

Harvest Thanksgiving

The 'Season of Creation' runs from 1 September to 4 October

Principal Service readings

Joel 2.21-27	A vision of plenty
Psalms 126	Song of the returning exiles
1 Timothy 2.1-7 or 6.6-10	Offer prayers for those in authority We shall be content with what we have
Matthew 6.25-33	Trust in providence

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 said to his disciples: ²⁵Do 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.’

Matthew 6.25-33 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

'Do not worry' (6.25) indicates that it is not out of laziness but out of an attitude of trust; it is linked with the previous verse on whole-hearted service of God (8.24).

The reflection on trust in God's power (6.25-34) 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 (6.34).

Life is more important than food and the body is more important than the clothes it wears. It is a hard saying for those living in poverty, but it is not saying 'just think about spiritual things, not material things'. It is saying, 'your life matters'.

Worrying never helps. How does worrying ever help us in anything? It is the way of the world to strive and worry. We should live our lives in the context of God – he is present; he knows us and cares about us.

The one thing that matters most for disciples of Jesus is to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness – putting God first.

In what ways is God our heavenly Master and in what ways our heavenly Father?

In ministering to others how should we deal with anxiety in the poor and in the rich?

How can we relate the teaching in this section with the fact that millions in the world are starving?

Quotations

1

I have today – yes, just today
to work and pray;
tomorrow is a dream unborn
and yesterday
is gone for ever from my hand.
I have today.

Joan Suisted

2

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.

Clippings from My Notebook / Corrie Ten Boom, 1982

Related topics

For further study:

Discipleship; justice; Christian community; the kingdom of God

Closing Prayer

God of abundance,
you give the sun and rain
and make the earth fruitful.
Remove from our human community
the fear of want and the menace of starvation.
Make us generous in giving,
and wise in our husbandry of this good earth,
that all may eat and praise your holy name.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Celebrating the Christian Year · Harvest Thanksgiving, Year B²

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2 *Celebrating the Christian year : prayers and resources for Sundays, holy days and festivals, years A, B and C /* compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.