

Luke 12:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

Analysis

And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? Jesus employs rhetorical questions to expose anxiety's futility. The phrase **with taking thought** (merimnon, μεριμνῶν) again uses the verb for anxious worry. The question format expects the answer "no one"—anxiety accomplishes nothing productive. **Can add to his stature one cubit** presents interpretive complexity. The Greek helikia (ἡλικία) means either physical stature/height or span of life/age, and pechyn (πῆχυν, cubit) was about 18 inches—a unit of length that could metaphorically describe time.

Most commentators favor the "span of life" interpretation for two reasons:

1. the context concerns provision, not appearance, making lifespan more relevant than height
2. adding 18 inches to height is not a "least" thing (v. 26) but would be dramatic, whereas adding a small increment of time could be.

Either way, Jesus' point stands: merimna (anxiety) cannot alter realities God controls. Worry adds neither height nor lifespan—it's utterly ineffective for achieving what it obsesses over.

This verse anticipates Jesus' Gethsemane prayer, where He submits His psyche to the Father's will (Luke 22:42). If the sinless Son cannot extend His life apart from divine providence, how much less can anxious disciples? Sovereignty belongs to God; submission and trust are the disciple's proper response.

Historical Context

The cubit (pechys, πῆχυς) was a common ancient measurement, roughly the length from elbow to fingertip. It functioned both literally (for construction, cloth measurement) and metaphorically (for time, as in Psalm 39:5, "thou hast made my days as an handbreadth"). Jews in Jesus' day were intensely aware of divine sovereignty over lifespan—the Psalms repeatedly acknowledge that God numbers our days (Psalm 90:12, 139:16). Jesus' rhetorical question would resonate with hearers who understood human limitations. Anxiety was recognized as counterproductive even in secular Greco-Roman philosophy (Stoicism taught ataraxia, freedom from anxiety), but Jesus grounds the prohibition in divine providence rather than human willpower.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What specific worries consume mental and emotional energy but accomplish nothing to change your circumstances?
2. How does recognizing God's absolute sovereignty over lifespan affect your anxiety about health, safety, and the future?
3. In what areas of life do you attempt to seize control that properly belongs to God alone?

Interlinear Text

τίς	δὲ	ἐξ	ὑμῶν	μεριμνῶν	δύναται	προσθεῖναι
which	And	of	you	with taking thought	can	add
G5101	G1161	G1537	G5216	G3309	G1410	G4369
ἐπὶ	τὴν	ἡλικίαν	αὐτοῦ	πῆχυν	ἔνα	
to	G3588	stature	G846	cubit	one	
G1909		G2244		G4083	G1520	

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 6:27 (Kingdom): Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

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