

Readings: Genesis 1:2-2:3; Romans 8:18-25; Matthew 6: 25-34

This is a Church of England church and there are certain things that are central to the way we do things. One of them is the sermon. Usually, we speak about what we have heard from the Old Testament, the Gospel and a reading from the New Testament. This morning I am going to concentrate on just one of these – the Gospel. The reason for this is that I want us to concentrate on Jesus and our relationship with him.

I'm going to do something a bit different. Most of you will know that I am a teacher. I started at the age of 15 and 47 years later I am still wanting people to learn something that will change their lives. I have a very simple question for you. I will not say to anyone you must give me an answer.

Here is the question: When you think of the life of Jesus, what is the one thing about him that has remained in your head?

Now I've got a list of things that I found in a book. It says Jesus was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. We know that the darkness and sadness of the world descended on him as he went to the cross. The scene in Gethsemane, where he is wrestling with his Father's will, and in agony wondering if he's come the right way, is one of the most harrowing stories ever told. We know that he wept at the tomb of Lazarus, and that he was sad when people refused to trust God and see the wonderful things he was doing.

Now, just like Jesus, we have been confronted with great difficulties, but that is not the full story of our lives. We have watched the sun shining yesterday and as I went for a long walk with my dog I saw the birds. Jesus said, Look at the birds in the sky. They don't plant seeds, they don't store things in barns and your Father in heaven feeds them. He had watched a thousand different kinds of flowers growing in the fertile Galilee soil. Where did this beauty come from? It didn't spend hours in front of the mirror putting on make-up. It didn't go shopping. So many of the things that I saw on my walk yesterday were glorious, God-given, beautiful.

Jesus had a strong, lively sense of the goodness of his Father, the Father of this world. His whole spirituality is many a mile from those teachers who insisted that the present world was a place of shadows, gloom and vanity, and that the true philosophy consisted in escaping it and concentrating on the things of the mind. His teaching grew out of his own experience. He told them something that we need to. We shouldn't worry about tomorrow. We have this day before us, and we should use it to make God our priority. He has filled the world with wonderful and mysterious things, full of beauty and energy and excitement, and wants his human creatures above all to trust him and love him and receive their own beauty, energy and excitement from him.

So when Jesus tells you not to worry about what to eat, or drink, or wear, he doesn't mean these things don't matter. Jesus summons people to a freedom that comes from taking a first step even when the second and third step are not yet in view. This discussion raises the question between worldly-wise subsistence and childlike life – between the adult who ruins their life out of a worry for food and clothing, and the one who God takes seriously, the God who created both body and life.

The statements bear a marked resemblance to wisdom that should be obvious to everyone, but to act on such wisdom needs more than a little faith. We do it understanding that the life of faith is realized in our ability to live the present day confidently, free from worry about tomorrow. The terseness of many of the sayings reflects the radical nature of liberation with which Jesus would set us free to live out our lives. For true life comes only when life is received as a gift and can therefore be lived in fundamental confidence.