

LUKE 12:22–34. (EHV)

Jesus said to his disciples, “For that reason I tell you, stop worrying about your life, about what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Certainly life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap; they have no warehouse or barn; and yet God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than birds! And who of you by worrying can add a single moment to his lifespan? Since you are not able to do this little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was dressed like one of these. If this is how God clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith? Do not constantly chase after what you will eat or what you will drink. Do not be worried about it. To be sure, the nations of the world chase after all of these things, but your Father knows that you need them. Instead, continue to seek the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not become old, a treasure in the heavens that will not fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Worry. It’s something that has affected all of us, and persistently plagues some of us. Are we going to get enough rain? Are this year’s crops going to succeed? How am I going to pay next month’s bills? Are prices going to continue to go up? How am I going to put food on my family’s table and clothes on their backs? Am I going to pass my exams and get my degree? Even if I do, did I even choose the right course of study? How am I going to get all my work done this week? Is my injured or sick father or mother, son or daughter, going to be okay? What is the doctor going to find on my scan?

It doesn’t matter whether you’re young or old, rich or poor, male or female, strong or weak, living in the city or in the country. We all are prone to worry.

What’s the remedy for worry, without Jesus? Do you just quote the Bobby McFerrin song, “Don’t Worry, Be Happy,” “In every life we have some trouble, but when you worry, you make it double. Don’t worry, be happy”? Do you quote the motivational speaker who said, “Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow; it only saps today of its joy”? Or Thomas Jefferson who said, “How much pain they have cost us—the evils which have never happened”? Those quotes all have the ring of truth, don’t they? And yet they’re not much help come fall in a year of drought, or when your loved one is being rushed to the emergency room.

Thank goodness we don’t need to come up with remedies for worry without Jesus. We have Jesus. Today Jesus teaches us and enables us to **fight fear with faith.**

1.

As we heard last week, Jesus has just told us to be on our guard against all greed. He told us not to make life all about accumulating stuff, not to focus on storing up treasures for ourselves, but to be rich toward God. But he doesn’t just tell us to do that and then leave us unequipped to do it. No, he then tells his disciples, tells you and me, “For that reason I tell you,

stop worrying about your life, about what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Certainly life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.”

Jesus doesn't specifically address all our fears and worries here, but he does address our most common ones—food and clothing. In fact, by focusing on these two common worries, he's sort of narrowing down our worries as he addresses them. He's sort of saying two things at once. First he's saying, “Don't worry about the rain. Don't worry about the economy. Don't worry about your studies and your exams. Don't worry about sickness. If you're going to worry about something, worry about the more important things behind those less important things. Really, when you're worried about the rainfall and the economy and your studies and your job or career and your health, you're worried about providing food and clothing and shelter for yourself and your family. So worry about those things, not those other things.”

Then, secondly, he's saying, “And stop worrying about those more important things too. After all, life is more than just food, and the body is more than just clothing.” Jesus is reminding us that making your life continue isn't just a matter of proper diet, exercise, rest, medicine, essential oils, protection from the elements, and clothing yourself in high-quality and comfortable materials. It's basically the same thing he told the devil when he said, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

This is why Jesus said a blessing before meals and taught us to do the same. This is why we pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed.” We are acknowledging that food by itself, with its vitamins, minerals, and other nutritional components, isn't what keeps us alive. God does. God must add his blessing to the food in order for it to do us any good. God must also add his blessing to our exercise, rest, medicine, shelter, and clothing in order for it to benefit us and improve and prolong our lives. Life is more than just food, and the body is more than just clothing. Our life and body is in the hands of God.

In other words, all the earthly things you are afraid about and are prone to worry about are ultimately not in your hands. They are out of your control. They are in the control of heaven. So it doesn't pay to worry about them.

2.

But that all by itself, though it's important, is no better than the sage advice from worldly gurus that I quoted before. In fact, we might prefer that those things be in our control even if it causes us more stress, because at least we are concerned about ourselves and will look out for ourselves. If God is the one ultimately in control, how do we know that he cares about us? How do we know that he will look out for us?

Here is where Jesus gives us his simple and brilliant window sermon, or walking sermon. That is, he gives us a sermon that we can remember every time we look out the window or go for a walk. He starts it this way: “Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap; they have no warehouse or barn; and yet God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than birds!”

Look at the birds. In Matthew, Jesus tells us to look at all the birds, but here Jesus tells us to look particularly at one of the least popular—the ravens. Ravens are a type of crow, and who likes crows?

But that's exactly Jesus's point. Very few people like them. In addition, they do not plant seeds or reap harvests, like we do. They have no warehouse or pantry or barn, like we do. Yet

God feeds them. And how he feeds them! Crows in Japan have been documented as adapting to city life in some pretty creative ways. They will take a nut—something they can't normally eat—then perch on a branch or wire above a busy street, drop the nut in the street near the side of an intersection, wait until a car runs it over, then wait until the light turns red and traffic stops, then go down and eat the contents. *Crows* do that. Who gave them their intelligence? God did. Who provides the nuts? God does.

And what about all the other birds? They don't have gardens, pantries, refrigerators, or barns either, yet, as Martin Luther reminds us, they start each day by perching on a branch and singing, before they even know where they're going to find the day's meal.

Now don't miss this: You, as a human being, are much more valuable to God than the birds are!

Jesus continues: "Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was dressed like one of these. If this is how God clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith?" My wife and I loved to go on walks in the local nature preserve in Texas in the spring. Texas is kind of known for its wildflowers. We would watch all the beautiful wildflowers come up in turn—bluebonnets, Indian paintbrushes (those were my favorite), Indian blankets, primroses, winecups, Mexican hats, prairie nymphs, pricklypoppies, antelope horns, lantana, horsemint, and rain lilies. I'm sure some of those grow up here too. These were just wildflowers that grew in the grass. In a few days, weeks, or a month, perhaps longer for some of them, they would wither and dry out, just like the grass around them, and be fit for nothing but the fire. Yet wild and fleeting as they were, King Solomon with all his wealth, decked out in his finest regalia, wasn't dressed like one of them.

Now don't miss this: Even though your fears and worries betray that your faith is not as large as it ought to be, you are much more valuable to God than the grass and the wildflowers.

You see, Jesus didn't shed one drop of blood for a single raven, or any of the birds. Jesus didn't shed one drop of blood for a single wildflower or a single blade of grass. Remember when Jesus preferred that two thousand pigs drown in the Sea of Galilee rather than that two demon-possessed humans perish? Jesus loves his creation, but he only created one part of it to live in a conscious relationship with his heavenly Father, and so he only redeemed one part of it. He shed his blood plentifully and gave up his life for fallen humans, for you and me.

The Lord of the universe, with infinitely more power and control than you, the one who governs the world's affairs and each one of your affairs, is concerned about you and cares deeply for you. So "do not constantly chase after what you will eat or what you will drink. Do not be worried about it. To be sure, the nations of the world chase after all of these things, but your Father knows that you need them."

Do you see how Jesus enables us to fight fear with faith? It's as simple as looking out your window and then remembering whom God gave his life for. And do you see how this turns our whole life upside down in a good way?

First, it enables us to seek the most important things first. "The nations of the world chase after all of these [earthly] things, but your Father knows that you need them. Instead, continue to seek the kingdom of God, and all these [earthly] things will be added to you. Do not be afraid,

little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.” If our heavenly Father has promised to supply all our needs, then we can seek the most important things first—things like righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus, things given to us and strengthened in us through God’s word and sacraments. That doesn’t mean that we quit our jobs and don’t do any work. Rather, like the birds who sing first and then go find their food, so we seek the kingdom of God first, and then concern ourselves with our earthly affairs trusting in him.

And second, we don’t always need to be looking out for number one. In fact, we don’t even think of ourselves as number one. If God has the welfare of our life and body in his gracious hands, then we can heed Jesus’s words: “Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not become old, a treasure in the heavens that will not fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.” By our generosity, we can become tools of God for helping other people to see his gracious love and care. By our generosity, we can become tools of God for helping other people not to worry, but to fight fear with faith.

So the next time you’re wringing your hands, the next time you’re lying on your back in bed staring at the ceiling with a hundred questions and concerns running through your head, go to God’s word—whether by actually opening up your Bibles or by simply recalling Jesus’s window or walking sermon. Consider the ravens. Consider the wildflowers. Then remember: You are much more valuable and precious to God than they are, through the blood of his Son, your dear Savior, Jesus Christ. By the power of his Holy Spirit, fight fear with faith. Amen.