

Proper 8C (Pentecost 11)

Text: Luke 12:22-34

Title: Crows and Weeds

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Crows and weeds. If you ever wondered if God cares about you, look at the crows and the weeds.

Crows are not beautiful in appearance or song. They aren't pretty. Crows are not songbirds. They are noisy. Edgar Allen Poe used the Raven to symbolize hopelessness and despair. No state has the crow or the raven as their state bird. Crows may be smart, but crows do not plant fields, they do not build barns (like that fellow from last week's story), and yet they have plenty to eat. God feeds even the crows.

And if God feeds the crows, don't you think he'll feed you? Aren't you worth more to God than a crow?

And the lilies. Now the lilies are beautiful, even more beautiful than Solomon. But lilies grow wild. You can plant them in your garden, but you can also see them growing wild in the fields and in the ditches. Think about wildflowers. No one plants them. No one waters them. No one fertilizes them. They just grow. A "wildflower" is just a weed with better PR.

And when you need to get a fire started on a cold night, the lilies and grass and the rest of the plants and weeds go into the oven to be burned, without a second thought.

If God clothes the grass and the lilies and the weeds, which are here one day and gone the next, don't you think he'll clothe you?

It's an easy question for us to consider, as we stuff our faces with food, and quickly become one of the most obese cultures to walk the face of the earth.

It's an easy question for us to consider, as we have closets overflowing with clothes and shoes, many of which we never wear, that don't fit, or that are no longer in style, but we still hang on to them.

It's easy to say, "Don't worry, God will take care of you," when you've never had to worry about basic things like clothes or food or shelter.

Most of us have never gone hungry. Most of us have never spent the night shivering from cold. Most of us have not had to worry about where we would spend the night.

I know that I've never had to worry about starving. I've never worried that I wouldn't have clothes to wear. I've never had to worry about finding a place to sleep. So it's pretty easy for me to agree with Jesus and say, "Don't worry about food or clothing; God will take care of you."

But there are certainly people who have had these worries, who have wondered where their next meal would come from.

Those people have might question Jesus here.

If what Jesus says is true, then why do people starve? Why are people homeless? Why is there so much suffering in the world? Why do we see commercials asking us to adopt children in foreign lands and to pay for their food or their healthcare or their education? Why doesn't God take better care of them?

Here is the point....

All of these things are important. It's important that people have food and clothing and a roof over their heads. These are the basics that people need to live, and God doesn't enjoy watching people suffer.

But some things are even more important than food, or clothes, or a home. It's hard to imagine, but there are things more important than life itself.

That's the kingdom of God. To be a member of God's kingdom is the most important thing, more important than life itself.

God's kingdom is not an earthly kingdom, and that's a good thing. You should not become a Christian or join a church and expect that God will reward you financially. That's not the point.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." And that's a good thing.

Things of this world don't last. Things of this world get broken or stolen or rot or waste away. But the treasures of God's kingdom are heavenly. They will never break or get stolen or rot or waste away. Our problem is that we can't see, we can't touch, we can't grasp these heavenly treasures.

To be a member of God's kingdom is to have faith and trust in Him, to believe that these treasures are real, and they are stored up for you in heaven.

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." We can't see our heavenly treasures, but we can see the earthly ones.

We can look at our neighbor and see his house and his car and think that that's what we need, too. We can't look up to heaven and see our treasures there. We can't see forgiveness. We can't see peace with God. We can't see the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

But Jesus still gives us ways to experience our heavenly treasures here on earth, to strengthen our faith in Him, and to build our trust as we live in His kingdom.

God blesses you with food. Jesus feeds you with food better than he gives any raven or crow. Jesus feeds you at His table with His own body and blood.

God blesses you with clothing. Jesus clothes you in apparel far more beautiful than any lily or rose or wildflower, more beautiful than King Solomon's Robes. In Holy Baptism Jesus clothes you with Himself, with His own righteousness.

In these two sacraments, God feeds and clothes His people.

God knows that we are weak, that we need things that we can see and touch and taste, that we have a hard time believing. And so He joins His words and promises to real, physical things, things like water and bread and wine, that we can see and touch and taste in order to strengthen your faith.

Do you ever wonder if God really cares for you? Do you wonder if God really loves you?

Remember your baptism. Make the sign of the cross. Splash a little water on yourself from time to time. Know that with words and water you have been clothed with salvation. It's a heavenly treasure, but you get to experience it here in an earthly way.

Do you ever wonder if God really cares for you? Do you wonder if God really loves you?

Come to the Lord's Table. Receive His body and blood, given and shed for you. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Know that you have been nourished by Jesus Christ Himself.

God does take care of you, better care than He gives to the crows or the weeds or anything else in all of creation. God became man, He took on human flesh for you, something He didn't do for the crows or the weeds, or anything else.

So what about the poor and needy, the starving and the homeless? Jesus has them covered, too. Jesus says, "Sell your possessions and give to the needy."

Those of you who have more than you need, give to those who have none.

God will feed and clothe His children, and He uses you to do so. God lets you join in the fun and play along.

There's a reason why you have more food and clothes than you really need. There is someone else out there whom God will provide for, and He just might use your stuff to take care of them.

Yes, God does feed the birds and tend the flowers, but you can do so, too. You can feed the birds and grow a garden and care for God's creation.

How much more should you care for the people around you!

So don't worry. Don't be afraid. The Father gives you His kingdom, and He'll take care of you.