

~From the Bishop



*‘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*

When I read this in Matthew, I think back to a song that was popular a few years ago. It had a sort of Jamaican beat, and the singer sang over and over again, “Don’t Worry, be Happy.” And whenever I heard it, I thought of palm trees and the blue ocean, and drinking something cool and fruity on a white sandy beach. This song speaks about worry as if we can just turn it off, check out from life, distance ourselves from all our cares and concerns and feelings and live as if life didn’t matter.

At Thanksgiving, we give thanks, because life does matter. The cares and concerns and feelings we have speak to how invested we are in living a life that matters. As we eat too much pie and turkey, we give thanks that we do not have to worry about what we shall eat or what we shall wear. We give thanks that life is more than food and clothing. We give thanks, that as much as God is involved in creation and feeding the birds of the air, making the lilies beautiful, causing grass and grain to grow, much as God is involved in all that is around us, we give thanks at how much more is God involved with that which is even more precious. As people of faith we take time to thank God for how much more God cares for you, provides for you, and gives you what you need the most.

Jesus says do not worry or be anxious, because Jesus knows how easy it is for us to get bogged down in the details. Of course food and clothing matter, but they only really matter if you don’t have any. I read the other day, about two Christian congregations. One is

here in the U.S., and one is in Malawi. The congregation in the U.S. sent some folks over to Malawi for a visit and they saw first hand how the people struggled. The country was in the grip of a severe famine. People were barely surviving on what little they had, and yet worship was a priority, and the church in Malawi was full to busting on Sunday mornings. After the visiting group returned home, they continued communicating with this congregation in Malawi, and along with gifts of support, they sent a letter commending the congregation for their lively and thriving faith in the midst of such hardship. And they asked the question, “How is it that you have faith when you have so little?” And the people of the church in Malawi, sent back a letter of thanks, and their own question, “How is it that you have faith when you have so much?”

The congregation in the U.S. wondered how it was that the people from Malawi were not driven to despair. The people from the church in Malawi wondered how it is that having our basic needs met and then some, doesn’t lead us to trust in ourselves rather than God. It is a good question. It is easy to take what we have for granted. Having the food and clothing and shelter we need frees us to focus on what kind of food, clothing and shelter we want. And this can easily distract us from what really matters.

The people of the church in Malawi know first hand about faith born of desperation. But they are not alone in this. We know too that often it is out of need and desperation that we seek God. So often, it is a crisis that brings us to our knees. So often it takes an emptiness that we cannot name, or when life spins beyond our reach and we don’t know what else to do but pray. So often, faith comes when trust in God is all you have to go on. We are blessed when despair leads to hope in God. We are blessed when crisis brings us new understanding of God in our lives.

While there may be times when we come to God in desperation, how nice it is to come to God in praise and thankfulness for the many blessings we enjoy.

At Thanksgiving and every time we worship, we gather to offer thanks to God, not just for food and clothing but also for the life we have that is so much more than food and clothing. We thank God for the wonderful gift of people we love and the blessing of people who love us. We thank God for all that God has made us to be and everything God calls us to become. But most of all, we thank God for giving us what we need the most, the saving power of Jesus the Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan

