

Do Not Worry????

Luke 12: 22-34

He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do such a small thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, 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. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not keep seeking what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰ For it is the nations of the world that seek all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

How many of you have a bird feeder? All the variety of winged creatures floating in and out for a meal. The relentless squirrels who acrobatically try to get their slice of the pie. It is entertaining to watch what happens at the bird feeder, and some might even say contemplative! It’s no wonder Jesus brings up birds or in Luke “ravens,” which is a biblical reference to when God uses ravens to feed Elijah when he is hungry during a drought. Jesus says, “Do not worry.” And his advice is simple enough: when we wonder if God cares about our lives, just look to the birds and the flowers and remember if God cares and provides for them, how much more does God care and provide for us.

Well, thanks for the advice, Jesus, but I’m pretty sure it’s not that simple. “Do not worry!?” Easy for him to say! He never had to deal with a 24/7 news cycle. I’m pretty sure the ice caps weren’t melting this quickly. Not to mention, he never had any children! And there was no such thing as social media or Minecraft. Not worry!? Isn’t that something we hear from privileged people who don’t really know what it’s like to struggle? How dare anyone tell the mothers holding their starving children in Gaza, not to worry. Or the people whose health care is on the chopping block, don’t worry. Or the undocumented who get snatched on their way to court cases. Every day we are inundated with things to worry about. So at the outset when Jesus tells us not to worry, I’m pretty sure it’s not that simple. Because if it were, we would do it.

But step back and listen to what Jesus is saying in context. You see, just before he tells us not to worry, he tells a parable. It’s about a farmer who gets an abundant crop on year. Rather than spreading the good fortune, he hoards it by building bigger barns to hold all the grain in case there is a drought. He believes he is set for many years to eat, drink, and be merry, and as a result

will be able to relax without worries. I mean, he's not wrong. Most of us make up that the more we have stored away the more we can relax, right? Except, that night he dies. He has shaped his life around making a future for himself, but in the process he lost the present blessing. And a blessing can only remain a blessing if we are willing to share it. So after Jesus tells the story he tells his disciples not to worry about what they eat or drink, or wear. To look to creation as to understand how God's system of blessings operates, and then Jesus asks them a pointed question: Can anyone by worrying add any time to their life?

So how would we answer? Probably, "No, but..." Can anyone name a moment when our anxiety about the future was life giving? Many nights, my anxiety wakes me up between 3am and 4am as my brain starts to go through the worry list, which is often the to-do-list. During Covid I had to take medication to help me. If you're anything like me when the anxiety hits, it doesn't add anything positive or life giving. It doesn't give me better focus, or put me in a better mood. In fact, it usually, if not always, does the opposite. The same might be true of us as a church. Sure, worrying about the future has its moments, but if it becomes the pattern it's going to rob us of life rather than bring it. I mean, how many times have we heard about worries stunting churches from actually doing kingdom things? To be clear Jesus isn't telling us to sacrifice our needs. In the parable he mentions a farmer who builds bigger silos, but here he says, "We don't need a silo, all we need are purses which holds just enough for today." Our daily bread.

So what do we need for today? Over the last two and a half weeks, since Marilyn died unexpectedly and tragically, our hearts have been heavy. She was a treasure and I find myself often wondering what she would say or do as a pastor in this same situation. And I discovered this week when visiting Hedge at their home, that there is a birdfeeder in their front yard. Yellow canaries, cardinals, blue jays, sparrows feasting without worry about tomorrow. I learned Marilyn would sit by the window in the dining room, rocking in her grandmother's rocking chair and just watch them. Then I recalled that before she died she wanted us to do a sort of intergenerational activity—of making a bunch of bird houses or buying kits we could paint with rainbow flag colors. So thought we could hang them outside of our sanctuary windows where we could watch them play. We could be present without worry, and maybe even be reminded that we belong to a God who delights in creation and takes pleasure in providing us with what we need for the moment—including this one, as difficult as it has been.

So let's make Marilyn's birdhouse idea happen. Not only in her honor, but also for those times when we might feel overwhelmed, or anxious about the future. Then we can look to the birds, take a deep cleansing breath and relax into the truth of who we really are—a beloved blessing who are free to share, because we trust there is enough for today. Amen.