

Pentecost A-2, 2008

May 25, 2008 Confirmation Sunday

Matthew 6: 24-34

Title: Keeping the Main Thing, The Main Thing

Want to know what's important to Jesus? Read his manifesto!

Commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, the central teachings of Jesus in three short chapters, Matthew 5-7. Our confirmands spent three years studying the life of faith---Jesus disciples spent one afternoon with him on the Mount.

I did a Google search on the Sermon on the Mount---only 2,010,000 hits. It would take more than an afternoon to read all of that. A lifetime of reading on Jesus' life giving guidance. We don't do it justice by calling these monumental words the Sermon on the Mount. Instead we should call them Essentials for Life, on Keeping the Main Thing, the Main Thing.

Jesus says some tender things here—Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God. Jesus makes big, huge claims about us, his disciples---YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. Jesus says some demanding things here—He says You know the commandment Do Not Kill---I say to you if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable for judgment. Jesus wants us to keep our priorities straight, he hands us a stick of dynamite—You can't serve God and money. Notice He doesn't say—good luck, try it, some of you might navigate successfully with two masters—nope, can't be done. There can't be more than one absolute priority in life.

All this is about what—keeping the main thing, the main thing. Which is precisely what confirmation Sunday is all about....Living as God intends...to live in faith, love and obedience to the will of God.

How ironic that right smack dab in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus asks five questions. We ask our confirmands five key life questions today—

Do you promise to live among God's faithful people....hear the word and share the supper...proclaim the good news of God through word and deed....to serve all people following the example of Jesus....to strive for justice and peace through all the earth....Main Thing Kind of Questions.

Notice what Jesus asks:

1. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?
2. Are you not of more value than the birds of the air?
3. Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?
4. And why do you worry about clothing?
5. 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?

DUH! If these are the key questions Jesus asks—piece of cake, a no brainer....of course, we know we are of more value than the birds and the lilies and that life is more than about feeding our faces and wearing brand name clothing. But Jesus is addressing what gets in the way of keeping the main thing, the main thing.

Our worry, our anxiety, our fears, our dread....mind you some worries are good---like the church worrying over confirmands seeing this day as graduation, rather than beginning.

Worry closes down our hearts; it puts up a barricade to grace, it plagues us and paralyzes us from the life God intends. The worry over tomorrow gives money its bewitching power.

If you saw the movie Marshall you saw a community ravaged by tragedy. A college football team is killed in a plane crash—except for two players and one assistant coach who didn't make the trip. Amidst this bottomless sorrow the decision is made to form a football team for the next season. Marshall is used to winning. No way, no way in this world, they will win, and the surviving assistant coach is filled with worry about this. The new head coach gathers with this despondent assistant in the sanctuary of a church, beneath the cross of Jesus. What

the new coach says is—we won't win! That's not why we play now. We play to play.

He puts perspective on the coach's worry. Gets him outside of himself. Consider the lilies of the field; look at the birds of the air. What would happen to us if we spent more time in contemplation of creation? If we beheld the ants on our driveway? It might awaken us to the MAIN THING....That we are to be unobstructed channels for the flow of God's grace....and how silly our worries are....they block our participation in the main thing.

--Jesus encountered a rich young ruler and invited him to let go of his riches. He could not abandon his riches. He missed out on life.

--the Pharisees were so worried about their religious rules they are blinded to the presence of God in Jesus

--Pontius Pilate is so worried about holding on to his power, he can't let go of it and he misses out on grace and life.

It's all over scripture---people so worried they miss the joy of living. And worry is likely to find a home in us.

Jesus wants to liberate us from the power of worry, because he wants us alive, free, full channels of his grace. As Paul says, We are stewards of the mysteries of God. That's all about you and me offering grace, mercy, forgiveness to others. Jesus has an anecdote to worry. It's the gift of faith in him, that tomorrow will bring not just worries, but Him. That whatever tomorrow brings, it will bring Jesus.

Were we to consider this, look at this, step back and gain a faith perspective, what amazing stewards of the mysteries of God we would be.

What if we children of the living God took on nicknames the way our Native American ancestors bore the names of creation.

Rachel Elizabeth Austin. SPARROW Jessica Leigh Brooks.BLUEBIRD Jonathan Edward Lee EAGLE, Emily Lauren Nordstrom CRANE, Olivia Ann Wedegaetner CARDINAL....to remind

us that our names are written on the hand of God. We are of more value than all He has made. Keep the main thing, the main thing.

You and me stewards, bearers, of the mysteries of God.

Bill Harley was sitting at his son Dylan's t-ball game, the last game of the season. That year everybody hit the ball, except an awkward girl named Tracy. She was more often than not spaced out. But in this last game, to everyone's surprise, Tracy smacked a ball into center field. Everyone was cheering for Tracy to run. RUN TRACY RUN! And she did. She made it to first base, the coach pointed her to second. She rounded third. A home run was certain. She was on her way to a glorious ending off her first hit. But just as she headed home this old Mutt saw Tracy and ran up to her. Thirty feet from a legitimate home run. Tracy looked to home plate. She looked at her parents. She looked at the dog. Tracy fell to her knees and hugged the dog.

Brothers and sisters, why worry about getting to home plate? Will we go bound by our worries? Look at the birds of the air

Consider the lilies of the field.....

Keep the main thing, the main thing.