

“No Worries”

There is a difference between the things that we need and the things that we want. I’m guessing most of us have heard this truth before, and it makes sense. We need food. Our bodies don’t survive without it. We don’t necessarily need steak dinners or fancy desserts. We need clothing. We want nice clothes that fit our personal styles. We need shelter. We want a house with all the amenities.

So we understand that we really shouldn’t worry about our wants. By their very definition, our wants, as opposed to our needs, are things that we can do without. It may mean some inconvenience or some disappointment, but in the end, I don’t really need to worry about them. But we do need to worry about our needs, right? After all, we need them.

Hopefully it’s obvious to you already that this is not the case, even if it is what many think. Hopefully you’ve already listened carefully to the words of Jesus in today’s Gospel and have realized that the opposite is true. While we have a tendency to worry about our needs, and a tendency to worry about our wants, Jesus tells us that we have no reason to worry.

As we have for much of the summer, we are again looking at questions that Jesus asked. In today’s sermon text, as you may have also noticed, Jesus asked many questions. We’ll consider several of them as we think about worry. The first one I’d like to consider is this: **“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”** In other words, Jesus is asking, “what good does worrying do for you?” Does worrying about food put more food on the table? Does worrying about clothing fill your closet? Of course not. In fact, worrying may have a detrimental effect on our health and on our life.

So why do we worry so much? To help us think about that, Jesus asks us to consider the birds and the flowers. **“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.”** We have great advantages over the birds. We can plan and store food away. We have an understanding of agriculture so that we can work to grow and harvest the food that we need. Yet people are the ones that worry, while the birds just go on doing what they do as God takes care of them.

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies 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.” Another example from nature teaches the same lesson in regard to our clothing. Even the wild plants in the field are beautifully clothed with flowers, though they don’t work for them. Again, the advantage is ours with the ability to make the clothes that we require.

Jesus’ next question really reveals the heart of the issue: **“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, O you of little faith?”** Why do we worry? We worry because our faith is small and weak. We worry because we don’t think about the lessons that God placed into nature to teach us. We forget that we are more important to God than the flowers and more valuable than the birds.

Yet I suppose some might say, “Well I don’t worry about clothing or food.” And if you would say that, it might well be true. After all, we live in one of the most prosperous nations in the history of the world, and certainly one of the richest and most blessed in the world today. Our concerns are not necessarily about having food so that we don’t starve or clothing so that we are properly covered and protected. Instead, what is probably even worse is that we have so often allowed our wants to become needs in our lives, and then we have worried about our wants. We might not worry about food or clothes, but have we worried about cell phones and big screen televisions and cars and vacations and mortgage payments?

And even though we have many of these luxuries, have we worried about our family budget and thought “How can I possibly make ends meet?” We have God’s promises to never leave us or forsake us. He made

us, and we are his. And yet we worry. So small is our faith. And Jesus says, **“the pagans run after all these things.”** When we worry, we are acting like unbelievers act.

But Jesus also says, **“your heavenly Father knows that you need them.”** That is a truth full of amazing comfort. And the most comforting part is this: **your** heavenly Father. To people who are tempted to worry, and yes, to people who too often fall into that temptation Jesus says, “your heavenly Father.” In other words, people who don’t deserve to be in a relationship with God have a relationship with him. That’s how much he loves us. He loves us even though and even when we don’t deserve it.

He made us his children, he became our heavenly Father, by sending his own Son to be our Savior. Jesus lived a life free of worry. He always trusted in his Father’s care and providence. Even though for much of his life he lived without a home or a steady income, Jesus trusted instead of worrying. Even though he had very few possessions to speak of, he knew that God would always provide what he needed. And Jesus exchanged his perfect trust for our sinful worry. He suffered the torment that we deserved and gave us in its place eternal life and salvation. He made us children of God.

So now this is your heavenly Father, who not only created you, who not only protects and preserves you by giving you all you need, but also who gives you more than you could ever ask for or imagine. And he asks and he invites you to trust in him.

Jesus said it this way: **“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”** Understanding what God has done for us puts everything in perspective. The first priority in our lives, even above food and clothing, is God’s kingdom and his righteousness. God’s kingdom is the way that he rules in the hearts and lives of people by faith, and his righteousness is that righteousness that he has given to us which we then seek to reflect in the way that we live.

Seeking God’s kingdom cannot mean that we are responsible for coming to faith on our own or that we deserve eternal life. As we’ve already said, forgiveness, eternal life and salvation are God’s free gifts to us based only on what Jesus has done. Seeking God’s kingdom is what we do in response to what God has already done for us. It means that we seek after what he wants, both for ourselves and for others. It means seeking the spread of God’s kingdom to those around us, and even to those we have not and may never meet this side of heaven.

So how do we seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness? Well, being here today to listen attentively to God’s Word is one important way. Taking a little extra time on a Sunday morning, or at another time during the week, or perhaps both, to study God’s word with your fellow believers is another way. Reading and meditating on God’s Word at home is still another.

We seek God’s kingdom and righteousness when we let our lights shine so that others might see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven. We seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness when we send our children to Sunday School and to elementary schools and high schools where God’s Word is taught throughout the curriculum. We seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness when we give our generous offerings to support the sharing of God’s Word both here at home and throughout the world. We seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness when we tell our friends and neighbors who don’t know Jesus what he has done for them, and when we invite them to join us for worship or Bible Study or other events at church.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

No, that does not necessarily mean that everything that you want will come your way, but it does mean that God promises to give you all that you need. **“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”** Worrying is taking the issues of tomorrow and making them a problem today. We have enough issues to deal with today, and we have enough opportunities to seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness before us from day to day. Worrying does us no good, but God’s kingdom and his righteousness is precisely what we and the rest of the world really need.

Sermon Text: Matthew 6:25–34 (NIV84)

²⁵ “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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶ 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? ²⁷ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ 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, O you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.