

“Simplicity” (Ruthless Elimination of Hurry Pt. 5)
(Matt. 6:19-21)

- **How is it with your soul?**

- Imagine gathering with a small group to answer the same question, every week, for the rest of your life. Sounds pretty radical, right? The early Methodist Christians in 18th Century England and America were zealously committed to fellowship and accountability. John Wesley’s strategy was to organize believers in various kinds of small groups where they would spur one another on to work out their salvation in Christ. The most powerful question they asked every week was this: **“How is your soul?”** In other words, *how is your life with God? How are you really doing? How is the part of you that nobody sees but God? How are you growing in grace?*
- The other week I had a zoom meeting, and like always, I opened the link, adjusted my laptop, and made sure the camera was pointing at a good angle for where I sat in the office. Then it hit me: *we do this with our lives all the time.* In our relationships, communities, even in church, *we choose where we point the camera.* You show *this part* of what you want others to see—but there could be *any number of things happening* outside that frame. For all we know, the other part of the house is on fire, or the kids are in the kitchen dumping a bag of flour on the floor, or you might only be dressed for work from the waste up! This is why they asked the same question every week. How often do you get to examine, and share, *the condition of your soul?*
- I share because, as we finish our series on *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, I want to check-in and ask—**how is your soul?** How have these biblical teachings on *Hurry, the Easy Yoke of Jesus, Solitude, and Sabbath* hit you? If you can honestly say, *“I am not well,” “my life has not been aligned with Jesus,”* know these 3 things: 1) there’s no shame in that honest answer, 2) you’re not the only one, and 3) the Good News hasn’t changed: Jesus is here, and *the Kingdom of Heaven is near.* You can step into the reality of His Kingdom *right here, right now.* He shed His blood so you could enter in. So, are you ready for one more topic? Let’s pray and dig in.

- **Pulled-Apart**

- Our final theme to close this series is *Simplicity*, and our Scripture comes from Matthew 6: **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** (Matt. 6:19-21)
- This teaching of Jesus has a lot to do with how we answer the question, *“How is your soul?”* because it has a lot to do with whether our lives are dominated by anxious hurry. Take a look at the verses that come right after this passage. This is the **“Sermon on the Mount,”** where Jesus taught all about the Kingdom of God in **Matt. 5-7.** In this part, He focusses on how money and possessions impact our life with God. For 16 verses, He talks about treasures, having a “generous” eye, whether we worship God or Money, and not worrying. Here’s what’s interesting to note: right after Jesus talked about where our treasure is, and whether we worship God or Money, He talks about *worry.* He’s pointing out that the type of relationship we have with “stuff” has a direct impact on whether we live lives of *anxiousness* or not. He begins talking about *the birds of the air and the flowers of the field and seeking first the Kingdom of God* with this jarring statement: **“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 than food, and the body more than clothes?”** Leave it to Jesus to make everything so ridiculously simple, and challenging, at the same time! Let’s just hone in on this one simple word, “worry.” *Do not worry.*
- This word for “worry” or “anxious” occurs 19 times in the New Testament, most of the time in a negative sense. This Greek word **merimnao** carries the implication of *being drawn in opposite directions, divided into pieces, pulled apart.* Isn’t that a powerful description of what it feels like to be *anxious*, to be burdened by worries and cares? As opposed to being whole-hearted, single-minded, content—life is *simple*—you’re being *pulled apart* by all these competing cares and concerns. Sadly, I resonate. Do you? But Jesus says, *don’t worry about these things.*

- Let's remember the definition of *hurry* from our first week. Dallas Willard said: **"Hurry involves excessive haste or a state of urgency, a state of frantic effort one falls into in response to inadequacy, fear, and guilt."** Can you see how all this fits together?
- **Simplicity**
 - Jesus is showing us that one of the primary drivers of an anxious, hurried life is a false, out-of-balance relationship with stuff (money, possessions, food, clothing). If you do not *seek first the Kingdom of God* and live in quiet trust that your Heavenly Father knows your need, you'll fall into a life of fear—*pulled apart* by the cares of life. If you do not *store up treasures in heaven*, but *put all your treasures in the stuff of this life*, you'll find your heart *weighed down by the cares of life*—because you'll live in constant fear over preserving those things in which your heart resides!
 - Let's think: does our culture tend to emphasize more *storing up treasures on earth*, or *storing up treasures in heaven*? When you admit the obvious answer to that question, is it any wonder that our world tends to be dominated by a *mindset of hurry and worry*, rather than *peace, simplicity*?
 - John Mark Comer contrasts "the Gospel of the American Dream" with "the Gospel of the Kingdom." **The Gospel of the Kingdom is, "...the good news that the life you've always wanted is fully available to you right where you are through Jesus. Through Him you have access to the Father's loving presence. Nothing—not your income level or stage of life or health or relational status—nothing is standing between you and the 'life that is truly life.'"** That's Jesus' message, read the Beatitudes! In contrast, **the Gospel of the American Dream is, "...the more you have, the happier you'll be."**
 - If our view of "stuff" and what we're seeking most fervently in life is driven by the Gospel of Jesus, we will grow in a sense of contentment, peace, and valuing the things that matter most—the things of God, the things of eternity. If, on the other hand, we're driven by the Gospel of the American Dream, we will grow in a sense of *hurry, distraction, anxiousness, and fear*. Because in that mindset, *there is never enough*. We'll never get the carrot hanging on that string. We'll never arrive to the top of that ladder. We'll never achieve enough security to protect the treasures of earth from the things that destroy—*the clock is ticking and we can't take it with us!*
 - In the midst of these contrasting ways of life, God consistently calls us to *simplicity*. *Simplicity of life and resources; simplicity of focus and priorities; simplicity of heart and mind*. A life of *whole-heartedness, single-mindedness*. Life in this world get complicated, *but His Way is simple*.
 - Jesus spoke to it again and again: **"Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** (Matt. 6:21) **"...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well...do not worry about tomorrow..."** (Matt. 6:33-34) **"Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."** (Luke 12:15) **"Martha, Martha...you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."** (Luke 10:41-42)
 - Likewise, the Apostle Paul said: **"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."** (Phil. 4:12-13)
 - Do you see the overarching point? In a hurried, chaotic, divided world that is being pulled apart by the cares of life, following Jesus leads to a simplified life—the *good life*. *Do you own your possessions, or do your possessions own you? Do you control your calendar, or does your calendar control you? Do you rule your thoughts, or do your thoughts rule you?* If we follow Christ, we can cultivate simplicity in our possessions, simplicity in our life, simplicity in our thoughts and priorities that lead to an unhurried, whole-hearted life. *The life we long for*.
 - We can end this whole series with a very simple question: **Where is God calling me to simplify my life so that I can live with a more single-minded, whole-hearted focus on His Kingdom?** If you can answer that, and live into it, you will be well on your way to *un-hurrying* your life and anchoring yourself in *the Life that is truly life*. The world will not lead you to this—in fact, just the opposite. But Jesus will. Let's trust and follow Him today. Remember, *His burden is light*.