

Here's how today's reading begins:

- **'Therefore I tell you,**
- OK: why 'therefore'? What has Jesus just been saying?
- This: **'No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth [Mammon].**
- Note: Not 'do not' serve, but 'can not' serve.
- It's just not possible to serve both:
- Like going by car to Sydney and Perth at the same time
- Because this is the case, Jesus gives his teaching
- For us who are on the path that God has established.

Today I'm proclaiming Good News:

- Jesus sought the kingdom of God first, above all else
- And all that there is has been given to him
- We, who are united with him through holy baptism
- Do not have to be burdened by anxiety
- But are free joyfully to trust our Father
- Knowing that he wills to give us the kingdom.

Listen to Jesus' word: **'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.**

- Here there is a command: do not worry
- In the New Testament the Greek word for 'worry'
- Can be used negatively, as it is here
- In the sense of being overcome by anxiety about our own lives.
- But sometimes it can be used positively
- In the sense of showing due care
- For those we have a calling to provide for
- And indeed for neighbour in their need:
- Jesus is not here forbidding us to care
- For *others* when they are hungry or thirsty or naked.

Today Jesus is speaking to us as his disciples:

- We are not people who have been called to serve Mammon
- But we have been called to serve God
- So we have a command not to be anxious
- About what we will eat, drink, or wear.

Now Jesus gives us a series of questions

- To help us think clearly about reality
- And about living out our status as children of the Father.
- Here is his first question:
- **Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?**
- Jesus will make clear that these things are necessities
- And he, who has just fasted, and is on the way to the cross,
- Is not naïve regarding the reality of human suffering
- But he asks his question knowing how we will answer:
- Life *is* about more than eating, drinking, and being clothed
- All these things *are means to a greater end* -
- We eat to live, we don't live to eat -
- And Jesus will make clear that the greatest end
- Is life with God

Jesus goes on to give his next command and question:

**Look 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?**

- The command is to look – *to look at the birds*
- So, if you stop in life, and take the time to look at creation
- If you pay attention to the birds and how they live
- You are living as a faithful disciple of Jesus.
- Jesus gives us his word
- That the birds are fed by the heavenly Father,
- And Jesus assures us that we are of more value to God:
- He says this to free us from anxiety.
- We will come back to the point about being of value to the Father
- Because the question of our identity,

- Of whether we have status with the Father
- Seems to loom behind this whole section of teaching.

Here is Jesus next question: **And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?**

- Again, Jesus gives this question to free us from worry:
- He asks whether this sort of worry is practical
- Whether it works to any advantage.
- In Australia we live on average about 730,000 hours.
- Worrying, Jesus says, won't even bring it to 730,001
- So, be practical: stop worrying, it doesn't work

Then Jesus asks two more questions:

- **And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But 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?**
- Again, Jesus commands us to look at creation
- This time at the flowers, and their beauty.
- We often wear clothes to mark out our status
- And king Solomon was *the* high status man:
- And yet, Jesus says, the humble flowers have a greater glory
- Than Solomon robed in royal splendour.
- Jesus frees us from anxiety by asking:
- If God clothes the transient grass in such splendour
- Won't he also clothe us? Even though our faith is so small?

Jesus then gives this concluding teaching: **Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

- Firstly, Jesus makes it clear that food, drink, and clothing

- Are necessities: we cannot live without them.
- He also makes it clear that our heavenly Father knows this -
- That God is not indifferent to hunger or thirst or nakedness
- But he encourages us to seek first for the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is not something that we build

- God's kingdom is *his* reign, *his* rule
- And it is revealed in the true king: Jesus
- He is the one who put the reign of God's kingdom above all else
- But what was his path?
- It was the path of suffering and the cross.
- And on the cross he cried out
- **'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'**
- In what sense were 'all these things' given to him?
- To him who, hungry, thirsty, and naked cried out from the cross?
- The cross was not the end, but the lowest point
- On the path to glory: it was through the path of humility
- That Jesus was raised to the place of the highest status
- So that at his name every knee bows and every tongue confesses
- The status we worry about, that we try to assure ourselves about
- Through what we eat and drink and wear
- Only one person has the true status
- That can bring us peace and joy
- And for him, as for us, it is through the path of the cross.

Through baptism we are in Christ: we share what is his

- Including his call to glory with the Father
- Our freedom from worry is through Christ:
- His word to us, which gives us his Spirit
- And the unity we have with him through baptism
- So that where he is, we may be too.
- So, let's receive his word as people loved by God
- And find the freedom from worry that he gives as a gift.
- In Jesus' name. Amen.