

Chris Murphy

October 1st, 2023

Scripture: Matthew 6: 25-34

Sermon Title: Compassion for Creation

Prayer...

On this World Communion Sunday, we remember that there are close to 8.1 billion people in the world and nearly 2.4 billion people identify as Christian. Many Christians today will be celebrating World Communion Sunday. This is a time for us to focus on peace, unity, and our common mission as followers of Jesus to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God.

Our Scripture today from Matthew 6 is a portion of Jesus' sermon on the mount. The sermon of the mount found in Matthew 5-7. Luke's gospel has a similar sermon, but it is called the sermon on the plain.

Both sermons emphasize how we are called to live in this world. They give guidance on our worship of God, our care for one another, prayer, money, and peace. The kingdom of God is the main theme, and the kingdom of God is to be pursued over what others in the world might

value. The kingdom of God is more important than personal success, wealth, popularity, or any other achievement that seems to compete with our devotion to God and God's heart for the world.

As I read our passage today prayerfully, I am drawn to a couple key ideas.

1. The first idea is that Jesus gives his followers the invitation to not worry. He does not want them to worry about food, clothing, money, or how long one might live. Jesus suggests that in his kingdom, worry is unnecessary because God is ultimately in control. Now my initial thought to this idea is, what is Jesus thinking? How can he have the audacity to suggest that his followers need not worry? I want to tell Jesus. Take a look at your world. We have earthquakes and fires and floods. There is climate change, too many fossil fuels and other forms of pollution. Entire species are going extinct. There is extreme poverty, homelessness, human trafficking, domestic abuse, violence in our streets. What

about war, greed, and the vast health problems that plague so many people? How about mental health challenges and the problem of addiction? What about the challenges of immigration and the plight of refugees? How about the burden of our criminal justice system and the problem of prisons and the plight of those who seek to re-enter society without sufficient support. I could go on and on to Jesus. I am just getting started. And yet, on this World Communion Sunday, Jesus says, “do not worry.” So, I change my approach to Jesus. Rather than listing out the problems in the world, I share with him that if I don’t worry, won’t I become passive and selfish and naive to the problems of the world? Won’t I be complacent and contribute to the mess? Jesus gently says to me and maybe to all of us- Do not worry? And then I remember an experience I had as a young man in El Salvador. (Tell story of my question for the campesino family. How can you have faith even though you live with so much uncertainty and in poverty? The answer is found in Matthew 6.) Friends, maybe with the grace of

God we do not need to worry. Maybe, Jesus wants to offer us mental, emotional, and spiritual rest as we follow him.

2. As Jesus reminds us to not worry, he encourages us to look at creation. He mentions the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. How God takes care of them and that he will also take care of us. Do you notice that Jesus invites his followers to look at nature for the key. (Story of the Book of Creation and the Book of Scripture) Nature has so much to teach us. Remember the closer we are to nature, the closer we are to God. On this World Communion Sunday, we remember our kinship with all of creation. We are part of nature. The animal outside and the ones we bring into our homes as pets our part of God's blessing in our lives. These animals remind us to not worry and to live our lives with freedom and joy. Today, we will celebrate God's animals through our Blessing of the Animals service in the Newberg Peace Garden.
3. A Final reflection on this passage is that as we seek to not worry with the help of enjoying creation, we are called to seek first the

kingdom of God. As we seek first the kingdom, God will partner with us to care for this world. The kingdom of God is God's way of doing things. Today, I want to remind us to have compassion for creation as part of living out the kingdom of God. We need to continue to join our denomination, the Presbyterian Church USA and many other Christian groups in being good stewards of creation. Environmental stewardship is part of our Christian faith. Questions like, how do we pursue alternative energy sources, how do we recycle products, how do we work with cooperatives like Equal Exchange to help farmers in Central America grow their own food and how do we join with local farmers to support organic farming? These are important questions of faith. On this World Communion Sunday, let us care for all of creation: the land, the air, the trees and forests, our animals, and fellow human beings. Let us live out the kingdom of God in this way. May our Newberg Peace Garden be part of our stewardship of creation as we seek to

foster peace and unity in our town and as we enjoy God's creation
here on our church campus.

Please pray with me...

Matthew 6:25-34

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,[a] or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?[b] 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ 32 For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God[c] and his[d] righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.