

## Luke 12: 22-34

## Do Not Worry

<sup>22</sup>He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. <sup>23</sup>For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. <sup>24</sup>Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! <sup>25</sup>And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>26</sup>If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? <sup>27</sup>Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;<sup>[b]</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>28</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! <sup>29</sup>And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. <sup>30</sup>For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. <sup>31</sup>Instead, strive for his<sup>[c]</sup> kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

<sup>32</sup>"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup>Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

### **The Reading of Mark 1:14-15 (Common English Bible)**

*After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"*

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Luke 12:22-34; Mark 1:14-15 (CEB)  
Thy Kingdom Come, And Soon Please  
Kerra Becker English

*No one longs for what he or she already has.* This is a wise insight articulated by Barbara Brown Taylor, but as she also suggests, many of us who are already on the search for spiritual treasure are still looking for “more” and we aren’t quite sure where to start digging. Perhaps, she notes, it’s hard for us to see the giant red X marking the spot if it’s placed right under our feet. As she continues, she says, “The treasure we seek requires no lengthy expedition, no expensive equipment, no superior aptitude or special company. All we lack is the willingness to imagine that we already have everything we need. The only thing missing is our consent to be where we are.” (*An Altar in the World*, xvi-xvii, Barbara Brown Taylor)

When I read her words this week, it took me right to the heart of this famous passage on worry from Luke’s gospel. God knows, intimately knows, that we are longing for more, and yet, that desire won’t be fulfilled with a closet full of clothes or by getting good seats at just the right Sunday brunch after church. We worry about the wrong things, Jesus tells us. God already knows we need clothes and food, and God happens to provide those things for the ravens and for the grasses of the field. And Jesus, who wants us turned toward the right things, may even know something about this longing for “more” that instead would have us striving toward the kingdom, the things that are really real, and not just leave us spinning around in the worry stirred up by anxious nations and competing worldviews.

So you might ask in spiritual terms, what is the “more” that we desire? If more clothes and more food, more stuff and more security aren’t doing it for us, then how do we attain more

of the kingdom, more heavenly treasure, more life, more love, more heart and soul for our everyday lives? We pray every time we recall the Lord's prayer, *thy kingdom come*, but will we recognize this arrival of God's kingdom when we see it?

I'm not sure that the church as a whole has an answer for that. The church, the place folks might imagine as the place where spiritual answers come from, has been all too ready to dish out easy answers and churn out doctrinal formulas, forgetting that we humans require a much bigger space for asking life's more difficult questions. We've made it our job to try to mediate the anxiety rather than going deeper for the peace. Spiritual longing is not so easily filled. Jesus makes that perfectly clear. He makes that clear by not trying to nail down the kingdom, and certainly not pushing it off or minimizing it to just that reward we get when we find ourselves in heaven. Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God as right here, right now, and right under our feet. Do we have the eyes to see it? Are we ready to look down at our own feet and notice the X marking the spot of this amazing treasure God has blessed just for us?

"It is God's pleasure to give you the Kingdom," Jesus says. God's Kingdom is presented by Jesus as a gift to us, a delight we didn't earn but God was pleased to give us anyway. And yet so often we feel like it's miles and miles, and years and years from reaching us. Rather than the treasure of our heart, it seems like the pipedream that will never, never happen. The world tells us that goods are scarce and security comes at a very high price. It's best to get worried and stay worried about it all. That's what makes us want more stuff, more power, more control. We think we can fix our existential angst with the truths of this world, but instead that fixing mentality leaves little room for experiencing the Kingdom of God.

That's the real challenge. Can we truly accept that we do, and we will have everything that we need? It's a risk to be sure. My pantry and freezer might offer a different answer than the one I'd want to give. My closet is pretty full, as are my dresser, and my bureau. I really can honestly say that I have everything that I need, and then some. Giving alms is well within my possibility, and something I am committed to doing. But I still worry. Nevertheless, worrying that I might not have enough to eat or something that I could wear would be a foolish worry. That it might not be exactly what I want at the time is something different, something that might be just a teensy little spiritual issue for me, Jesus whispers in my ear, "*Are you going to do something about that?*"

Being able to live in the Kingdom of God, right here, right now, right in this very space is about trust. The first words out of Jesus' mouth in Mark's gospel are the ones I read this morning, "Now is the time! Here comes God's Kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!" John Vest did a study on this passage at the Massanetta Springs Bible Conference. It was an eye opener. The Kingdom of God is a big theme in the New Testament – especially for Jesus – so it really merits our attention. Jesus tells us it's here, and it's coming. The way to understand it is to change our hearts and lives, and trust in God. No worries. Most older translations will say something about repentance here. Repent and believe the good news. That translation may not speak to our current context in the same way, and may not be an accurate portrayal of the Greek when bringing it over into English. Repent has a negative tone to it. Apology. Having done something wrong. The Greek word *metanoia* simply means turn around, be changed, transformed. Change your hearts and lives. And trust.

I think we need to reclaim more positives like these in scripture to speak to and resound with our culture. That was at the heart of John's presentation about the Mark text too. For the good news to be good, to usher in God's Kingdom in a world of strife, we will need every drop of energy, every good gift of God, every blessing within reach to make a difference in this old world. The church has become very much like the world, with all its resident anxieties, and desires to perpetuate itself rather than live up to its rather unusual mission. The church's mission is to proclaim with Christ – NOW IS THE TIME! Really, Now? It doesn't seem like now. HERE COMES GOD'S KINGDOM! Really, the atheists and naysayers make a fairly good case that God seems rather absent. CHANGE YOUR HEARTS AND LIVES AND TRUST GOD! Well, that is a tall order, because you might just be talking to me.

We spiritual seekers want more, we do. We're never quite satisfied in that way, and that's a good thing. Rather than worry about physical things, or even emotional things, we want to embrace and encourage spiritual things, and allow the Kingdom of God to be the worldview that really shapes us. Now, Jesus doesn't exactly give us the strategic plan for all this. It's more about promoting wisdom than offering solutions. Don't worry so much. Love your neighbor. Trust that God has your back – just like God provides for the crows cawing in your back yard, just like God adorns the day lilies blooming in your morning garden.

When we let God's truth come alive in us, we are promised that the ripples of God's love will extend, and extend, and extend into a broken and hurting world. I encourage you to find the courage to be able to say to yourself that right where you are is right where God wants you to be,

right where God planted the unique you to make a difference. When we listen to that voice, that confirmation, I believe, no I TRUST that some amazing things will begin to happen. Amen.