

## Seeking the Kingdom of God

Thanks Yr B Matthew 6:25-33 October 10, 2021

Rev. Peter Smith [www.stjamesuc.com](http://www.stjamesuc.com)

I know this isn't quite the Thanksgiving we were expecting. Only a few months ago it looked like we would be free from Covid worries and restrictions well before October. But we're still wearing masks, figuring out proof of vaccine requirements, and keeping an anxious eye on what is happening in other provinces as they struggle with the fourth wave. And it almost seems that people are more stressed and more worried this fall than we were last fall.

In our gospel lesson, Jesus says "Do not worry about your life..." And I don't know about you but when someone tells me not to worry when I am worrying I end up worrying more. Being told to not worry isn't really helpful because it actually adds to our stress and anxiety. But Jesus doesn't just tell us to stop worrying- he points to the world around us and asks us to consider the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. And he does that in order to help us realize something important about our worries and fears.

But let me pause for a moment to talk about those familiar images because I have to be honest growing up I would hear lilies of the field and imagine these spectacular beautiful flowers neatly planted and when I heard birds of the air I would imagine eagles soaring majestically overhead. And I don't think that's what Jesus is talking about.

When Jesus talks about birds of the air he means the common everyday birds and how they get fed and provided for in their lives. And I'm not sure about you but I've never seen a thin seagull or a crow that looked like it missed too many meals. They always seem to be able to find something to eat even through long winter months. They don't worry, they don't fret and they get the food they need for their lives.

When Jesus talks about flowers of the field he means wildflowers, not cultivated ones which are cared for and nurtured but simply the ones which grow anywhere and everywhere. So he is mentioning flowers like dandelions, daisies, goldenrod, and all the colourful plants which grow by the side of the road. Flowers which grow quickly and don't last long. Flowers that when we step back we have to admit are striking and beautiful.

Jesus draws our attention to the birds of the air and the flowers of the field and asks us to realize that they thrive, they continue, they persist, and they don't worry about the things which preoccupy us. And after making that point Jesus asks whether we think that God loves us and cares for us and whether God will provide for us. And if we think that, is we believe and hope and trust in God, if we have faith, then why do we continue to worry?

Because let's be honest. We're thinking about tomorrow and trying to know the unknowable and influence things beyond our control. And so we worry. We're focused on things we don't have and problems which might occur. And so we're fearful. We imagine all the possibilities, all the things that might go wrong, and we try to get ahead of all the things that might happen, and we end up doing nothing meaningful.

As Jesus points out no one ever adds to their lives or the future through worry and fear. And let me repeat that- no one has ever added anything good to their lives by worry and fear. We don't live longer by any means and in fact we lose some of the time we have today focused on problems which might happen tomorrow.

Yet as I said our gospel is more than Jesus simply saying you shouldn't worry. No, Jesus asks us to open our eyes, see what we find around us in nature, in our lives, and put our trust not in what we can do but in what God can do. Because the question isn't whether we have reason to worry because there is no doubt at all we do. Things are unsettled in our lives and still chaotic in the world. So the real question for us isn't if we have troubles today but whether we have reason to trust in God's grace, God's love, and that God will be there for us in our need.

And that is where our lesson for today touches on where we are this Thanksgiving. Because we all know too well what is bothering us, worrying us, and what is preoccupying our lives. We all know our fears about what might happen tomorrow. And that is not where our attention should be focused.

So we need at this time to pause to remember what Jesus does on the cross and how that brings us forgiveness and new life. We need to pay attention to the fact we have food which nourishes our bodies and is enjoyable. We need to realize that we

live in an area of the world filled with beauty and wonder and potential. We need to see that we are surrounded with good people, family and friend. God has richly blessed us in our lives and as we pause on Thanksgiving weekend we need to remember and recount those things.

And when we do, as we are thankful and grateful, let us put our trust in God. Because that is what faith is about, not knowing what is coming tomorrow but trusting that God will provide. Not seeing the path through our troubles but knowing that we will be shown the way. Not worrying about tomorrow because we do not want to miss out on the possibility and reality of today.

For in faith we come as thankful people to praise God and recount our blessings. In faith we come to live a life which shares the bounty which God has placed within our hands. In faith we look to today and don't focus on tomorrow because we know we are living examples of God's love, God's grace, and God's blessing.

And I know that doesn't take away the reality of what is happening in the world and the hard things that are happening in each of our lives. Because we may not be exactly where we want to be and may be worried about what is coming. But looking back we can see how far we have come and who has been with us the whole way. And while that doesn't change what we can do and what we can know it reminds us that in life there are more important things for us.

For what faith does is show us that there is more in our lives than our troubles, our pain, our fears. It reminds us that we have been through difficult times when the storms of life have raged and that God has seen us through those times. Gratitude, thanksgiving, and faith helps shift our attention and focus away from our fears and worries and towards what God has provided and what God will provide for us.

So look at your life, really look and recognize how God has been there and believe how God can provide for you this day and in the days to come. So open your hearts and be grateful to God for what you have known and what you are blessed with this day. And let your faith, your hope, your thanksgiving, focus you and push back the fears and worries about tomorrow. For we may not be where we had hoped to be at this point but if we are walking with the one who loves and cares for us we are exactly where we need to be.