



## The Nourishing Vocation Project

### Engaging the Living Word

### [Matthew 6:25-34](#)

#### What is this particular text?

- Part of Jesus' sermon on the mount
- A teaching
- Metaphor

#### How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- As a reorienting
  - Moving from our own concerns toward connecting with the rest of creation
- Portrays our importance as part of God's creation
- Shows that God's creation is much larger and full of life than our own anxiety
- Shows that working toward God's kingdom is about so much more than just us

#### How can this text function in the church today?

- Reminder to pay attention to what's outside the walls of our buildings
- Reminder not to get trapped by our own worries
- Assurance that God knows our needs
- There is so much more to life than our own worries
- Reminder that our bodies are intrinsically connected to the rest of God's creation
- Reminder that our faith is embodied

#### What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- At first, I struggled with this text because I worry a lot
  - I worry about....
    - Finances
    - How my body is perceived, particularly by cisgender people
    - Being targeted because of how my body is perceived
    - Anti-LGBTQ legislation and the effects it has/will have on my wellbeing
    - My future
    - My loved ones, particularly those who are struggling
    - Climate change
    - Whether my cats are drinking enough water
    - Family dynamics and relationships



- My worries are valid, and this text made them feel trivialized at first. Then I realized that's not the intent of the text
- After sitting with the text for some time, I began to experience it differently
  - I felt a sense of validation. My body is equally as every other piece of creation; my body is holy
  - I began to reorient myself from focusing on all my worries to looking out my window at the grass, trees, and birds

#### **What do you have to say to the text?**

- But some of us *do* have to worry about tomorrow – if we will eat, if we will find shelter, if we will survive
- Oh to be a flower and not have to worry about anything
- Today's trouble is more than enough for today, if you ask me
- I love birds; they're such a joy to watch
- Telling me not to worry about tomorrow won't stop me from worrying about it
- Thank you for reminding me that what's most important to God is my very body

#### **What do you see through this text from the story itself?**

- As part of creation, we are intrinsically connected to everything God has made
- Just as God cares for the birds and flowers, God also cares for us
- Each and every piece of God's creation is inextricably connected
- Being God's kingdom here on earth is for the sake of all of creation, ourselves included
  - "striving for the kingdom of God" doesn't mean ignoring our own basic needs

#### **What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)**

- Mind/body dualism leading to disconnect
- Passion for care of creation, but not always linking it to care of ourselves and our neighbors
- Crises of today:
  - Mental Health
    - Self-worth
    - Worth of others
  - Labeling some bodies as bad/undesirable
    - insinuating some bodies aren't as important as others in the scheme of God's creation

#### **What do you see within yourself?**

- My propensity to get stuck in my own worries
- My need to get out of my own head and look around me
- My continued reconnecting to my own body and the world around me since coming out as trans

#### **What is the context – textual and historical?**

- Part of Jesus' sermon on the mount
- Sandwiched between Jesus' teachings about serving two masters and judging others

#### **What questions does this text raise for you?**



- What do we focus on, and why?
- What am I not paying attention to what I need to be?
- What am I paying attention to that perhaps doesn't need or require that attention?
- How have I been disconnected by my own worries and anxieties?
- What if I gave my body the same dignity God gives it? How would this change the way I move through the world?

#### **What words/themes seem of particular import?**

- "Are you not of more value than they?"
- Worry
- "Strive first for the kingdom of God"
- "Today's trouble is enough for today"

#### **What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?**

- God knows and affirms that our bodies are so much more than what we wear or what we eat
- God affirms that our bodies are just as important as the rest of creation
- God affirms that our bodies are important just as they are
- When we strive for the kingdom of God, when we work toward God's beloved kin-dom becoming a reality here on earth, we do this work for the good of all creation, ourselves included
- Worry and anxiety are powerful, but God is more powerful

#### **What is the as-over-againstness of this text?**

- Our worries can create a barrier between us and the outside world, and even between us and our own selves
  - Causes us to become detached, disconnected
- Striving for the kingdom of God doesn't mean our own needs will be ignored
- We can easily think of are of little value to God

#### **Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?**

- Jesus proclaims God's love for all of creation – even the smallest and the seemingly simplest parts we often overlook
- God knows our needs
- God's kingdom, God's reign of justice and righteousness, encompasses all of creation

#### **What have others said about this text?**

- ["So yes, Jesus' sending us to consider](#) the lilies of the field and the birds of the air for examples of how we are also to be does just what it needs to do. It points me to what God has already done in the world and in my life. It reminds me that for all of time as we trust in God, somehow it always works out. The challenge, though, for me again today, is not only hearing these words but also to step into and embrace the blessing they are meant to bring. Maybe, in the end, all I need to do as Jesus said. Perhaps I only need to step outside and gaze at the sky, the still green grass, the now empty fall trees, and the occasional summer flower which somehow survived the first frost — to be reminded of the gift Jesus offers now in pointing to God's tender care for all that is." Janet Hunt
- ["In the Greek, the word for worry](#) *merimneso* means "to care for"; so we should hear it to mean, "to be overly concerned; to care too much; to be anxious about." It is that which we put our energy towards – it is that which takes up undue space in our mental landscape. So hear again



Jesus' words with this meaning in mind, "Therefore I tell you, do not care so much about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear." What, then, really matters?"  
Maren Sonstegard-Spray

**What will I teach or proclaim?**

- The bodies we inhabit are just as important to God as the rest of creation – God says so.
- Jesus isn't saying that our worries don't matter. He's saying that there is much more to our experiences as God's creations than that we worry about. Jesus isn't saying we shouldn't have worries; rather, he's encouraging us not to let them trap us.
- This text is about reconnecting to the world around us and to our own selves. When we only focus on our worries, we begin to become cut off from ourselves, our surroundings, and from God. When we are able to orient ourselves and our bodies as important pieces of God's creation – as being just as important to God as the birds and the flowers – it can help us feel less overwhelmed by all that we worry about. This doesn't mean we won't worry anymore, or that we won't get overwhelmed, but it might help us remain connected in the midst of it all.
- The faith we confess as followers of Jesus is deeply embodied. When we forget this, we miss an important piece of what it is to belong in God's kin-dom.