

## Matthew 6.25-34 – 19 February 2020 ( 8.00 am service)

Do not worry about your life - what you will eat or drink - about your body - or what you will wear we are told. Furthermore - do not worry about tomorrow - because tomorrow will take care of itself.

I wonder what it would have been like for the folk who came to be with and be taught by Jesus - to have been presented with such demand to let go of life's worries and rely on God alone..

I wonder if you can remember when you first began to truly hear the teaching of Jesus and were astounded - enthused? You might have come from a worldview of a 'gentle Jesus' who loved and smiled and healed his way through his three year ministry - friend of all - bearer of good news that God loves us...

Well that all might be true of course - but there was more to Jesus's ministry than the gentle-Jesus stereotype...

Throughout this Sermon on the Mount, we are presented with a Jesus who leans on the teaching methods of his ancestors by asking rhetorical questions – but the questions from Jesus become deeper - more difficult to answer - they demanded a radical questioning of all that was believed to be true in a world of increasing oppression, inequality and political tension.

Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Jesus asks

Are you not much more valuable than they?

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

“And why do you worry about clothes? ... If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

The questioning of Jesus - couched within the natural innocence of lilies and birds and grass - was not intended to encourage resolution of life's conflicts of the day - but rather to challenge them - to heighten awareness that both individual and society were creeping further and further away from the true values and love of God.

They were worrying God out of their lives - insecure in what they couldn't control, plan or see.... Jesus wanted to encourage them to trust more deeply - to take a risk and give it all up to God - so that God could in turn meet them in their need.

'But how on earth can we possibly do this? - you can almost hear them saying...

But no - that wasn't what they were saying -

Matthew tells us that the 'crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.' And furthermore, 'When Jesus came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him' - and continued to follow him....

They were enthusiastic about Jesus and knew at a deep level that here was someone who was bringing them hope and freedom -

They had lived under the legalism of law after law - so many that it was virtually impossible to 'get it right' and to live up to such impossible expectations - Jesus teachings – were challenging for sure - but hopeful

and promising - directions for a way of life that could bring freedom from bondage of human struggle and a pathway to the new and promised land - God's Kingdom – on earth as in heaven...

No – the crowd were with him –

Perhaps it is you and I - humanity as a whole - who are saying 'how can we possibly live up to this high demand for trust and faithful obedience to Jesus' teaching...

Perhaps humanity has moved so far away from the security that the presence of a God can bring that our worry and insecurity and need to be in full control has created a sense of isolation from each other and from God –

and forgetting that we don't have to live up to an impossible rigid moral code but that we are simply being asked to try our best to trust in a God who has graciously entered into a relationship with us through Jesus Christ - and who empowers and enables us and shows us the way through HIS Spirit of love, compassion, forgiveness and truth.

Of course we can't live up to the spiritual heights of Jesus - but we can strive for them - trust and follow him and let God's spirit of truth live out his beatitudes of loving kindness and justice and peace through us as we 'let go and let God'....

'Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and things will be given to you as well ... Each day has enough trouble of its own ... Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.'