

Do Not Worry

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, [i] or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and vet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? (4) 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God^[] and his mighteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today. (Matthew 6: 25-34)

Life happens. In the midst of our human experience, as we pass from day to day and encounter people, events, deadlines, concerns, difficulties, problems, the unexpected, the expected, inabilities, illness, fear and all the other "realities" which cause us to lie awake at night with wandering minds, we recognize that anxiety is a part of life we can't overcome. Life creates stress. We worry for ourselves, for our family and loved ones, for our community, for our church, for our nation and for our world. We worry about things we know and about things we don't know. We worry about things we can control and about things we can't control. We worry about the consequences of past events and we worry about what tomorrow might bring. We even, from time to time, worry about worrying. Anxiety is a part of human life. Some may be better at coping with it than others, but we all face angst and doubt from time to time.

How, then, can we fulfill the direction Jesus gives us not to worry? His beautiful prose invites us to a place we all would like to enter, free from worry and fear. Yet, the mail comes with more bills, the kids (or parents) are having health issues, we watch the news and despair about what we hear, we obsess about the upcoming doctor's appointment, we compare the church today with the church we grew up in and we feel the anxiety rise within. Where is life leading me? What is going to happen next? How can I feel safe and free from worry?

Jesus was sharing this message with real people like you and me, who worked hard each day and who didn't always know what tomorrow might bring. Often, they felt removed from God's love, almost as if God had forgotten about them. Our worries and anxiety about many things come from a similar place. When we feel unable to be in control of events, as if we were tossed about by things beyond our fashioning, we also feel removed from God's caring hand. Yet, Jesus is very frank in his assessment. God loves creation, and cares for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, providing for their needs. But where is this care when our mortgage comes due, or we face the uncertainty of medical exams? The care comes in the form of promises made to us in the waters of Baptism. I know I talk often about the promises spoken over our lives in Baptism, but I do so because I believe that they are fundamental for our faith. God doesn't promise us an easy life, or that God will take every distasteful event/possibility and remove it from our lives. What God does promise, however, is that God's care and love and life will be with us every step of the way, and that in the promise given to us in Baptism, God will keep us close forever. Nothing will be able to get between us and the fullness of love and life that God gives us through Jesus.

Life happens. Life happens because God has caused it to happen. The one who created you to be the unique person you are is the one who will walk with you every step of the way in this wonderful journey. I wish I could say to you, "Don't worry," and you could stop worrying. But what I can share is the that in Christ's pronouncement of the kingdom God's love becomes real. This love is more powerful than anything else, even death. And, as St. Paul reminds us, if this love is for us, what could be against us?

Pastor Jay

2