have tapen ranges.

They don't have stoves like you do for baking their bread. There's a community baker there. And what the housewives do is they work, they knead the dough, get the dough all ready, and they put it on a piece of wood and they give it to the little boy, and the little boy goes down to the baker and the baker is there with an open heart oven and for a small amount of money he bakes the bread for all the housewives in the area.

It's a community oven. And it's an open oven. And beside the oven there's a great big pile of grass.

And it has all these wild anemones right in it. The wildflowers are all there. And every once in a while the baker will just put his hand into that pile of grass and flowers and just throw it into the fire and the fire blazes up and it helps to bake the bread.

The bread is not like your wonder bread. The bread is this flat pita bread or pocket bread. And there's enough heat and enough fire there to bake that bread.

And of course the argument of the Lord Jesus is that God, he shows such infinite care and variety on those little flowers as they're born but for one brief day. And then the next day the baker takes a handful of them and throws them into the fire. What do you think about that? Now if God so clothes the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is thrown into the oven will he not much more clothe you? Oh you, of little faith.

It's an argument from the lesser to the greater, isn't it? We've had that before in our studies this year. You're comparing yourself with a single little wildflower. If God cares that much for wildflowers how much more does he care for those whom he has redeemed by the precious blood of his son? God will take care of you.

His promise is sure. He cannot go back on his word. Therefore do not worry saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? And once again I insist that he's not talking about the provision of our needs today although we don't have to worry about them.

He's talking about living for the future. Living to provide for your future. Do not worry saying what shall we eat, what shall we drink, what shall we wear for after all these things the Gentiles seek.

The Gentiles here means the pagan world, the heathen world. That's what they live for. They live for food, they live for drink, they live for clothing, and they live for pleasure.

Kind of sad, isn't it? To think of men and women brought into the world in the image and after the likeness of God and they have no higher destiny than to live for these passing things. The Lord says don't live like them. I bestow divine life upon you.

You're creatures of eternity called to an eternal destiny. There's something more in life than that. I get great comfort from these words for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

Put yourself in the position of a father. You know what your children need and with all the power that's in you you provide those needs for your children. God knows what we need and He provides for our needs.

Now, here in verse 33 the Lord Jesus comes to the crux of the matter. Let me look at it this way. If I have to worry about my future I won't have any time to serve the Lord.

If I have to make my future my concern there goes my life. I would have to work 26 hours every 24 hour day to do that and I still wouldn't do it. I still wouldn't do it because He's already told me it's impossible.

It's as impossible as adding 18 inches to the length of your life when your life is viewed as a distance. And God put me down here to serve Him, to glorify Him, to use my life for Him not to spend my life for food, clothing, pleasure. So, He says, I want to make a deal with you.

I want to make an agreement with you. Contract. You seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and I'll take care of your future.

That's really what verse 33 is saying in the light of the rest of the context. You burn yourself out for me. You live first and foremost for my kingdom.

And it says, for the kingdom of God and His righteousness. What's His righteousness? Well, His righteousness is the whole way of life that He's been describing here in the Sermon on the Mount. That's what it is.

He's saying, you build your life upon that foundation and I'll take care of your future. It's a promise from a God who can't lie. Seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.

All these things. I see that as meaning that you'll never lack the necessity of life. It's a wonderful thing, isn't it? That releases me to serve Christ with all I have.

If I'm going to spend my life accumulating things and accumulating money, savings accounts, stocks and bonds and all the rest, if that's the goal in life, then I'm not going to be able to spend my life for Him. He says, I know that. But I don't want you to spend your life for those things.

You can't serve God and mammon. So you serve God and I'll see that you never lack the necessity of life. And then in verse 34, the Lord Jesus said, therefore do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about its own things.

Poetic language, figurative language. Tomorrow doesn't belong to me. We often say tomorrow never comes.

It says that's true. The Lord has given me and you this present 24 hours. And He says, live it with a hilt for me.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Now, I know this raises some questions in people's minds and I'll anticipate one or two of them. First of all, what does this do to insurance policy? Good question.

A question you have to think about. My answer is what I already gave in a preliminary lecture, according to your faith, to get unto you. If you are willing to say, Lord, I'm going to claim your promise in Matthew 6.33 and I'm going to live my life to the hilt for you.

And I'm going to trust you to take care of me and my family, according to your faith, be it unto you. You say, Lord, I'm going to take all that money that I otherwise would have spent on insurance premiums and put it to work for you. God will take care of it.

If you have faith to do that, then take care of it. Then take care of your wife and your children if anything happens to you. If you say, no, I'm going to do without insurance and I'm going to use those premiums to buy a power speedboat, you better get the insurance.

If husband and wife are not agreed about this, maybe the wife feels that she's willing to trust God, but the husband doesn't, you better get the insurance. God will still love you. God will still use you.

God will still bless you. I think you will miss a blessing of a deeper rest in him, a deeper trust in him. But God will still use you.

Same thing with bank deposits. If you say, well, I just feel we should have a little nest egg there in the case of a contingency. Well, you should have it if you feel that way.

God will still love you, and God will still bless you, and God will still use you. Now, what about a Christian businessman? This man has a big business, and he needs money to run that business. What about that? Well, God knows that.

Any man that has a business, any Christian that has a business, needs what we call fixed capital. He needs the equipment, and he needs current assets, too. He needs money to pay his employees.

God knows all about that. You say, ah, but it's millions. It's perfectly all right.

God knows about that, too. You say, where does the life of faith come in next? The life of faith comes in in what he does with the profit. That's where it comes in.

There's nothing in the Bible against that man having fixed assets and current assets to carry on a business. But the question is, well, there are several questions. How does he treat his employees? Is he paying them adequately? And what does he do with the money? What kind of a steward is he with the money that's left over from the business? Okay, some of you might be thinking at this point, well, I hear you, and I know you're single, and what you're saying is good for single people, but it's not for men with families, right? So, you were saying that.

My answer is, your God is too small. God is just as able to take care of a husband and wife and 19 kids as he is of a bachelor. He really is.

And his promises are just as good. These promises weren't written to single people, were they? They were written to the household of faith. God says, you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Watch out you don't get sidetracked. Watch out you don't get detoured into living for a world of passing things. Really, that's what worldliness is, essentially.

Living for passing things. Jesus says, life is more than that. Don't spend your life in earnest anxiety about an indefinite future that you can't provide for anyway.

Remember my promise. You live first and foremost for me, and I'll take care of your future for you.

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