

Second Sunday before Lent

(Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time)

Principal Service readings

Genesis 1.1–2.3	The creation of the world
Psalm 136.1-9 [10-22] 23-26	Give thanks to the Lord for his graciousness
Romans 8.18-25	Creation waits with longing for the revelation of God's children
Matthew 6.25-34	Don't worry about life, strive for God's kingdom and justice

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Trust in providence

Jesus taught his disciples, saying: ²⁵Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look 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? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But 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? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

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

Comments and Questions

The introduction (5.1-20) and the first two major parts (5.21-48; 6.1-18) of the Sermon on the Mount display a clear structure. The third major part (6.19-7.12) is more like a collection of wisdom sayings, like Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Ecclesiasticus.

The reflection on trust in God's power (6.25-34; see also Luke 12.22-32) states a basic principle (6.25), gives two illustrations regarding food (6.26-27) and clothing (6.28-30), restates the principle (6.31-32), draws a conclusion (6.33), and adds a final consideration (6.35).

'Birds of the air' (6.26) – Luke 12.23 has 'crows, ravens', but Matthew might have changed this because 'ravens' were considered unclean (see Leviticus 11.15; Deuteronomy 14.14).

'Lilies of the field' (6.28) may be as generic as 'birds' (6.26).

For descriptions of Solomon's wealth (6.29) see 1 Kings 10.4-5; 2 Chronicles 9.13-22, though nothing is mentioned there about the splendour of his clothing.

'His righteousness' (6.33) is a major theme of Matthew. God's righteousness is revealed in the teaching of Jesus (see 5.6, 10, 20).

'Do not worry about tomorrow' (6.34) has parallels in wisdom teachings: 'Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what the day will bring forth' (Proverbs 27.1). The word 'trouble' (*kakia*) could also be taken in a moral sense as 'evil' or 'wickedness'.

Quotations

1

God is always trying to give good things to us, but our hands are too full to receive them.

Saint Augustine of Hippo. 354–430

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2

Only good things come from God's hands. He never gives you more than you can bear. Every burden prepares you for eternity.

Basilea Schlink, 1904–2001

3

He that takes truth for his guide, and duty for his end, may safely trust to God's providence to lead him alright.

Blaise Pascal, 1623–1662

Related topics

For further study:

Creation; faith; trust; stewardship; Trinity; christology; conversion; living the moral life; social teaching; biblical justice

Closing Prayer

Lord God,
your care for us surpasses
even a mother's tender love.

Through this word and sacrament
renew our trust in your provident care,
that we may abandon all anxiety
and seek first your kingdom.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Ordinary Time 8, Year A²

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*