

²² Then he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, don’t worry about your life, what you will eat; or about the body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They don’t sow or reap; they don’t have a storeroom or a barn; yet God feeds them. Aren’t you worth much more than the birds? ²⁵ Can any of you add one moment to his life span[Ⓜ] by worrying? ²⁶ If then you’re not able to do even a little thing, why worry about the rest?”

²⁷ “Consider how the wildflowers grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. ²⁸ If that’s how God clothes the grass, which is in the field today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will he do for you—you of little faith? ²⁹ Don’t strive for what you should eat and what you should drink, and don’t be anxious. ³⁰ For the Gentile world eagerly seeks all these things, and your Father knows that you need them.

³¹ “But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. ³² Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won’t grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Consider the Ravens

Researches in California were puzzled. They had found over 200 dead crows and there was concern that they may have died from Avian Flu. An expert examined the remains of the crows and, to everyone’s relief, confirmed that it was not the bird flu. The cause of death was vehicular collision. Upon examining the bird’s beaks and claws they were able to determine that 98% of the crows had been killed by an impact with trucks, while only 2% were killed by an impact with a car. Experts were puzzled. What was the cause for the disproportionate percentage of truck kills verses car kills? It was because while crows are adept at warning, “Caw, caw,” they are not so well equipped to say, “Truck, truck.”

That’s about all I knew about birds. There are black birds and they are crows. Then there are blue birds and those are blue birds. But I have never, not even once, “Consider the ravens.” But usually I jump to Jesus’ first command and focus on that “*Don’t be afraid.*” But how many of us haven’t missed out on the “why?” portion of this lesson. Jesus tells us why we need not be afraid. Consider means to immerse yourself in, to ponder.

But it does no good for us to tell people, “Don’t be afraid.” We can’t console anyone at a funeral with, “Cheer up.” When we are afraid, when we are terrified, when you or a loved one is having a panic attack you don’t need to tell them, “I’m going to need you to calm down. Don’t be afraid.” Jesus knows that we are anxious, worried, and concerned and so he calls us to bird watching and gardening. Jesus points to an observation in nature, natural knowledge, in order to illustrate the revealed knowledge of God. The ravens and lilies tell us about our gracious and merciful God. So when you tell people, “Don’t be afraid,” you can tell them why they have no need to be afraid. For if God takes care of the less important and even trivial things of this world, will he not also take care of you? Consider the ravens but first let’s consider the context.

Who is Jesus talking to? Luke 12 starts with “*a crowd of many thousands came together, so that they were trampling on one another.*” Since then Jesus has addressed those who are afraid, those filled with fear and anxiety. Then someone from the crowd called out, “*Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.*” Jesus then told a parable in which he called such a person who depended on wealth a fool. You can’t find comfort in the things of this world be it money or pantry. Last week it was about a bumper crops and riches. This week it’s about the basic necessities of life. Our lesson starts with, “*Then he said to his disciples.*”

The group just got smaller. Jesus is speaking specifically to those who believe in him. And he says, “*Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat; or about the body, what you will wear. For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens.*” Life is more than things. Life is found in more than food and clothing but those are the basic necessities of life. Without shelter one can die from exposure in a few hours. Without food one will die after a few weeks. We need these things and Jesus knows that we need them. But life is more than just things. “*Man does not live on bread alone...*”

But we worry about things. The disciples are worried about things. That’s why Jesus tells them, “Don’t be worrying.” It’s a present imperative a command to not do what they are currently doing and then to continue not doing it. They are worried and concerned about many things.

We are too. Maybe it’s not the luxuries of life and we’re not building bigger barns, but maybe it is the necessities. We pray for health, wealth, and happiness but sometimes we don’t even have our health. We have much to worry about. The world considers food and clothing to be the big things in life. The world is anxious about survival and indifferent to the kingdom.

The world looks at our guilt and shame and sees them as minor problems, just get over it. They don't see hell, death, and separation from God as of any big concern. There is still time for that later.

In fact many in the church are anxious too. During hard times some have said, "When I get things sorted out... I'll get back to church." But that's not how God works. Jesus said, "*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and these things will be added to you as well.*" And yet we're still anxious. Our sinful nature is still alive and well. We think that the addition of things will finally lead to less stress. But the more things we have means we have more things to stress about. The more we have the more we are worried about losing. The more we have the more we are tempted to rely on things rather than trust in God.

How is that working out for us? It's as if Doctor Jesus visits us in the office over our stress and asks, "Have you tried to stress about it more?" *Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying?* ²⁶ *If then you're not able to do even a little thing, why worry about the rest?"* With our worry what have we accomplished? You can't add a foot to your life. But God can and has done something to set us at peace.

God wants us to walk through this world knowing that it is our Father's kingdom. We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things. That means we should only be afraid of those things that God has told us to be afraid of. "*But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you.* Don't treat this as if it were something for us to accomplish by our seeking. ³² *Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom.*

It's his good pleasure. This is what God our Father loves to do. Think of a Father taking his family out for ice-cream. The kids jump and dance in front of the display, looking over all of the flavors. I love seeing the joy on their faces. This is what God wants to do, provide for you, give you the kingdom. But sinners aren't always so certain. When Adam and Eve fell into sin they were anxious. They assumed God had become their enemy. They hid from him and thought they had a reason to be afraid of him. They didn't know him as a loving and forgiving God. They were in a sinful statue of unbelief. They could only see God as one who would harm them.

It wasn't until after God called to them with his word, reassured them with his promise, that they could trust him. Not every day will be like the ice-cream store. We will rightly be afraid but this isn't about fear. It's about faith. Our faith is in a God who doesn't forget about us. He doesn't walk away from us. He isn't shaken by the wrong we've done. We come before him as dearly loved children come to their father. Instead of running away from home we should turn to him exactly when we've let him down.

We still haven't considered those ravens. Ravens were the considered the lowest in the animal kingdom. They're unclean. They're not pretty little song birds. They're flying garbage disposals, scavengers feeding on the flesh of the dead, which is why in our language ravens have given us a word that describes someone so hungry he will eat anything: ravenous. No self-respecting Jew would eat a raven and neither would we. Elijah however was fed by them in 1 Kings 17. They brought him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening. Ravens first appear on the pages of Scripture in Genesis 8, Noah sent out a raven to look for land. Scripture makes no mention of the raven returning but only "*going back and forth until the earth had dried up.*"

Many considered them worthless birds. They don't sow or harvest. They don't pack away for the winter. There are no bigger barns or storehouses for them to build. They are considered lazy birds and yet God feeds them. If God takes care of the ravens and he does... how much more won't he take care of you? If God clothes these lilies... how much more true is it that he will clothe you? Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater. If he will take care of an unclean eater of the flesh of the dead, if God adorns the grass of the field which is here one day and thrown into the fire the next what about you?

How much more important are you than the birds? You are the crown of his creation. You are the apple of his eye. You are the one he redeemed from death through the gift of his son. You are one for whom Christ died. God knows you. He made you. He knit you together while you were still in your mother's womb. He created you. He cares for you. Every moment of your existence is in God's hands. He's redeemed you. He's taken care of our greatest need. We have peace with God.

Now he calls us to live as his children in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. That might mean you will sell your possessions and give to the poor. That might also mean that you continue to care for the poor while keeping what you have. The point is to not let anything stand in your way of trusting in God to

Luke 12:22-34

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August 7, 2022

provide. Jesus also does not tell us to, "Sell all that you have, and give everything to the poor." That command was reserved for the rich young man who came to Jesus thinking he had fulfilled the law.

But you, consider the ravens. Consider the lilies. The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream telling him to ask for anything but he did not ask for long life or riches but an understanding heart. (1 Kings 3). He sought first the Kingdom of God and the Lord gave him also what he did not ask for. That doesn't mean we should quit our jobs and live as hermits and monks. God can and does support us through work and yet he expects us to trust him to provide. So work and let God worry about the rest.

Place your treasure in heaven and there no one and nothing can take them from you. God will provide the rest as well sustain you on your journey from earth to heaven. Along the way the little flock is given eternal treasures through Christ, the Good Shepherd who washes his flock in baptism, and feeds his sheep with the Passover Lamb, his body and blood. Along the way he guides us with his Word.

There is nothing you need fear. I'm not saying, "You should cancel your insurance. Run with scissors around the pool and then jump in within half hour of eating food." We don't need to be worried because our God is good. He cares for the little things, he also cares for you. Amen.