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Matthew 6:25-33

*Thanksgiving*

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Matthew 6:25-33 The Message

“If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don’t fuss about what’s on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

“Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

“If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God’s giving. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

In Daniel Defoe’s book *Robinson Crusoe*, the first thing Crusoe does when he finds himself on a deserted island is to make out a list.  On one side of the list he writes down all his problems.  On the other side of the list he writes down all of his blessings. On one side he writes: I do not have any clothes. On the other side he writes:  But it’s warm and I don’t really need any.  On one side he writes: All of the provisions were lost.  On the other side he writes: But there’s plenty of fresh fruit and water on the island.  And on down the list he went.  He discovered that for every negative aspect about his situation, there was a positive aspect, something to be thankful for. It is easy to find ourselves on an island of despair. Perhaps it is time that we take an inventory of our blessings? We might find that we are long overdue in expressing our thanks to God.

Eva Hoffman is a Polish immigrant who made her life in America and wrote a book a few years ago called Time. She said, “It was not only that time moved faster in America—it pressed onward in more stressful ways. People worked much harder, of course; but also it seemed to me, more anxiously. I was witnessing, even if I did not initially realize it, the phenomenon of ‘American nervousness.’ . . . People worked very hard. But even if not everyone used every minute of their working day to be optimally productive—so I noted during my tenure in some major American workplaces—everyone suffered from the stress of not doing enough, or the possibility of doing more, or at least feeling good and guilty about it (p. 5–6).

Stress, anxiety, nervousness, and guilt are the emotional by products of American time. Our life seems full to overflowing with worry. Not just “what will we eat and drink?” or “what will we wear?”,  but also “will our kids be healthy?” and “will I find someone that accepts me as I am?” and “will we be able to retire?” and “what do people think of me?” and “will I find work?” and “will we go to war?”.[[1]](#footnote-2)

And the ads that we see every day feed our fears of inadequacy. So it’s not just “what will we wear?” but rather, “will what I wear make me acceptable and attractive to those around me?” And it’s not only “what will I eat?” but “is what I eat tasty, low-fat, sugar-free, and organic?”[[2]](#footnote-3)

And Jesus is telling us that life isn’t about our worries, life is about relationships. St. Augustine once said that we were made to love people and use things and that sin causes us to confuse these two.[[3]](#footnote-4) Incessant worrying slowly erodes our trust in God and we end up feeling like it’s all up to us, like there is no one around us to help. Jesus simply and quietly reminds us that God knows our needs. As we trust God more we begin see all that God has already given us and move from a sense of scarcity to abundance.

Now we might look at our world and see all of the needs that go unmet. I wonder if the poverty in our world is caused by God not providing enough resources or is it a result of too many of us hoarding and misusing these resources because we are dominated by a sense of scarcity and inadequacy?[[4]](#footnote-5) If we loved God by loving our neighbor, honored God by honoring our neighbor, and kept God’s commandments that seek first and foremost the welfare of our neighbor, then I think we would see that all we need and more would be added to our lives. We give thanks to God when our actions are tenderness and love.

Every day that we have is a gift.  Do we live our lives in a way that reflects that every day is a gift or do we get too wrapped up in the busyness of our lives and forget?  Thanksgiving is an important part of our faith and thanks-living. This week as our world became more polarized with everyone giving their own opinion on welcoming the stranger, I thought of writer Anne Lamott’s words. In a small book on prayer, Anne Lamott confesses, “I do not know much about God and prayer, but I have come to believe . . . that there’s something to be said about keeping prayer simple. Help. Thanks. Wow” (p. 1). This week I was surprised by the fear of the comments that I heard on the news. And I thought about what God would think of us focusing on ourselves and focusing on our fear.

There is an old fable told about a far-off land which was ruled by a tyrant.  The tyrant had an ironclad grip over all parts of the kingdom, except for one frustrating area.  The tyrant was unable to destroy the people's belief in God.  The counselors were summoned and the tyrant asked them, “Where can I hide God so that the people will end up forgetting God?? One counselor suggested that God be hidden on the dark side of the moon.  This proposal was debated for some time, but voted down because it was believed that one day scientists would discover a means of space travel and God would end being found again.  Another advisor to the tyrant came up with the idea of burying God beneath the depths of the ocean floor.  This was voted down for basically the same reason - it was felt that scientific advancement would lead to the discovery of God even beneath the depths of the ocean floor.  Finally the oldest and wisest of the counselors had a flash of insight.  "I know,” the counselor said, why don't we hide God where no one will ever think of finding God?"  He continued, "If we hide God in the ordinary events of people's everyday lives they'll never find God."  And so it was done - and they say that people are still looking for God - even today.  God is hidden in the ordinary routine events of our life. May our practice of thank-giving bring God to our sight and in so doing bring to others and ourselves a better world.

In our family, we have a Thanksgiving tradition of going around the table and sharing what we are thankful for. The ordinary events and happening are blessings and they are where we find God.

As we start this Thanksgiving week, let us not get swallowed up in the fear and upset. Let us remember the abundance of love that is Greenland Hills and let us give thanks for it. Today, may we the church, believers in God. Let us be the first to give praise to God, not the last.  Amen.

1. http://www.davidlose.net/2014/02/matthew-6-25-33/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. http://www.davidlose.net/2014/02/matthew-6-25-33/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. http://www.davidlose.net/2014/02/matthew-6-25-33/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. http://www.davidlose.net/2014/02/matthew-6-25-33/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)