

The Rev. Duane A. Jesse, Senior Pastor
Zion Lutheran Church, Youngstown, Ohio

Thanksgiving Eve, November 23, 2021
Year B

First Reading: Joel 2:21-27

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Gospel Reading: Matthew 6:25-33

Sermon Title: “”

Theme

Text

First Reading – Joel 2:21-27

- ²¹Do not fear, O soil;
be glad and rejoice,
for the LORD has done great things!
- ²²Do not fear, you animals of the field,
for the pastures of the wilderness are green;
the tree bears its fruit,
the fig tree and vine give their full yield.
- ²³O children of Zion, be glad
and rejoice in the LORD your God;
for he has given the early rain for your vindication,
he has poured down for you abundant rain,
the early and the later rain, as before.
- ²⁴The threshing floors shall be full of grain,
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.
- ²⁵I will repay you for the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army, which I sent against you.
- ²⁶You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the LORD your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.

And my people shall never again be put to shame.

²⁷You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other.

And my people shall never again be put to shame.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 6:25-33

[Jesus said,] ²⁵“Therefore 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.”

Sermon

Today we are gathered for Thanksgiving, and thanksgiving will be the order of the day to be sure. But I noticed that in the first reading and the gospel reading that the proclamation is ... that the LORD *has done* many things.

The way our worship is ordered, especially the Prayers of Intercession, facilitates us asking for stuff. And there is scriptural support for this. In numerous places in the Old and New Testaments we are exhorted to ask for whatever we need, and depend on the LORD for our every need.

But as I studied the First Reading and the Gospel Reading I noticed that the LORD is not waiting for us to ask. And you know why that is? Because the LORD is not off playing golf somewhere not being attentive to the needs of creation and especially us, God's highest creation.

What we can conclude from this is that the LORD has in fact supplied our every need and more, and therefore we should be satisfied!

But we're not are we. We have an insatiable appetite for more – it is as if we have convinced ourselves that we will never have enough. I will never forget this, back in the fall of 2010, my father and I were driving someplace and chatting about something unimportant. My dad had a knack for small talk, meaningless conversation about stuff that didn't matter, but on this occasion, out of the blue he said, "You know, you spend your life scrimping and saving never thinking you will have enough to retire, and then one day you realize there's not enough time left to spend all you have." And he was right. He died a few months later. My mother will have enough too, given their modest lifestyle.

In the gospel reading Jesus confronted this notion of worry. I'm pretty sure my mom and dad worried about not having enough. Having five children, I think there were plenty of days when they lived paycheck to paycheck. I don't think they lost sleep over it, we never went hungry, but I am pretty sure they worried a bit about being able to supply the basic necessities of their family.

Jesus looked at the birds of the air and the lilies of the field and asked if God took care of them why wouldn't God take care of us?

You know, worry leads to stress, and stress leads to ill health. So then if we worried less and trusted God more, who has a proven track record of meeting our needs, then what would we do with all our time, we might ask?

Give praise and thanksgiving! That's right! Acknowledge that God is going to come through for us. It's going to happen. The only reason we should ask for things is because scripture tells us to, but that is not because God isn't aware of our needs, it's because God loves our devotion and attention. God also loves our praise and thanksgiving.

To worry that we will not have enough is to say that God isn't paying attention, or God has overlooked us. Nothing could be farther than the truth. God knows our every need, delights in giving us good gifts, and loves our praise and thanksgiving.

Let us give God some now.