

Luke 12:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

Analysis

If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Jesus draws a logical conclusion from verse 25. The phrase **that thing which is least** (elachiston, ἐλάχιστον) refers to the smallest, most insignificant matter. If anxiety cannot accomplish even the smallest thing—adding a cubit to stature or a moment to life—why persist in worrying about **the rest** (ton loipon, τῶν λοιπῶν), the greater concerns of food, clothing, and provision?

The Greek construction *ei oun oude elachiston dynasthe* (εἰ οὖν οὐδὲ ἐλάχιστον δύνασθε, "if then not even the least you are able") emphasizes human powerlessness in fundamental areas. The verb *dynasthe* (δύνασθε, you are able) comes from *dynamis* (δύναμις, power)—humans lack the power to control what God sovereignly governs. The question **why take ye thought** (ti merimnate, τί μεριμνᾶτε) expects the answer: there is no reason. Anxiety is both ineffective and illogical.

This argument employs qal wahomer (light and heavy) reasoning: if you cannot do the small thing, how could you accomplish the large? Since you cannot extend life by worrying, cease worrying about life's necessities. Jesus redirects energy from futile anxiety to productive faith. As Peter later writes, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Historical Context

Rabbinic teaching employed qal wahomer arguments extensively—if X is true in a lesser case, how much more in a greater case. Jesus uses this familiar reasoning pattern to expose anxiety's irrationality. First-century Jews lived with constant economic vulnerability under Roman taxation and occupation, making worry about provision a daily reality. Yet Jesus calls His disciples to a radically different posture: since God controls what anxiety cannot change, trust Him rather than exhaust yourself with worry. This teaching challenged both Jewish and Greco-Roman assumptions about self-preservation through planning and accumulation.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does your persistent anxiety about things beyond your control reveal about your functional beliefs regarding God's power and care?
2. How would your daily rhythms change if you genuinely accepted that worry accomplishes nothing productive?
3. Where do you need to shift energy from anxious fretting to active trust and obedient action?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	οὖν	οὐτὲ	ἐλάχιστον	δύνασθε	τί	περὶ	τῶν	
If	ye then	not	that thing which is least	able to do	why	for		G3588
G1487	G3767	G3777	G1646	G1410	G5101	G4012		
λοιπῶν	μεριμνᾶτε							
the rest	take ye thought							
G3062	G3309							

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 5:7 (Parallel theme): Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Psalms 39:6 (Parallel theme): Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

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