

***25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***

Allow me to share with you the story about poor Willy Witherspoon:

Willy Witherspoon worried. Willy worried about the day... whether the weather would be warm and wet or windy and wonderful. Would Willy wear his warm woolies or his worn-out white Wranglers? Were Warren, Woody and Wilma walking to school today? Would breakfast be waffles with whipped cream or Wheaties with watermelon?

Willy worried about school. Would Mr. Winslow explain a lesson on wigwams or weevils? Would Willy have worksheets with word lists or write whimsical wit about wee whales? Would Wilma and Winnie whisper words to wound him? Would Warren and Woody want him on their

whiffle ball team? Willie's worries were way out of whack!

But to Willy Witherspoon and all who worry about... whatever, Jesus lovingly invites, ***Do not worry...[rather] seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*** And as we give thanks for all that has been given us, please join me...

My dear Christian friends,

Have you got the Willies? I mean, are you a Willy Whitherspoon? Some of us are definitely more the Willy worrier types. But all of us, depending on the situation, fall along the entire Willie worry spectrum: We wonder how we'll handle this, what we'll say to that person, who we'll meet, where we'll go, and when it's all going to happen. At the other end of the spectrum there are those who don't worry about anything, but it's often more from an arrogant self-reliance that we have all the answers rather than a confidence of the heart that the Lord will provide. And the rest fall into the middle of Willie worriers – worrying at some times and sometimes not at others.

Are you, then, a Willie Witherspoon? Think of poor Willie. How easy it would be for Willies dad Wally (don't worry, I'm not going to do this throughout the sermon) to dismiss Willies worries as simple. Come on, food, worksheets? But to him, they are significant. And you adults, quite honestly, many of your concerns about debt, or relationships, or employment seem pointless to a child... even though to the parent providing for a family, or a spouse honoring commitment, or a retiree struggling with limited income, these challenges are daunting. Your worries may manifest themselves in depression and anxiety, only to be dismissed as simply a lack of faith and told to "get over it?" You know as well as anyone how real your worries are.

But whatever kind of Willie worrier you are, always remember this: ***your heavenly Father knows.*** Only this isn't

some Big Bad Judge waiting to catch you worrying, carting you off to punishment. This is comfort through your Savior, from your heavenly Father, reminding you that your Father knows what you need and lovingly, faithfully provides it.

Consider how involved the Father is in the affairs of the world: ***Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?*** <sup>27</sup> ***Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?*** <sup>28</sup> ***And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.*** <sup>29</sup> ***Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.***

As Jesus sat on that hillside, preaching his Sermon on the Mount, you can imagine him plucking these illustrations literally out of the air. A bird flies by and Jesus notices. The lilies sway in the breeze and Jesus glorifies the Father through them. Such beautiful illustrations of how the Father is intimately concerned about his people.

I mean, we are so blessed that few, if any of us, worry about bare necessities such as food and clothing. Oh, we may crave eating at the finest restaurants or long to wear certain clothes, but none of us need worry about the basics, so blessed are we. Yet, don't miss Jesus' point: there need be no Willie worriers here. Our heavenly Father "knows [your] need and well provides." ***If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?***

Finally, that's the sticky wicket, isn't it – ***little faith?*** With the exceptions of certain depressions and anxieties, so many of our Willie worries are simply a matter of placing all things in the Father's capable hands. Yet we look to ourselves for solutions, doubting God's wisdom and will. We chase after the things of this world

rather than ***seek first His kingdom***. How many of us will spend Thanksgiving in homes judged by most of the world as borderline palaces and feasting on more food than most of the world will see in a week – blessings from God himself - and yet by black Friday we'll want more, fear more, worry more!

***O you of little faith...do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*** <sup>32</sup> ***For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*** (And now you know how the rest goes...) <sup>33</sup> ***But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***

Yes, ***Seek first [the Lord's] kingdom*** and recognize your Willie worries for the lack of faith that they are. ***Seek first [the Lord's] kingdom*** and confess your ingratitude, your fears, and your sinful desires. ***Seek first [the Lord's] kingdom*** and turn to him with repentant hearts. Then, ***seek first [the Lord's] kingdom and his righteousness*** – the Lord, our righteousness as he is called – the preacher on the mount. ***Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness*** won for you on another mount and out of an empty tomb. ***Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness*** with faith in your heart... ***and all these things will be given to you as well.*** Each worry paid for. Each need met. Each promise kept. No Willie Worriers here. For all is ***cast on him, because he cares for you.***

So give thanks today, tomorrow, and every day of grace the Lord gives you. Give thanks for the people who love you and hate you. Give thanks for the abundance of food and the protection of shelter. Give thanks for the beauty of creation and the products of industry. Give thanks for the opportunities and challenges of life. Give thanks for peace and the resolution that rises out of conflict. Give thanks for the Spirit at work within and the Savior at throughout. Give thanks to the Lord for his grace, ***and all...things...given to you as well.*** Amen.