

INI - SDG

8th Sunday a. Epiphany

February 27, 2011

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Hecla, SD

Text: Matthew 6:24-34 *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither so nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentile seeks. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."*

Theme: "DON'T WORRY!"

- Look at the birds
- Consider the lilies
- Seek the Kingdom

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

Worry, worry, worry. Who here is not familiar with worrying? We worry about our health, we worry about our finances, we worry about our family, we worry, worry, worry. But I would venture to guess that there is at least one person here today that has never worried about a thing. As I was preparing for today's service it crossed my mind that babies are never worried. It isn't until later in life that they begin to worry about things. Why is it, that as babies none of us worried about anything? It is because we had parents that took care of all of our needs and we TRUSTED them to continue to do the same.

Why then do we begin to worry as we grow older? Well there are a couple of reasons that come to mind. We might worry because we are control freaks. We like to be able to control everything in our lives and the lives of those around us. We worry because so often the future seems uncertain and out of our control. Another reason we

worry is because somewhere along the line, that trust we had as a baby was betrayed. Maybe it was an accident that your parents forgot to do something they promised, but that once golden trust that existed between parent and child was compromised by doubt. Doubt which then leads to worry. The worry that they will be let down again.

So if people worry because they are control freaks and people worry because somewhere along the line their trust has betrayed, why then does the Christian worry? Do we worry because we think God is going to do the WRONG thing in the future? Do we worry because God has EVER betrayed our trust and shown that He cannot be trusted? We begin to see why Jesus urges us to have a childlike faith. One which simply takes God at His Word and trusts Him as a baby trusts his parents.

Knowing that worrying was a problem for His disciples, Jesus addresses the topic during His Sermon on the Mount. In a section of Scripture that will be very familiar to us, Jesus tells us that as children of the heavenly Father, it really is ridiculous that we should be worried about anything. To help teach us not to worry, He gives us two examples of God's providence in nature - the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Let us look to the lilies and consider the birds, as we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. "Don't worry!" Jesus says.

May God the Holy Spirit work in us a steadfast trust in our heavenly Father, that we do away with this thing called worry. Amen.

LOOK AT THE BIRDS

"Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" A cubit is a measurement that was frequently used in the days of the Scriptures. A cubit was about 18 inches, the average length from a man's fingertip to his elbow. In the days before tape measures, you can imagine how convenient it would have been for a man to simply use his forearm as a measuring stick in his building projects. As Jesus addresses the topic of worry, He makes the dramatic point that worrying does not add anything to our life. Worrying about when you will die will not make you live longer. Worrying about your retirement will not add money to your bank account. We cannot add anything to our lives by worrying. If anything, psychologists suggest that worrying can actually shorten our life-span as anxiety stresses out our bodies and causes them to wear out faster. Worrying adds nothing to our lives.

To teach us about how foolish it is for the believer to worry, Jesus directs our attention to the birds of the air. This would have been an especially powerful teaching tool as Jesus delivered this sermon outdoors on a mountain side. No doubt He pointed to the birds flying around as He said, ***"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"*** Jesus expects a yes answer from His question. Of course the believer is more valuable to God than the birds of the air. Think of all that God has done for us! Did He give His own beloved Son into death to save the birds? No! His Son died to save us! Did God send His Holy Spirit into the hearts of the bird to make them His children? No! He sent His Spirit into our hearts to adopt us as His children. We are of more value to God than the birds of the air.

And yet, what does God do for those birds of the air? They don't sow seed every spring, reap it every fall, and put store it in their grain bins until the market price is right. Yet God feeds them. The Creator provides for His creatures. And the birds don't worry that God is not going to provide them with their daily bread.

That's not to say the birds are lazy, sitting around with their mouths open, waiting for God to feed them. No they are busy, industrious creatures. They are very active. We shouldn't get the impression that Jesus is here urging us to be inactive either. Paul writes to the Thessalonians, ***"If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. . . .we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread."*** (2 Thess. 3:10, 12)

By directing us to look at the birds, Jesus is teaching us not to worry about what lies in the future for our lives, but to trust God like the birds do, to provide for our daily bread. We are much more valuable to God than the birds of the air. Remember how Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread in the Lord's Prayer? "Give us THIS DAY our daily bread." Jesus teaches us only pray for the needs of this day.

Note especially how Jesus refers to God in verse 26. ***"YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER."*** Jesus wants us to think of Him as our Father and we are His children. A Father loves His children. A Father cares for His children. A Father provides for His children. A Father listens to His children. When God brought us to faith in Jesus, He adopted us as His children. We are a part of His family. He will provide for our daily bread, just as He feeds the birds of the air. We need not worry about that!

CONSIDER THE LILIES

What about our bodies? What's going to happen to our bodies in the coming days, weeks, and years? It seems that ever other day there is a new warning about a new disease that could kill us. One year it was SARS, then it was Asian Bird Flu, the next year it was the West Nile Virus, last year it was the Pig Flu. Now these are real diseases and they may really kill us. But will worrying change any of that? Will worrying about prevent us from getting ill?

When it comes to worrying about the clothing and care of our bodies, Jesus would have us consider the lilies of the field. These are the beautiful flowers that paint the landscape. Nobody planted those flowers. They are a part of God's beautiful imagination and creation. ***"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."*** Lilies don't have to toil or work hard at looking beautiful - they just are. Lilies don't have to get out their sowing machine and buy expensive thread to get beautiful colored pedals. They are beautiful because that is the way God made them. Not even Solomon, who was well know to have beautiful clothing and a beautiful palace, not even Solomon when he looked his best, looked as beautiful as the lilies of the field.

The point for us about the lilies of the field? ***"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"*** What happens if you have a beautiful purple flower growing in the middle of your hayfield? Do you stop your tractor, get out, grab a shovel,

and transplant the soil and flower to preserve it's beauty? No. You mow it over without giving it a second thought. Such is the nature of wild flowers that grow in the grassy fields. As beautiful as they are, they are done away with, without a thought. And yet, God clothes the grass of the field in such a beautiful way! Now if God is going to do that for the grass of the field, isn't He going to take care of our bodily needs? Of course He is! Consider the lilies of the field and don't worry, God will supply for all the bodily needs of His valuable children!

SEEK THE KINGDOM

Jesus isn't here suggesting that we should be fatalist about our bodies and our lives. A fatalist is someone that throws up their hands and says, "Well there's nothing I can do about this or that, so why even try?" Nor is Jesus suggesting laziness, that we should not work by the sweat of our brow to get our daily bread. Not at all. At the end of verse 30, Jesus gets at the heart of the problem, doesn't He. ***"O you of little faith."*** It's not that we don't have faith at all in God and that causes us to worry. Jesus delivered His Sermon on the Mount to His disciples. What Jesus is addressing here is our littleness of faith. It is littleness of faith that causes us to worry, isn't it. It is littleness of faith that fails to trust that God who created us, God who saves us, will also provide for us day by day.

Rather than suffering from littleness of faith, where does Jesus direct us? ***"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."*** Rather than being consumed with the mammon of this world, which leads to worrying, Jesus directs us to something that should come first - the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

What do we find when we seek the kingdom of God? We find a God who loved us so much, that He took care of our biggest problem. He removed our debt of sin forever! We find a God who loved us so much, that He sacrificed His own beloved Son to save us. We find a God that wants us to live with Him eternally so much so, that He had His Son suffer hell in our place. When we seek the kingdom of God we find that God has taken care of our biggest problem, our eternal problem. We also find His righteousness. His righteousness that He credits us with through faith in Jesus. His righteousness that He robes us in.

Now, what makes us think that this same God who loved us and adopted us as His children, is simply going to throw us out in the street and tell us, "Good luck. I hope you survive this life!" How foolish of us to worry! What littleness of faith we have for failing to trust that our heavenly Father will not provide for us in the days to come! The LORD will provide for His children. He has to. He has promised to. ***"Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."*** Praise be to our Triune God who has and ever continues to provide for all of our needs! Amen.