

Luke 12: 22-34
“Emoticon Hearts”
February 10, 2013
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Consider the ravens: they don’t plant or harvest food, they have no storage facilities and yet God feeds them.

Consider the lilies (the wild flowers that spring up randomly along the highways and byways of life): they don’t make their own garments and yet they are given finer clothing than Solomon – the one of whom the court historian declares in 1 Kings 10:23, “Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.” – Solomon’s wealth was unimaginable, yet his grandeur was no match for the beauty of a field flower.

Consider how God provides for these two – then consider how much more will God provide for us – the ones whom God values more than the birds of the air and flowers of the field?

God cares for things we don’t think about ... how much more will God care for us?

God provides for birds and flowers ... Will God not also provide for us?

And while we get that in our minds – sometimes, doesn’t doubt creep in?

We worry.

Maybe anxiety overwhelms?

We find ourselves wondering:

Do we have enough?

Will we have enough?

It’s natural - this basic human anxiety for survival needs: food & clothing.

Anxiety I’ve read is like an itch – simply deciding we are not going to think about something does not make it go away.

It can very quickly become more than a feeling – it can overtake one’s life.

The Greek verbiage here for “worry” is *merimnaō* - “to be anxious” – it can also mean “to strive after” or “to put forth an effort” – this could imply then that maybe as faithful people we have another tact we could take – one which encourages us to start making decisions which are not controlled by anxiety.

Which may be why Jesus asks us to consider the ravens and lilies ... ?

This may be why Jesus draws the conclusions he does from the ravens and lilies ... ?

Maybe it’s his way of helping us to recognize that anxiety can cripple ... ?

For when we who find our daily needs being met – we have food to eat – we have clothes to wear – when we remember & ponder Jesus’ conclusions drawn from the ravens & lilies – we find our energy refocused in that we shine the spotlight of our worth not on what we have or

how we will get ahead ... rather on who we are & what we are becoming as a result of God's active presence and grace at work in our lives.

And this, my friends, can be freeing.

It is liberating to stop reaching after the golden ring on the carousel of life only to have it either just out of reach or realize once you've grabbed it that it's not a big enough ring to satisfy. When we break away from the mundane concerns of wanting more we are opened up to becoming concerned for the things of God's kingdom.

And this is the promise and command which surrounds the indicative and imperative of God's words in verses 31 & 32,

"Strive for God's kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

These two verses neatly balance what we have as disciples:

- The assurance of God's care for our needs, and
- The certainty that the Kingdom will finally declare God's sovereignty.

And, this takes faith – BIG FAITH – though big faith to God is 'As small as a mustard seed' or 'yeast mixed with flour' (Luke 13:18-21) – a little goes a long way ...

God's kingdom is powerful & irrepressible.

God's kingdom will inevitably grow into fullness – it will come into all its glory and it begins small ... like the mustard seed one of the greatest signs of God's kingdom is the very presence of these pocket communities of believers who are not only declaring verbally God's kingdom – they are living into that kingdom by the choices they daily make –

Like how they allocate their resources.

Or, how they participate in bringing about a more just and peaceful society.

Or, how they develop their personal, intellectual and spiritual identities as Christ's disciples.

Or, how they treat the people around them – from stranger to neighbor to family member.

These pocket communities conscientiously focus on how their choices reflect to the world and all who watch them what it is they value.

Who are these people?

Look around.

It is you. It is me. It is us.

We are these kingdom people of whom Jesus speaks.

We are the "little flock" to whom he references in this passage.

As the children's saying goes: "Here is the church. Here is the steeple. Open the doors and see all the people."

But let's not forget the doors are open at two times in the service ... to let the people in and to let the people out ... we are called to gather in the presence of God in order to go and bear witness to this presence in the world around us.

For as another saying goes, "I am the church. You are the church. We are the church, together."

We are the being ... saying ... and doing people of God who declare God's active presence in this world.

How do our choices reflect to all who watch us what it is we value?

Depending on the answer we either discover either a stranglehold or a stronghold.

I've read we have two basic impulses – to grasp or to give.

The alternative to our anxiety over holding tightly to that which we do not possess is ... to release our white-knuckled grip of that which we **do not** control.

The amazing part is that when we release our grip ... we are in turn released.

We store our treasure in heaven or earth – NOT BOTH.

The choice – sometimes the very difficult choice – is between our own selfish concerns or God's concern for how we spend our lives and how we will invest in this world – in the people and places around us – the very people whom Jesus died for – the very people God calls us to serve with love.

For where we invest ourselves and our resources sends a very clear message about where our heart is located.

Are we rooted here – in the things we cannot take with us?

Or, are we grounded in a treasure that cannot be consumed by earthly means because it is beyond us.

Are we devoted to acquiring "stuff" or are we devoted to showering the blessings we've been given by God upon those around us in response to the great grace God has showed us?

Does security lie in our things or in our devotion to God as we live into a realization of how much God loves us and how God desires to help us see how best to use these gifts in order to share the good news with others?

What do we need to release in order to be released?

How might the world look different to us and because of us if we took this passage a bit more serious ... if we:

- give up anxiety over that which we do not possess
- give allegiance to the One who promises to provide

- give attention to the needs around us that we can do something about

What if we held a ‘discipleship sale’ (as I’ve heard it called)?

What if we took an inventory of our stuff – our basement stuff ... our attic stuff ... our closet stuff – and decided to sell it in order to give to charities and human services?

What if we took our stuff and donated it?

What would such detachment from materialism declare to a watching world about our values?

What would be the cost?

We often tell someone about our love via the use of picture hearts.

We can text or imprint emails with emoticons of smiling, winking, furrowed brow hearts.

When I was younger we didn’t have email or text so our emotive icons had to wait for Valentine’s Day to arrive and those candy hearts. Those delicious little sugar rushes of candy that said things like: “Love You” – “U R Cute” “Ask me.”

Today, thanks to Justin Bieber, we can say it without words using only our hands:

I “heart” U ... & the response I “heart” U 2.

As people of faith, we know all about the One who enacted:

Emotive

Iconic

Wordless

Selfless

Love

A love which declares

there is a cost to loving without condition ...

there is a cost to discipleship ...

there is a cost to being God’s people who bring the kingdom in:

Little – day by day – step by faithful step – in simple yet profound way that declare what we value by how we live ...

As people of faith, we know the One who enacts this love – who pours out his heart – and who calls us to do the same ...

And his name is Jesus the Christ.

And his call is to put our heart and our treasure in the same place.

Amen & Amen.