

Meditation on Matthew 6:25-33
Thanksgiving Eve, November 25, 2015
Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
By James Erlandson

“Do not worry about your life.” Did we hear that right, Jesus? Do not worry? Are you paying attention? We have SO MUCH to worry about, don't you think? Speaking as a white, European American, I may be privileged, but that just seems to give me all the more to worry about! For example, because we seem to think that what we have is all because we have worked for it and earned it, then we must have more to lose (so we've got to do something about it – it's up to us!). We worry about all those immigrants, it seems, who seek to come to this country – whether it's for its freedoms, which makes ultimate sense, or for our jobs and its riches (which is what we suspect – as we try to keep them out). Can we hold on to our many possessions, and those privileges that we guard so jealously?

And now we have “Black Friday” to think about – and all those sales coming up – both in stores and online. You know – that Black Friday which has nothing to do with a civil rights movement or Good Friday, but has everything to do with buying more stuff before Christmas – such a deal! But does it start on Thursday evening at dusk, or at midnight, or at dawn on Friday morning? And how about those Starbucks cups? Boy, this is hard work! And such a worry, too!

But Jesus says to you and me “do not worry so much”. Jesus gives examples: like the lilies of the field, and the birds of the air – who do not seem to have a care in the world. Because they just go about their business of living, and God cares for them. Can't we just imitate them? Sometimes we'd like to. But really, don't we have more urgent, pressing worries than the flowers and the birds? I know I do! I've got bills to pay – two daughters in college, my father in assisted living, and the world around us is in turmoil – or so it seems.....

But Jesus does make a good point: *“Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?”* Well, actually, no, we can't. In fact, there is plenty of medical research to show that by worrying we add stress, and stress just seems to shorten our lives – hyper-tension is a real killer, it seems. It is a real cause of heart attacks. We even worry about stress! So, we may have lots to worry about, but worrying about these things doesn't seem to help us at all.

We have looked down on other peoples of this world, and those of the past, who do not share our technological advancements, and whom we regarded as “undeveloped”, “uncivilized” and “primitive”. Our ancestors looked down on their Native American neighbors, who did not see the land as something to be owned or possessed, but simply appreciated it as God's gift - and after we took it, we sent

their children off to schools where we made them dress like us, work the land like us, take on white European culture, and we gave them... our stress.

Jesus says, *“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?”* So Jesus says not to worry about what we will eat, or drink, or wear (which is often the basis for all that we worry about). Like the Gentiles in the gospel, we STRIVE so hard for all these things. And where does it get us? We work so hard to pay off that mortgage, to repay our college loans, get that second or third car, afford the latest techno-gadget. But we know that “you can’t take it with you” – we come into this world naked and will leave it with nothing.

But Jesus has something of ultimate worth to strive for! He says *“strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

So tonight is the night when we are reminded by our scriptures of the great gift God has given us in the earth and all that we have received. We are reminded tonight to give thanks for all that God has given, and to share it in an expression of our gratitude! Our native American sisters and brothers did this naturally, by their culture and their spirituality, and it would do us well to learn it ourselves – and to appreciate the gift!

So let’s not worry about those things we cannot control, or be anxious about those things that we think we can! Let us simply be thankful tonight, for the God who has created us, who gives us life, who raised Jesus from the dead and promises to give you and me life, forever. And while we are at it, let’s be thankful for one another, and share what God has given us with those in need. That is all. Amen.