

Sermon – Matthew 6:25-33
David R. Lyle
Grace Lutheran Church
Thanksgiving – Year B
28 November 2024

“Do Not Worry”

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace be unto you and peace in the name God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. How many of you have a turkey in the oven right now? If so, how many of you are a little distracted, worrying that all is well with the bird in the oven? How many of you are hosting a big gathering today, worrying that you have everything prepared for a perfect holiday celebration? How many of you are going to someone else’s home for dinner, worrying whether your green bean casserole or your deviled eggs will measure up? Or perhaps you’re just worried by the day itself and all that it presents. Perhaps you’re worried because you’d love to be spending the day with others but find yourself alone. Or, perhaps, because you *will* be spending the day with others when you’d rather be alone. Such is the human capacity for worry that even a day set aside for gratitude can lead us in the opposite direction. I don’t even blame you. If I had a bird baking right now, I’d be distracted, too.
2. Jesus invites us to consider the birds today, although he’s not talking about turkeys. As we all know from *WKRP in Cincinnati*, turkeys were never meant to be birds of the air, no matter what station manager Arthur Carlson believed when the great Thanksgiving turkey drop was planned. Sparrows and robins are more likely to be on the Savior’s mind here. And in considering such birds, and the lilies of the field, too, Jesus invites us to set aside our worries, particularly our worries for ourselves, our own lives, what we will eat and what we will wear. Are you not of more value than birds and

flowers? If your heavenly Father cares for them, in spite of the fact that they do not toil for what they receive, will not God provide for you?

3. Jesus' words cut through our worry with an invitation to gratitude and a reminder that our God provides abundantly. But we dare not reduce this to a bromide or imagine it's nothing more than a snappy Bobby McFerrin tune. For one thing, for any of you who live with an anxiety disorder, Jesus isn't telling you to just talk yourself into a different state of mental health. Neither is Jesus saying that there is nothing worth worrying about. In the verse immediately following today's Gospel reading, Jesus says this: "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." Jesus, born into this world of sin and brokenness to bring us life and salvation, is nothing if not aware of all that is not right with the world. We can consider the birds all we want, but it's not like bad things don't happen to them, too. And the grass of the field, so lush and green one day, is bound for the fire, as Jesus says himself. In our world of injustice, the problem even people who do toil with all their might find that they don't have enough. Should they just pretend everything is okay?
4. Jesus knows that there is plenty of trouble to go around but invites us all the same not to worry. Jesus's words to us today do at least two things. First, they call us out of our day-to-day situations and give us a resurrection perspective. Seek first the Kingdom of God, Jesus says, from which comes all that you need. Life, salvation, forgiveness, forever. On the other side of every today's trouble is the joy of life with God forever. None of today's troubles, no matter how desperate or dire, get the last word. The promises of the gospel, however, are never just pumpkin pie in the sky. If today's troubles are enough for today, then that's where Jesus is inviting us to focus our energy. Today. Worry so often leads us to fret about the future, placing us in a state of paralysis, for who can solve the world's problems all at once? No, Jesus calls us into this moment, this day, to will and to work for our neighbors, for are

they not precious in God's sight, even more than robins and lilies? And a funny thing happens when we stop worrying about ourselves, what we will eat and what we will wear. We can start focusing on making sure that our neighbors have enough to eat and enough to wear, not to mention enough justice, mercy, opportunity, and love. Worry turns us inward. Jesus opens us up to one another, to do the hard work for one another that can only be fueled by God's abundance, fed by our faith in the living God who provides more than enough daily bread for all.

5. Last night, Erika and I kicked off our holiday season by attending Mariah Carey's Christmas concert, of all things. Was it a bit goofy? Perhaps. Did I buy a t-shirt? No comment. Did we somehow manage to meet Rod Blagojevich at dinner before the show? It was an odd night. Of course, the show ended with the hit song, "All I Want for Christmas is You." It is certainly a slice of saccharine seasonal silliness, but it's also as good reminder as any that the best things in life aren't things, that most of us don't need more stuff, and that we are made to be in relationship with one another. So, whatever shape your Thanksgiving celebrations take today, give thanks that what God wants is to be with you, to care for you; that the good gifts of today come from God's own hand, given to you that you would be fed and nourished for the sake of others. Set aside worry, making room for both gratitude and the real work that needs to be done. Whatever awaits you on your table today, come first to the Lord's table, feasting again on the gifts of Christ, in whose dying and rising you have all that you most truly need. Amen.

And now may that peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.