



IS NOT LIFE MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOOD, AND THE BODY MORE IMPORTANT THAN CLOTHES?

~ MATTHEW 6:25-34 ~

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“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? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

We are now in the middle of the hot days of summer in Tucson. Water is important at any time of the year, but it takes on a special importance in the summer. My wife and I try not to go out without having a water bottle or two on hand. It is recommended if you are just out running errands, but especially recommended if you are out on a hike, playing sports, or washing cars.

Now imagine if you were out on a hike and you got lost. The water you brought along on the hike is gone. The minutes turn into hours, you start getting worried. Daylight is slowly replaced with night, and you find a place to settle in for the evening. The next day things don’t get any better. You survived the night, no critters got you. But you still don’t know which direction civilization is, and you are becoming weak from a lack of water. Then all of a sudden, out of nowhere, a weary traveler approaches you. It almost seems like a dream, like you may be hallucinating. And this traveler offers you a choice: A BOTTLE OF WATER OR A BIBLE?

Like I said, you may be hallucinating, so this is not out of the realm of possibility. Or maybe you can consider this a parable with pastor. But say you were in that situation, if you could only choose one, which would it be? A BOTTLE OF WATER OR A BIBLE? Even if we will never be placed into a situation as drastic as that, it would be good for us to think about it. The bottle of water represents everything we search for and might get worried about in this life. The Bible represents the things of God – his Word and his kingdom. And as much as we like to think that we’d take the Bible over a bottle of water, by our actions, our worries, we often prove the latter.

The question we consider this morning in our series *Jesus is Asking* is this: **“Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”**

(1)

Worry is one of those emotions that everyone is familiar with. Worry comes from caring about something. Worry is fear from losing that thing. There are so many things that we can worry about. We can worry about our kids leaving home, we can worry about a new year of school, we can worry about our country, we can worry about finances, our health and our future.

It is so familiar an emotion that Jesus addressed this issue with the people of his day. He talked about it when he preached his famous sermon on the mount. In the nine verses of Matthew that we had as our gospel this morning, the word “worry” shows up five times. “Do not worry!” “Do not be overly anxious!” The worries that Jesus addresses directly in this gospel are these three: food and drink, your body, what you will wear. But that doesn’t mean Jesus says all other worries are OK. These are just three examples. When we worry about what we think is important we reach for that bottle of water.

He gives them two reasons why they should not worry about these things. Look at the birds in the sky. You don’t see them worrying about where they will find their next meal, where they will rest, and yet God takes care of them. We are more important than the birds. If God takes care of them in that way, how much more will he take care of us? The second example he uses is with the plants around them. We could do the same in Arizona. Look at the beauty of the plants, especially when they bloom and flower like our Texas Ranger bushes in our front yard. If God looks after the flowers of the field with such great beauty, then how much more will he take care of us?

These words from our sermon came at a perfect time in my life. This last week our air conditioner broke down. Needless to say, I was a little worried. How long would we have to be without AC in a hot AZ summer? How would we be able to get a loan quick enough to be able to afford a new AC? Where would we go during the time our house was so hot. I only needed to take a step back, take a look at Matthew 6’s words, “Do not worry!” Everything was alright, everything was taken care of, everything is fixed.

Every time we worry, it’s like we are in the desert and we choose the bottle of water over the Bible. We feel like it’s not going to do us any good by taking a Bible, because water will help us survive. We feel like we should take care of our own needs first before we do anything for God. I’m sure there are certain events or happenings in your life that you could be or are worried about. Jesus’ words are there for you too, “don’t worry.” And what wise words from Jesus, not only because it helps us to relax, but also because God has given us no reason to worry.

Because if you think about it, what is worry? What are the kinds of things we worry about? The kinds of things we worry about are things we care for which are out of our control – the weather, our finances, an upcoming NFL season, school. Worry is trying to control those things we can’t control. And unfortunately, the more we try to control those things, the more they start to control us. It’s like a dog with a big pile of bones. He’s so busy fending off the other dogs that he will likely starve because he’s forgotten to eat.

And while there are many things in life that cause us to worry, something that we have no control over and should be concerned about is sin. Worry itself is a sin because it is a lack of trust in God's promises. The Bible says that we are slaves to sin, meaning, we can't help but sin. We are controlled by sin. And that makes us worried. Sin is like that split personality that can pop out at any time, in a moment of anger, in a moment of weakness, and we're worried about that, and well we should be, for God says, **"The wages of sin is death."**

But not only does Jesus tell us not to be worried, he gave us the reason we need not be worried. He trusted his heavenly Father perfectly to provide for him. He did not worry even though he did not have a home, or a way to make money. But not only that, he placed all our worries on his shoulders. He took all of our burdens, including those burdens of worry and sin, before we were even born, and nailed them to that cross. This is why we are not to worry. This is why we do not need to take the bottle of water first.

(2)

A BOTTLE OF WATER OR A BIBLE? If we don't take the bottle of water first (representing our worries about life), then that leaves us with taking the Bible. And this is precisely what God wants. He says later in the gospel, **"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."** When we worry, we place our cares and concerns on things that we care for and are concerned for – this seems logical. But as a Christian, we place our cares and concerns on the things that God cares for and is concerned for. And what is that? God cares about all people. The apostle Peter writes, **"He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."**

Choosing the Bible over the water bottle is choosing something beyond this life. And we are only able to do this when God entered our hearts and allowed us to believe. **"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' except by the power of the Holy Spirit."** We who are here this morning, along with believers around the world and across the centuries have had our hearts opened by the gospel message. We know there is something more than this life, life is about more than food, body and clothing, life now is about eternal life in heaven. But eternal life doesn't just start when we die, it started the moment God entered your heart and life, we have it right now. So don't worry!

As Christians, this may be easy for us to know (head knowledge). We know there's more to this life than getting through it and then dying. But I wonder if we really know it (heart knowledge). The Greek language has a few different words for the verb, "to know." One word talks about a head knowledge – that you learn from a book, the other word talks about an experiential knowledge – something you know because you've done it. We can read the Bible and hear what it has to say, and we can know it. But how can we help anyone if we keep that knowledge to ourself.

Maybe you've noticed a few more young bodies here in church this morning. This is our Lifeline group who got a little bit more of that experiential knowledge this weekend. They took time out of their schedules to come out and help Grace Lutheran Church. They were not getting into theological conversations with people, they were showing Christian service by offering a free car wash to the Rita Ranch neighborhood. Perhaps take a moment today to thank them for that.

Being a Christian is something that we can be thankful for, and we can celebrate. Being a Christian means we no longer live for ourselves, but for him who died for us. We “**seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.**” We shouldn’t concern ourselves with things that don’t matter, but rather with things that do. Things that matter are telling people how to get to heaven. It means getting to know a person and befriend them, and then show your love to them. We need not worry ourselves about the necessities of life, God will provide them, just as he provided for our necessity of eternal life.

One of the items my dad carried around with him as a missionary in Africa was a portfolio case. It was similar in size to an i-Pad case, in which he kept his documents, notes and checks. One day he left it in the vehicle when he was in town, with a Bible placed on top of it. When he got back, he realized the portfolio case was stolen, but the Bible had been left. The thief took what he thought was valuable – the “bottle of water” as it were. But in reality, he had grabbed something far greater. For inside that portfolio case, my dad had yet another Bible. May we in our lives worry less about our “bottles of water,” and care more for “the Bible.” Amen.