

INTRODUCTION

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving. Whether you had turkey or hot-pot for dinner it should be a time for families and friends to get together to recount the Lord's blessings. I wonder where you were on Friday. Were you hopping from store to store to join the Black Friday fever? The name "Black Friday" originated in the 50's and 60's when a large number of people rushed to Philadelphia for the annual Navy versus Army football game. It was played on the Saturday after the Thanksgiving Day. Streets and stores were packed with people. Shoplifting increased too. The local police department had to deal with extra traffic and crime. No one was allowed to take time off. Everyone had to work overtime. So they called the day Black Friday to describe the headache. Later the term got a different meaning. Those who are in accounting profession know that companies use red ink to indicate deficit and black for profit. Some merchants may suffer financial loss in the first half of the year. The surge in customers toward the holidays bring in business. Thus their accounting books will be written in all black. Since then the day after Thanksgiving becomes a time for hunting great deals. With internet convenience people will be able to get the same products online. Therefore, customers camping outside the stores for days and fighting inside to seize their treasure have become history. But one thing remains unchanged. Merchants want you to buy their products. Forget about what you already have! The new stuff are always better. Don't worry if you cannot afford it, but worry if you cannot catch up with your neighbors and friends. Is that your worry today? Perhaps your worry is not material. You may worry about your health or your aging parents, your kids' education or your future. In Matthew chapter 6 Jesus teaches us not to worry. Jesus began with "therefore" in verse 25 to draw a conclusion from what He shared before. Jesus said in **verse 24**: "No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money." Jesus told us that if God is our Master then we should serve Him wholeheartedly. Jesus followed the same logic as He introduced a new subject of not to worry. The antidote to worry is to make God the Master of our life. We do not need to worry if we keep in mind that we have a loving and mighty Father who cares about us.

EXPLANATION

1. 神的供應 God's Provision

First, Jesus reminded us of God's provision. Jesus was teaching from a mountainside. Therefore, He asked His audience to look around in nature. Let us read **verse 26**: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" Birds are everywhere. They are not like farmers who have to work in the field, harvest the crops and stock up food. Jesus reminded us that birds can survive because the Heavenly Father provides for their needs. Church reformation pioneer Martin Luther has a famous quote. He said: "God provides food for the birds, but He does not drop it into their beaks." Birds have to fly around to look for the food God has reserved for them. Therefore, when you get up tomorrow morning you still need to work to provide for your family. Don't expect money or food to drop down from the sky! Not only did Jesus encourage us to look

at the birds He also told us to study the wild flowers. He said in **verse 28**: “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.” Next, Jesus asked us to ponder the grass. **Verse 30** reads: “If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” While the birds are capable to fly around to look for food, wild flowers and grass are helpless because they are stuck in the mud! How do they survive? The Heavenly Father provides sunshine, air and rain in the atmosphere, and nutrients in the soil for them. In all three examples Jesus’ argument goes from the lesser to the greater. If our Heavenly Father takes care of the birds despite their low economic value how much more will He provide for His own children? If our Heavenly Father cares about the wild flowers and grass, though they do not live long, how much more will He provide for us? We should not forget that every blessing comes from our Heavenly Father. **James 1:16-17** remind us: 16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights... Everything we have is from God. There is a credit card commercial whose slogan is: “What’s in your wallet?” Do you know what is in your wallet? Our sisters can check your purse too. I have my driver’s license, some cash, credit cards, medical insurance card, pictures of my two boys, etc. Where do all that come from? It is God’s provision. I used to drive a car that was passed down from my wife’s two older sisters. One sister drove it for a few years, then she sold it to her younger sister. A few years later the next person gave it to us. A while later the husband of the first sister was surprised to realize that we still own their old car. He asked his wife: “How come Vincent is still driving that POJ?” (POJ stands for piece of junk.) Well, he is richer than before. But he forgot that the POJ was the first car his wife purchased after she got her first job. When you leave the church today I encourage you to take a good look at your car. It may be older than my previous POJ. But it is still God’s provision for you. When you arrive home look around in the garage and closets. If your home is like mine there may be lots of stuff here and there that you have not used in years. Those collections are God’s provision too. We worry because we think that we do not have enough. We also worry when things seem to be out of our control. Jesus reminded us that a good solution to our worries is to look around. Switch your attention from what you do not have, to what you already have. Everything you have is from God. He made the birds, flowers and grass. God also made you and me. He is not only the Creator. After He made us He did not abandon us as orphans. Do not worry because God promises to provide for our needs.

2. 神的觀點 God’s Perspective

We have a loving and mighty Father who cares about us. Not only that we have to be thankful for His provision, we should also learn to see ourselves from His perspective. Let us go back and read **verse 25**: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?” Jesus echoed the same thought in **verse 31**: “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’” Previously Jesus argued from the lesser to the greater. He talked about birds, flowers and grass before He talked about us. Now He reversed the orders. Life is of course more important than food, and body is surely more important than clothes. For if we cannot breathe then we do not need to eat, and if we do not have a body then we do not need to wear clothes. Notice Jesus was not talking about worry over no food or no clothes. It is the worry about what to eat and what to wear. I wonder if

you have those worries when you got up this morning. You passed by the kitchen and wondered what to have for breakfast. Perhaps you have too many choices, or you were tired of eating the same thing you had yesterday. Then when it was time to get dressed, you stared at your closet and did not know what to wear today. We jokingly say that ladies are always short of an extra piece of garment. Your husband should be pleased if you had completed that mission on Black Friday. Some ladies who are more sophisticated worry even after they bought a new dress. They have to buy a matching purse, shoes or jewelry. No wonder in any department store the ladies' section is always a few times bigger than the men's section. That is clothes. What about food? Nowadays, people worry about what they eat. They do not just want to be well-fed they want to live longer. Hormone-free dairy and organic produces are modern hype. I am not saying that we should not take care of our body. We should eat nutritious food, sleep well and exercise often. After all, if we do not have good health how can we serve God effectively? However, Jesus told us that God's perspective is differently from ours. He values His relationship with us more than what we have. God wants us to be mindful of eternal rather than temporary things. In **Luke 12** Jesus told a parable about a landlord who worried that he did not have enough space to store his harvest. He decided to tear down the barns and built bigger ones. When he dreamed of the many years to enjoy his wealth he could not help but smiled in his heart. Then there was a voice from heaven in **verse 20**: "... 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'" If God did not allow this wealthy man to live another day then what was the use of all his fortune? Don't worry about the stuff this world can offer. God loves us because we are His children. It does not matter how much you earn, your height or weight or what zip code you live in. If we learn to see ourselves from God's perspective it will lift our worries away. The question is: do you care about your relationship with Him? God is not Santa Clause or genie in a bottle. He is our Heavenly Father! Don't just go to Him and ask for stuff. Do you spend time to nurture your relationship with Him? Do you spend time on His Word, and attend church meetings to get to know Him more? Don't just focus on things that will eventually fade away. Invest your time on things that will last forever.

3. 神的次序 God's Priority

We have a loving and mighty Father who cares about us. We will not worry if learn to thank Him for His provision. We will not worry if see ourselves from His perspective. Besides, Jesus encouraged us to adopt God's priority. **Verse 33** reads: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." The verb "seek" means to "look for." Most Christians should be familiar with this verse. What does it mean to seek after God's kingdom and righteousness? Jesus meant that we should put God's priority first. Our purpose in life should be to further His kingdom and make His righteousness known to the fallen world. If serving God becomes our top priority then there is no need to worry if our Father will not give us what we need. No, God never promises to make us millionaires. Someone said it right: God desires to fulfill our need, not our greed. In **verse 32** Jesus contrasted those who live by God's priority and those who do not: "For the pagans run after all these things..." The pagans are those who do not know God. They seek after material possessions as if those things became their gods. As Christians we should be using God's blessings to bless others. Take wealth as an example. Are we serving the Lord with what He entrusts us, or has money become our master? Paul talked about money offering in **2 Corinthians 9:7-8** – 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God

is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. In the context, Paul talked about supporting another church with financial needs. God gives us money so that we can learn to use it to benefit others. Once I was financially stressed. Then one day a family gave me an envelope. I opened it and saw some cash in it. The same day while I was working in the church office I got a phone call. A missionary couple whom I did not know wanted to visit me to introduce their ministries. They were driving from one state to another. After our meeting I asked them how they covered their travel expense. Then I pulled the envelope out, told them where it came from and gave it to them. I am a shy person and I seldom do something like that. But it was a joy to share with others what God has given me. If you worry too much about yourself you may expect the worst scenario. You may ask yourself: If I am laid-off from work or die unexpectedly then who will take care of my family? If a tornado sweep my house away then where will my family live? Jesus was not asking us not to prepare for our future. It makes Biblical sense to put money in the bank, to plan for your kids' college tuition or your retirement. But we should trust God that His grace is sufficient for our needs. After I came to U.S. I learned two words from a sermon. They are "means" and "ends." Means is the process through which we complete a task, while end is the result we hope to achieve. If we see money as the ultimate end then we will always want more. We may become selfish and stingy too. However, if we see money as a means for us to bless others then we can be joyful givers. Next time you receive a bank or credit card statement you can take a good look at where your money went. What proportion do you use it for yourself, and what proportion do you invest it in God's Kingdom? The same principle also applies to how we use our home, car, time, etc. I know people who have big houses but they never host home gathering because they are afraid that little kids may mess up their decorations. I also know people who come to church alone in their own cars but have never considered giving brothers and sisters ride because they think that it is too troublesome to do so. Are you one of them? Only when we embrace God's priority and put furthering God's kingdom and His righteousness first, then we can enjoy sharing and serving others with what God gives us.

CONCLUSION

We have a loving and mighty Father who cares about us. Therefore, we should not worry about our life. Worry is an expression of disbelief. We doubt if our Heavenly Father has the ability to provide for our needs. During my school years in U.S. my wife and I attended a small Chinese church. The pastor couple has two daughters. This father was quite worry when his older daughter applied for college. Tuition, lodging, food and books. Where would the money come from? One day the family received a big envelope from one of colleges the young lady applied for. You know, if a school rejects you then all you will get is a one-page letter. If it is a large package then it means you are in! With all the money questions in mind the dad dared not to open the envelope. Finally the daughter got off school. She asked if there was any mail from the schools she had applied. The pastor pointed to the package. The young lady opened it. She was admitted – with a four-year full scholarship that included room and board. It was one of those big-name colleges that many parents want their children to attend. The whole family celebrated. Remember this family also has a younger daughter? Two years later she got higher test scores and was accepted to the same school with identical financial subsidy. God provided. Brothers and sisters: what are your worries today? Commit yourself to our Heavenly Father and trust Him only.