

## **Sermon October 27, 2024**

### **Matthew 6:25-33**

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you--you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

### **Thankful**

Almost 40 years ago, the rock band REM released a song called "It's the End of the World as We Know It.!" There are times in our lives when these lyrics connect to us – people standing in the rubble after a hurricane or the ashes after a wildfire or the wreckage of war... they know that the world has changed forever.

The prophet Joel spoke to people who shared the same fears and experiences, thousands of years ago. There was a plague of locusts...So many locusts, that they blocked the light of the sun and the land was plunged into darkness. The devastation was huge, as great as the devastation found in any modern storm and without the benefit of federal assistance. The locusts ate everything in their path. Gone were the grapes to make "sweet wine," gone were the crops to make cereal offerings in the Temple, gone was the crops needed to worship God, gone was the food to feed the hungry people. And the storm of locusts did not just last a few hours. The locusts stayed for years and years... a pandemic of locusts eating their way to destruction. "Surely this is a judgment from God, how can we survive without food? It's the end of the world as we know it."

And God, through Joel, spoke to the people. Spoke words that are as meaningful to us as they were almost 3,000 years ago.

“Don’t be afraid,” God said, “I am with you.  
The locusts are gone and the crops will return.”  
*And then a promise for the ages:*  
“You’ll know without question  
that I’m in the thick of life with Israel,  
I’m your GOD, yes, *your* GOD,  
the one and only real God.  
Never again will my people be despised.”

God is with us, through thick and thin. God loves us through storms and hardship. God loves us through peace and prosperity. God loves us no matter what.

## Breathing

Oh my, Beloved, sometimes the things we worry about or fear take our breath away. Sometimes we just need to stop and just breath... to remember to put our faith in the God who clothes the grasses of the field and feeds the birds in the air. To look at the gifts that God has given us and be thankful.

To remember the one and only God who is with us through thick and thin, in sickness and in health.

God loves us and God will take care of us when we need it most. But how easy it is for us to forget. Jesus reminded his disciples of the same thing 500 years later. The disciples were worried. They had given up everything to follow Jesus – family, friends, their livelihood. They felt an intense commitment to him and were willing to follow him wherever he goes. But they were anxious too. Traveling from village to village, they literally lived hand to mouth. So far, everything had been alright, but Jesus’ words of social change inspired so much anger towards Jesus, their world could come tumbling down at any moment. The journey was becoming more and more dangerous. It really might be, they thought, the end of the world as we know it...

Don't worry, Jesus tells them. Trust God to provide for your needs. Just as God cares for the birds in the air and the wildflowers in the fields, God will take care for you.

We all worry. Maybe we don't worry about the world ending, but we worry about day-to-day concerns. Paying bills and caring for family and working... sometimes it feels like we are juggling too much and our worries get in our way.

Jesus points us to the greatness of God's gifts and pushes us to remember that God takes care of all creation. And if that is so, how could he, in fact, forget about of us? It's not that bad things don't happen because of course they do. But the assurance that God is with us and will provide for us in love offers us a new perspective. God is in the midst of our lives.

God is with us; everything is in God's creative hands. During storms and wars, we are cradled in God's loving palm. And we are cradled during the daily anxieties that trouble us: like still to be raked leaves and unpaid bills. Not that God will make sure your leaves are raked or will deposit money in your checking account, but worrying about those things won't make them happen either.

Jesus and Joel both point us to a greater truth: God will give us what we need, no matter what. If we don't let our own worries and fears block our awareness of God's presence, we most certainly will find that God gives us more than enough. Blessings in abundance... overflowing... just pick up your head and look at those wild lilies of the field and get a glimpse of the blessings they represent.

When we are grateful for God's presence in our lives, instead of dwelling on the deficits, we are able to move forward and face the new opportunities of our lives.

So yes, Jesus sends us out today to consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. Jesus sends us out to live lives focused on new opportunities not old fears. Jesus points us to what God has already done in the world and in our lives, and reminds us that for all of time to trust in God. Somehow it always works out. It really is not the end of the world!

The challenge is to not only hearing these words but to step into them and embrace the blessing they are meant to bring... to do as Jesus said and go outside and gaze at the sky, the still green grass, the fall trees – some empty, some still dressed in vibrant colors-- and the occasional summer flower which somehow sustains in the autumn cool --- to be reminded of the gift Jesus offers now in pointing to God's tender care for all that is.

And so these words are ours as we gather our harvest --- urging us to let go of the worry --- and to let go of what would rob our lives of peace and joy - -- urging us to finally give it all back to God who gives us all of that for which we give thanks in the first place.