

SERMON FOR LENTEN 1 2020

TEXT: MATTHEW 6: 25-34

THEME: LOVE SO RICH IN PROVISION

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26** 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? **27** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? **28** And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. **34** “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

In the name of Jesus:

In our preschool chapel services the children sing a song called “Love in a Box.” The words convey the utter greatness of God’s love. The song goes: “Oh you can’t keep Jesus’ love in a box, love in a box, love in a box oh you can’t keep Jesus love in a box cause His love will keep bubbling through!”

Just how big is God’s love? If you think of God’s love the size of an elephant, you are thinking too small. If you think of God’s love in terms of the

size of a blue whale, that is still too small. God's love is bigger than a cruise ship, a mountain, it is bigger than the whole cosmos! According to current scientific estimates, the universe is 93 billion light years in diameter. That means that if a really bright light were turned on at one far end of the universe, it would take that light 93 billion years to reach the other end. And light travels pretty fast; it travels at the speed of light! Yes, God's love for you is as big as the whole cosmos, because, in Christ, he created it all for you. And He created it all for you as a free gift of His love.

There is a famous Christian cosmologist named Guy Consolmagno. He is the director of the Vatican Observatory. He is involved in all kinds of astronomical research, but his particular specialty, for years, has been meteorites. He wrote an essay recently in which he describes the joy that he finds, spiritual joy even, in his study of these asteroids. "My meteorites are indeed crying out 'Glory!' and beckoning our silent planet to awaken and sing to the Lord once more," he writes. "I do experiments in my lab just because I love doing the work. I mean, meteorites! And liquid nitrogen! What's not to love? I know now that the love I experience is derived ultimately from the Creator of the rocks that I experiment with, who is also the Father of love." He loves learning about creation, because he has come to realize that the Creator

is so full of love. Every good thing of his creation flows from the love of God. Truly, God is glorious, and generous. Truly your God is the Father of love.

Jesus tells us in our text for tonight to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble”

Your heavenly Father loves you, and he will care for you. That’s the bottom line of this passage. In Jesus Christ, he gives you his righteousness and an eternal kingdom. And even as He gives you every spiritual blessing, He assures you that He will surely also daily and richly provide you with all that you need to support this body and life.

Jesus provides an odd picture, in order to make a point. Have you ever seen a bird on a tractor plowing a field? Or a bird in bib overalls unloading beans into a grain wagon? Of course not. Birds don’t do that. Birds can’t do that. They simply receive the gifts of God.

Jesus then says to pay attention to the lilies. Do they work for their clothing? Have you ever seen lilies out picking cotton? Have you ever seen a lilly sitting at a sewing machine? Neither have I, flowers don’t work for what

they have. It has been given to them as a gift. God dresses the flowers. And that is the point that Jesus is making. If God provides for the birds and the flowers, how much more will your heavenly Father care for you. You are worth more, to him, than the graceful birds and the delicate flowers. God loves you. Every good thing that you have is a gift from his hand. It flows to you from his “fatherly, divine goodness and mercy.” And, if God has given you life itself, and eternal life in Christ—salvation and righteousness and an eternal kingdom—if God has given you these things, he will surely also provide simple gifts such as food and clothing.

Jesus makes the same point in Luke’s Gospel to assure us that we can seek all that we need from our heavenly Father, even the greatest things, such as his Holy Spirit. Jesus says this: “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” [Lk 11:11–13] Jesus is saying that the heavenly Father’s love for you is even greater than the love of an earthly father for his child.

Who is this heavenly Father who will so surely provide for us? He is God the Father, so full of goodness and love. And who are these children who

receive his love and provision? We are . . . evil. We are evil, Jesus says. And yet, he assures us, God will provide not only earthly gifts, a fish, an egg—but also the greatest gifts, his Holy Spirit, faith, hope, forgiveness, salvation, his kingdom, eternal life. He gives so many gifts, such great gifts . . . to sinners. Think of how God shows us His love every day. He causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall even for the wicked. He provides for our needs. He defends us from all kinds of danger. He guards and protects us from all kinds of evil. He does this every time, all the time, everyday, protecting us from the dangers and the disasters that Satan seeks to throw our way.

Our Heavenly Father does this everyday. Even though we are sinners, He loves us, without any merit or worthiness in us. God just keeps giving and blessings we poor miserable sinners.

You and I know this to be true. But when we look around, we see pain and tragedy in the world. A pandemic and illness, scarcity, famine, and poverty. We see people who suffer at the hands of others. Is God's love so big, even when these things are happening? Yes, His love for all is enormous, it is deep and fatherlike. It is a great mystery as to why such hard things come into the lives of people, and a deep mystery as to why people suffer. We can't fully explain it.

But the greatest mystery is this, that God loves and cares for sinners, for you and me, for the sake of Jesus. For Jesus bore our sins on the cross,, so that we might share his sonship, his special place in the Father's heart. Because of Jesus, our heavenly Father deals with us in enormous love, and richly and daily supplies us, protects us, and surrounds us with beauty. May God grant all of us eyes to recognize his loving gifts in our daily lives. And may His love for us flow on, through us, to others—so that we show ourselves to be his children. Amen.