

Evening Worship
"Birds of the Air"
Matthew 6:25-34
September 17, 2023
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Tonight we are going to pretty much dive right into the scripture. This is part of the Sermon on the Mount which starts in Matthew 5. "Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them" (Matthew 5:1-2). It concludes at the end of chapter 7, "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (Matthew 7:28-29). Jesus starts off the sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes, and we see a lot of little vignettes of his teachings that Jesus shares with the people. Tonight we are going to look at one of these passages from Matthew 6:25-34.

Matthew 6:25-34

"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? 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 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers 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—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.

How many of you ever worry about things? I know I do. I can't tell you how many sleepless nights I had when I first got here. I came in the middle of Covid. How I dreaded getting those phone calls that someone was exposed. And then I had to worry about sending out the emails to everyone that may have been infected. I remember the sleepless nights where something ultimately went wrong and I couldn't fall asleep as I tried to figure out what to do. Or when I finally did fall asleep, I would wake up at like 2am and wouldn't fall back asleep because my mind was racing. I don't know how many sermons I wrote in those early hours of the morning. We all tend to be anxious from time to time.

And we worry about different things. Some of those worries are more realistic than others. But Jesus tells us not to be worried. I know that's easier said than done. So Jesus gives us some examples, showing us why we should not worry. "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?" (6:26). God created this world and this world does a pretty good job of taking care of itself. (I mean, it would if we would stop messing it up so much.) God cares for all that was created. This world has survived for thousands of years. So if God cares for all of this world and all of the creatures in this world, don't you think that God would care for us as well?

I am fascinated by birds. I like to take pictures of them. But have you ever watched them fly? Some of the bigger birds tend to soar. They flap a few times and get to the height they want and then they just open up their wings and they glide. They glide over and over and over again hardly flapping their wings. The smaller birds seem terrifying to me. They flap and flap their wings incredibly hard, then they pull their wings in and they seem to be suspended in mid air. And then they drop. And then all of a sudden they flap their wings again and gain some altitude, just to pull their wings in, float, then drop again.

It is amazing how the various birds fly. The big ones confident in themselves, yet trusting in the air that surrounds them. Invisible hands holding them suspended in the air as they soar over this wonderful world. The smaller birds they trust that they will be able to respond and stop their fall. They fall, yet never too far that they cannot recover.

You know we all have tough days. And some times we feel like those little birds. We flap and flap and we feel like we have things under control. And then we tuck in our wings and we seem fine at first. And then we plummet. We fall and we fall, until we flap our wings once again. But Jesus tells us that God will care for us, just like God cares for those little birds. God provides for those birds - birds who do not store up food for themselves. And yet they are able to eat and are fed. So don't you think God will care for us just as much (if not more) seeing that we are more valuable than a bird?

And to continue to put things into perspective, Jesus talks to us about our clothes. We put a lot of stock in what we look like. Everywhere we look we see people more concerned about their appearance than many other aspects of life. There are people now that claim to be "influencers," who take it upon themselves to tell everyone else what they should wear, find important, and even just what we should like. And yet look at the flowers of the field. Look at their beauty, the vibrant colors, their fragrant smell. God created all of these beautiful things. And yet even the most beautiful things we can create do not hold a candle to what God created. Even our weeds can be beautiful, and yet we pull them out and mow them down. And we throw the trimmings of God's beautiful world into the trash or onto the fire pile. If God takes the time to create such beauty that is gone in just a few moments, don't you think God will provide for us in much the same way?

We don't often allow ourselves to rely on God. Those little birds always start flapping again before they drop too far. We flap our wings as soon as we feel ourselves start to fall. And we work hard and hard until we get ourselves back up again. But God is always there for us. And since we should trust in God for these things, Jesus tells us that there are more important things to focus on. But what is more important than the basic necessities of life? What is more important than clothing yourself and putting food on the table? Jesus tells us, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (6:33).

Jesus not only tells us to stop worrying, he tells us to replace our worry with something else. Replace our worry with concerns for God's kingdom. Focus on what God wants for us, for those around us, and the world in which we live. Because when we seek after what God wants, everything else falls in line. God doesn't want us to fail when God has plans for us. God wants us to accomplish our tasks for the Kingdom. And so when we follow what God wants for us, everything else tends to fall into place. That's why Jesus said "And all these things will be given to you as well."

And some of the ways we can replace worry, is by doing things that help us focus more on God. Things such as studying scripture, meditation and prayer, and helping and serving others. All of these things help us focus on God's kingdom of righteousness.

We sometimes worry about silly things. For example: my dog hates bad weather. About 15 minutes before it starts raining, he starts pacing around the house. He starts to get so anxious that his teeth starts chattering so loud you can hear it across the room. So we take him out to do his business and then we head inside before the rain starts. But the whole time it rains he paces around the house panting because of how worried he is. But in reality he has nothing to worry about because he has a safe dry place to live. And we lay out blankets all over the house for him to lay on and be comfortable. But yet he worries. Even though he has nothing to worry about.

The same goes for us. Sometimes we worry about the necessities of life, what we will eat, what we will wear, or where we live. Sometimes we worry about things we cannot control. Or we worry about problems that may come up - and then again they may not. But again Jesus tells us not to worry, and frankly why should we? God's love and care has been proven throughout all creation. We see the evidence of it in this world and even in our own lives. We may not always see God at work in our lives at first. But more often than not, when we look back over the course of our lives, we see exactly where God has been. And we see how God provided for us and helped us through those difficult times.

I know for me, looking back over my own life, there were times where I could not figure out how things were going to work out. Those stressful anxieties of what my future may hold. Those sleepless nights of worrying. And looking back I see how God took care of everything on my behalf. And by keeping my head down and taking each situation as they came, God helped me through. As Jesus said at the end of this scripture, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

And trust me, I am not saying we should not be prepared for what is coming. I'm not saying we should not make arrangements for the future. But there is a big difference between preparing and worrying. Worrying gets you nowhere. But we can take comfort in the fact that Jesus loves us. Jesus promised that he would never leave us. And sent his spirit to reside within us and walk through life with us - to guide us and protect us. And so sometimes we need to let go of our anxiety and our worry and simply trust that God will help us through every situation we face. I saw something online this week that said, "The trees are about to show us how lovely it is to let things go." And worry and anxiety are some of the things we need to let go. So let us cast our cares upon Jesus and let us soar on the wings that God gave us when we were created.