

Consider all of creation
[written in oral form]

Matthew 6:25-33
Thanksgiving Sunday, year B

October 10, 2021
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I will begin with a comment on Thanksgiving.
Giving thanks is freeing and uplifting for all.
Thankfulness helps us see we are part of the whole.

When you state your gratitude be sure to note the benefits of privilege and the social entitlements of your position. Doing so helps us to connect to the broader world and not just to our bubble.

We have much to be grateful for.

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Many things we are thankful for relate to the alleviation of fear.  
Such as, the fear of being alone, of not being loved, of poverty, or homelessness, or hunger.  
At the core is the fear of depravity.

The fear of depravity / of being without can cause anxiety.  
We worry about a lot of things, and worrying can be overwhelming and draining.

Younger adults worry about the housing market. Homes, even apartments are expensive and limited.

We are anxious about the climate crisis.

This pandemic has produced great stress and concern.  
“Will there be a 5<sup>th</sup> wave? How long do we have vaccine protection, and so on?”

The price of gasoline has gone sky high.  
Food costs are increasing.  
Then we worry about our finances / our financial security.  
“Can I make ends meet?”  
“Have I invested and saved enough?”  
“Will stock values decline?”  
“Will I get a good job after university?”

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We have accumulated a list of worries, and frequently they relate to money or possessions.

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Our text did not include verses 19-24.  
That section is the preface, and it deals with storing for yourself treasures on earth. The emphasis is on “yourself.”

Jesus stressed that we cannot serve two masters.

We must either choose God or our own self interests.  
Going after financial security / wealth is claiming personal control.  
That pursuit has rewards, but comes with the heavy cost of anxiety and worry.  
We worry because we are not so powerful.  
We are not in control.

Everyone listening to Jesus knows this.

So, Jesus said, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink."

Jesus drew attention to the birds who are fed by God's creation.

He then said what we all dreadfully know, which is worrying does not help / worry does not solve problems.

It's a waste of energy caused by our pursuit for control.

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Consider the lilies and HOW they grow....how they grow.
They do not seek to secure tomorrow. They merely live.

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Reassuringly, Jesus stated that God will provide for us and that God knows our needs.

To accept this radical change in perception, requires faith in God and letting go of our fixation for control.

However, if our view of God is limited, then this belief that God will provide everything can be dangerous and destructive.

For example, Jesus was tempted to jump off a tall building to prove God would catch him.  
Jesus did NOT, and responded that we are Not to test God.  
Jesus demonstrated that Holy living does Not work that way.

Likewise, there are religious anti-vaxers who assert God will protect them from COVID-19.  
Testing God is Not faith, and as I said, holy living does Not work that way.

Rejecting vaccination is selfish and counter to God's way for us.

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Let's review to better understand.

Consider the birds.....

We are inside, so I cannot point any out.

Therefore, consider the lilies. We do have plants here, so I'll use my phone to show them to you.

[take out phone]

Okay, let's do this. Don, can you make the switch now?

[Play prerecorded video that shows all the plants]

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Consider these plants,....and as Jesus said, "how they grow."

How are they alive? They are not in their natural environment.  
They are in pots and inside. How do they grow?

They live and grow because sunlight is allowed in and because I take care of them.  
I feed and water them; I talk to them, and repot them.

Plants in nature are cared for, too.  
All of creation is in a symbiotic relationship.

There are pollinators and there are birds that spread seeds.  
The soil is a complex living and giving system with minerals, water, microorganisms, enzymes  
and decaying matter.  
All are necessary for a plant to thrive, such as a tree.  
A tree receives and a tree gives many things, including oxygen, seeds & nuts, shade & safety  
for animals, and so on.

Nature is wonderfully diverse.  
It is a beautiful integrated wholeness.

Likewise, when we live as God desires for us, then we are in an integrated wholeness of giving  
and receiving.

We sometimes call this system a faith community, but it is much more than that.

To begin with, erase the limited view of God. God is not a solitary entity. God is Not a  
monarch on a throne ruling over us.  
God is love. God touches all things. God is in all of creation. God permeates in all things.

God forms the wholeness, and we are just a part of that.  
Grasping our significant insignificance frees us to be and to live in the wholeness / to be as  
God intends for us to be.

Francis of Assisi discovered this truth.  
Francis purged his affluent life of privilege by accepting poverty.  
From poverty he encountered the bounty and blessing of the wholeness in creation, which  
includes humans and all creatures.  
He lived in faith....trusting the greater community of giving and receiving.

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There have been occasions in my life when I was impoverished. Mine were not by spiritual
choice, but I learned that my faith and interdependence grew during such experiences.

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One example, for my second year at university, I had to choose between shelter or food. When lost in the wilderness, shelter is the priority. So that is what I chose. I didn't have money for food.

Restaurants throw away a lot of good food. Their large empty milk containers are not empty. There is still about a half a litre in them.

My favourite food source was conferences and conventions.

I would learn of one at a nearby hotel, dress up and attend as if I belonged. They always had food available.

The rare occasion that my presence was questioned, I would respond, "I am student, and I am very interested in whatever this is about."

I learned the kindness and generosity of people, and I experienced many miracles, too.

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Weeks ago, when I was thinking about this text, I knew St. Francis was an obvious example. And interestingly, this week, Richard Rohr cited Francis and others in that same vein.

I think Rohr was plagiarizing my thoughts.

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St. Francis got it. He understood what Jesus was presenting.  
He lived an integrated life with all of creation.

Subsequently, many others were drawn to his life style and he formed the Franciscan order that was blessed by Pope Innocent the third. His order was the only Christian group allowed by the sultan in Muslim occupied Jerusalem.

Even they saw that Francis was on to something pure and life-giving.

Francis knew nature was the mirror of God.  
He called all creatures his brothers and sisters.

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There is a very good movie about St. Francis called "Brother Sun & Sister moon." It was released in 1972

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In verse 33, Jesus presents how we enter into this symbiotic relationship with God and creation.

When we strive first to live God's way and God's righteousness, as Jesus presented, then our needs are fulfilled, too.

So, no need to worry.

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This way includes seeing God in all things, in all people.
And realizing that we are just a part of the whole, a part that is dearly loved when we embrace that love.

Moreover, as Jesus lived, God's way is surrendering the need to control life. We put others first. We do our part.

In faith, we give knowing our needs will be met too.

Giving away creates movement, and that movement includes letting in / receiving.

For example, we get vaccinated for the sake of others. We do this to limit the spread of the virus / so that we do not infect anyone.

And in the circle of wholeness, we and our loved ones live in a safer world. Our needs are met too.

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God's kingdom / God's way is faithfully living in integrated wholeness. It is being in a symbiotic relationship with each other and all of creation.

So, there is no need to worry about tomorrow or what we do not have.

Today is rightly unfolding. We are present in the wholeness, surrounded with God centred all around.

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Receive what is. Consider and talk to the birds.

Consider the lilies and the colourful fall leaves.

Consider being a part of God's giving and receiving universe.

Consider ways to give.

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We do benevolence well, yet too often we neglect the integration and interdependence.

I pray we will discover the beauty and wonder of inviting people into our faith community. So many people have struggled and are alone in this pandemic. They need us and we need them.

Helping without including separates us from the wholeness.

The wholeness is God's design for us and everyone.

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We have much to learn on this spiritual journey.

Let us resume this day by looking beyond our needs and by considering God. God's love is all around.

Consider we are an integral part of creation and of God's love.

May we live into that.