

Thanksgiving Year B October 10, 2021

Matthew 6:25-33

Epiphany, Winnipeg

1 I wonder who Jesus is talking to when he says, “Don’t worry about your life, about what you eat, or what you wear.” Sure, he was talking to his disciples as they begin to learn something about their new trade; their new trade of being followers of Jesus.

But I wonder who Jesus is talking to, and who is there to listen? Is he talking to people who really do worry about these things, because they don’t have enough food, or water, or shelter, and the only clothes they have are what they’re wearing right now? And Jesus says, “Don’t worry?” Shouldn’t you worry if that’s your life? Or is he talking to people who worry about what they will eat because there’s too much to eat, and what about my blood pressure or blood sugar or body image or.... And Jesus says, “Don’t worry?” About what?

If he’s talking to those who have nothing he promises that God will look after them just like God looks after the plants and the earth and the birds. If he’s talking to those with too much he says the same. God will look after you just like God looks after the plants and the earth and the birds and the water and the air...

Everyone will hear this call of Jesus differently, because we all listen from a different place.

I don’t know how these words of Jesus would be heard by someone who does not, really does not, have enough; and I can’t tell you what you should hear. But I do know that I hear them as one who has too much. Even a humble country parson...honestly...has too much. How do Jesus’ words sound to you?

2 I heard a sermon the other morning. I was sitting in the back yard having a cup of coffee one morning when it was finally a cool fresh October morning – you know, the best kind of morning – and I looked at the Zinias at the back of the garden that have grown to a bizarre height and are still so rich in colour in this season that has been so dry. And Jesus said, “consider the Zinias”...so I did, and the Zinias said this: “Paul, you didn’t do much to make us this way. All anybody did was give us some water. Thanks. But we didn’t work, we didn’t worry, we didn’t save, we didn’t sew, we didn’t do much but grow. The God who gave us life and who gave you life just made it happen. And when our roots dug deep we found water, even in these dry dry days. Don’t worry so much. God gave you water. God wrapped you up in what you need. God will do that again.”

Then I heard another sermon that same day as a few geese flew overhead and they they said much the same thing as the Zinias: “Here we go, planning for a trip, and we didn’t plant the grass that we eat or gather it up and store it somewhere or call ahead to book an Airbnb when we land. It’s all just been there – food and water and a place to stay. You don’t need to worry. Trust us on this one. Whatever you need will be there.” That’s the sermon the geese preached.

I know that the life of a lily and a Zinia, and a sparrow and a goose are more complicated than that. But listen to the world all around. Consider the lillies and the birds. God feeds them. Won’t God provide what you need too? Won’t God provide what we need?

3 Yes.

But that first question still kind of hangs there, doesn't it? Is Jesus talking to those who don't have enough? Or to those who have too much? Or to those who fall somewhere in between?

The answer, of course, is all of the above.

Jesus speaks to all of us...to those among us who don't have enough and to those who have too much. To those who love money and those who have none, to those who have a comfy bungalow in Niakwa Park and those whose home is a tent in the bush down by the Red, to those who are afraid because they have no work and to those who just can't stop working, not even on a long weekend.

It's what Jesus does. He calls together a band of people from all over, from all these different classes and livelihoods and colours and paths and says, "You are a new people now." And we spend our life figuring out how to be together. We spend our life figuring out how to bless the ones among us who are weak, meek, or grieving, how to uphold those whose spirit is poor or whose pocketbook is poor, how to walk alongside those who are hungry for justice, or for peace, or for a place to belong. We become a people who are figuring out how to be together even when we can't agree, a people more concerned about being kind to each other than being right. Jesus calls us salt and light, and we spend our life together trying to bring out the best flavour of all of us, and we try to be light for each other, helping each other find our way when it's so hard to see where we're going. And all along the way are learning, along with those disciples back then and with all God's people, even with all God's people back in a garden in our

imagination....we are learning together not to worry about what to eat, drink, wear, live on; we're learning together to trust a new way – to trust God who promises to give all we could ever need.

That's the Kingdom of God. We seek this kind of life together, to be a community of people who care for each other and care about the world around us. And all those other things – what you need to eat, to drink, to wear, to live – are given.

It's Thanksgiving this weekend...in case you didn't know.... Some of us will feast later today, or tomorrow, or we did last night already, and maybe the night before.... Dig in, have lots of gravy, a pile of whipped cream on pie is good for you this one day of the year. Some of us will sit at the feast and kind of have a little bit of this and a little of that, and hope nobody sees how little you're eating but you just can't help it. And some of us will not have enough because the money's just not there this time, and maybe it was like that yesterday and the day before....

But there's all this food. Still a gift from God.

I think Jesus knows all about how complicated our life with food is. He knew it then, he knows it now. But he also kept on talking about the kingdom of God, something to seek and something that has found us already; he knew that God is shaping the world into a place where whatever is broken will be turned upside down and made right, where relationships gone wrong will be relationships that are made right, where the people the world leaves out will be brought right back to the centre of things. He found out for himself when he lost everything on a cross, and everything was given back to him a few days later – the God who gives

life to the fields and the birds will give life, even to one in the tomb – and today Jesus gives this feast of bread and wine, here in a church building, here in a living room or kitchen or den. He speaks a simply promise in a complicated world: Look for this Kingdom of God, because it's sneaking in among us wherever we are. And all these things? All that we need? They will be given. For us. It's a promise. AMEN.