# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Our Primary Concern”**

**Matthew 6:25-34**

 **April 23, 2023**

We have been making our way through Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in which he shows us how to live in God’s Kingdom here on earth. In the Beatitudes, Jesus spoke about how our hearts need to become more and more like God’s heart. He has told us that as our inner selves are being transformed, we will outwardly be salt and light in the world, impacting others for God. He has explained the true meaning of God’s law, and he cautioned against doing good deeds merely to receive the praise of God or others. In today’s text, Jesus is going to point out the importance of making living in God’s Kingdom our primary concern. I invite you to turn with me to Matthew 6:25-34

“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

What dominates your thoughts? There is a song that summarizes well what Jesus is saying in our passage: “Turn your eyes upon Jesus; look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim; in the light of his glory and grace.” Jesus isn’t discounting the importance of the things of this world. Money, food, clothing, having a roof over our head, and much more are all things that matter. What Jesus is warning us against is taking these things that matter and turning them into things that we worship. When things such as these become our primary concern, when the focus and direction of our life becomes trying to accumulate them and then securing what we have accumulated, then we have begun worshipping them rather than worshipping God. Scripture is clear. We cannot worship both God and possessions. Our eyes will be either on Jesus and the Kingdom of his Heavenly Father or our eyes will be on our stuff. And, whichever our eyes are on, the other will begin to grow dim. It will gradually become of lesser importance to us. Jesus isn’t calling us to be care-less, as in “I couldn’t care less” about the things of earth, but he is telling us that we can be care-free, as in “I am free from worry and anxiety” about these things. The key to such freedom is focusing on God.

Jesus is telling us that we don’t need to worry about everyday life because we have a Father in heaven who loves us and cares for us and is able to provide for us. Having so clearly provided for the world around us, as seen in his provision for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, will he not care for each one of us who are infinitely more important to him than birds and flowers? The more we trust in God for these earthly things, the less we will worry about them. With these things no longer our primary concern, we are able seek the Kingdom of God and make it our primary concern. And, as Jesus teaches throughout his ministry and shows by the way he lives his life, the primary concern of the Kingdom of God is loving God and loving our neighbor.

Later in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus will speak of people who are hungry and thirsty and naked and sick and in prison. Those who care for these people in their time of need are people who have made the Kingdom of God their primary concern. When you and I take our eyes off ourselves and what we need, trusting God to provide, then we can more readily care for others and thereby be a part of God’s ministry of providing for them.

Think of it this way. God has placed in our hands the resources we need to live our lives in this world. We may not have as much as we want, but we have enough. How will we hold it? Will we hold it with an open hand, ready for God to ask us to take some of it from our hand and put it into the hand of another who needs it more than we do? Or, will we hold it in a closed hand, refusing to share God’s blessing with others because we are worried that if we do we will not have enough for ourselves. The reality is that not only can’t God work through us to love others when our hand is closed, but God can’t bless us with more. When we seek our best, God is unable to give us his best. Instead, says Jesus, make the Kingdom of God your primary concern, and you can be confident that God will meet all your other concerns.