

Kingdom Provision
Matthew 6:25-34

In two days Americans are going to go vote. If you listen to the prognosticators, the number one issue that will decide the election is inflation. I don't need to tell you about it or define it for you because we all know about it. The problem with inflation is that it causes scarcity because one dollar last year is worth 90 cents or less today. What cost a dollar last year costs a \$1.15 today. And when you ask most Americans what will decide their vote they name inflation way ahead of rising crime, abortion, immigration, education, parental rights, racism, the war in Ukraine, issues of gender and sexuality, election integrity, corona virus, foreign policy or even nuclear war.

And all those issues—one could argue—are big deals and potentially pose a huge threat. But inflation is more immediate because inflation strikes right at the heart of the anxiety addressed in the passage for today. The anxiety surrounds a simple question

Will I have enough?

Will I have enough to put clothes on my back, food in my family's belly and a roof over our heads? Will I have enough to take a vacation? Will I have enough to send my kids to college? Will I have enough to retire? Will I have enough to give my peace of mind? Have I done enough? Have I achieved enough? Have I mattered enough?

Will I have enough?

Even Jesus' disciples asked that question. One day when Jesus was teaching a crowd of 5,000 men plus women and children, the day was going on long. People had traveled for hundreds of miles to hear Jesus teach. And at dinner time His disciples said to Jesus, "Send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

Jesus' disciples saw that situation and believed there was no way there would be enough.

Will I have enough?

It's an open question for many people. And it's a very old question. It's a question asked by people, everywhere, at all times. And people ask it amid absolute abundance because material abundance is never enough.

That's because nothing but the Kingdom of God is always enough. And do you remember the definition of God's Kingdom we've been using in this sermon series:

The Kingdom is the world that pleases God.

We are reading Matthew's version of this teaching today but in Luke's version, Jesus ends with this promise:

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Luke 12:32-34

That is where we want to be, correct? We want to live fearlessly out of the abundance of God's Kingdom. Wouldn't it be nice to have enough confidence in our Heavenly Father, the King of all creation, to sell what we have and give to those who really need it. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be invested enough in eternal things that cannot be destroyed, rather than temporal things that can be stolen or ruined or lost. Wouldn't it be nice to have heart that treasures the right things, things that really matter and fill our soul, rather than things that don't and won't.

This is what we all want right? We want to be sets free from anxiety, worry and fear. We want be generous and make an eternal impact upon people's lives.

We are just dogged by this question:

Will I have enough?

But Jesus changes our perspective.

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?

Matthew 6:25

The word anxious figures in prominently in our Scripture lesson today. It appears six times. Anxiety, anxiousness is the very attitude that God Jesus tells us to avoid. The Greek word translated as anxiety is **merimnao**. And its literal meaning is to be pulled apart in two different directions. And that's what anxiety does, correct? We have no anxiety if we know where we are going. There is relief in just making a decision—even if it turns out to later to be bad one. But what is difficult is not having a mind that is made up, caught between two options, limping between two opinions. And the Bible actually has a reference to this kind of thing—double-minded. And it means someone who is caught between loving God and loving the world. Jesus' half-brother James teaches that anyone who cannot decisively love either God or the world, because we cannot serve two masters, will be subject to chronic anxiety. They will always be pulled apart in two different directions. **James 1:7-8:**

For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

I think we tend to read statements like these and think "God rewards us for faithfulness. And God rewards us for trusting Him." That's true. But it goes even deeper than that. What Jesus is really saying here is if allow ourselves to become materialists, if we look to material things (money, possessions, food, clothing, et cetera) to define our existence and spark our joy—then we are missing most of our what life

is all about. We are made for so much more than material things and miss entire dimensions of life when the material world comes before the Kingdom of God.

C.S. Lewis famously said:

Aim at heaven and you get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.

We need things. Material things are not unimportant. We are material beings not spirits, not ghosts. Trying going for a day without drinking any water and see how important material things are! Jesus didn't say, "Life is not about what you will eat or drink or wear or your body?" That's not what Jesus said. But Jesus said, "Is not life about more than these things?" God made things good and He want us to have them.

But when material things are mis-ordered in our life, we battle anxiety because we are torn between trusting God for great big things, like our eternal salvation but we don't trust Him to provide a sandwich and a soda for lunch.

But Jesus promises we can trust God to provide for us because we see God provide marvelously for insignificant things.

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? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 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...

Matthew 6:26-30

At a previous church I served there was a man who, let's just say, was I saw as not a huge supporter of what my work there. He was extremely critical and always seemed angry about something. Every single meeting we all dreaded what he might say or do. Most Sundays he found me after worship to point something he believed was wrong.

One evening I left the church close to 9:00 PM. It was mid-summer and there was a lot of daylight even at that hour. Out there in the parking lot was this man, who I frankly dreaded seeing because I feared what he might say. He was painting a handrail in the parking lot—at 9:00 at night.

I greeted him and he asked what I was doing there so late. And then I mentioned him being there late and he said as brushed some paint, "Little things matter."

I saw him quite differently after that because he was obviously all in. Instead of a cantankerous gadfly, I saw a guy who just cared deeply about His Church.

More than once Jesus taught, He who is faithful in little is faithful in much.

The Lord proves exceptionally faithful in providing for little things.

Scientists say there may be as many as 430 billion birds on the earth. That's a lot drumsticks. But Jesus cares for them all. Jesus promised that not even one of these birds falls to the ground without His say so.

Or think about the wildflowers that grow in the field. No one plants them. No one takes care of them. But there they are—radiant and beautiful in their glory. Here is a field in Western Oklahoma **(insert pic)**. And here's one in the Wichita Mountains. **(insert picture)**. And here is one I clicked on a hillside in Israel growing way out in the middle of nowhere. **(insert picture)**

No one planted these. No landscaping service was involved. God just provided. Have you ever been down in cave, hundreds of feet below the surface of the earth? And suddenly you walk into a space that is absolutely beautiful. The colors of the rocks, the shapes. Maybe there is a underground lake or stream. And there is life down there too. Then you stop to consider that cave laid there, undiscovered and unseen by human eyes and only in the last 100 years or less, someone stumbled upon its beauty.

God just creates beautiful things. He doesn't have to. He just does. He takes care of it all because it belongs to Him—every bit of it. **Psalm 50:10-11:**

For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine.

He takes care of all of it. Doesn't it make sense that He would take care of you too? God is faithful in taking care of little things—like flowers and birds that in the long run don't count for a terrible amount. Doesn't that mean we can count on Him taking care of us?

It does. And because we can trust God to provide it opens up the possibility to live what we're going to call a Kingdom economy.

O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But 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.

Matthew 6:30-34

So, here Jesus lays down the challenge. Here Jesus calls us to live according to Kingdom economy.

What is a Kingdom economy? A Kingdom economy has a different starting point than that to which we are accustomed. A Kingdom economy begins with the assumption of abundance. A Kingdom economy starts with the idea that Jesus is predisposed, inclined, determined even to provide. Trusting in the Kingdom economy is a like filling your bucket from one of the Great Lakes. You don't worry at all about not having enough water to fill your bucket hundreds, thousands, millions of times. Having enough doesn't even compute.

The opposite of a Kingdom economy is and economy of scarcity. The starting point of an economy scarcity presumes our own provision. An economy of scarcity begins with we can do rather than what

God can do. An economy of scarcity is like taking same bucket and filling it from a pothole in the road. From the very beginning, you assume that bucket is going to drain the pothole.

Here is the question, “Are we dipping out of a lake or out a pothole?” Are we choosing a source of abundance or scarcity? Are we drawing on our own resources or are we drawing upon God’s?

But here is this word again—anxious. And remember what this Greek word, **merimnao**, means. It means being torn between two things. It means being double-minded, limping between two opinions. And here, Jesus tells us again, having recounted, in great detail, God’s amazing provision for us, to not be double-minded about God. Jesus tells us that we do ourselves no favors being torn between trusting in God and trusting in His material world. Jesus tells us that we undermine our participation and presence in the Kingdom when we don’t seek it first. Charles Spurgeon reminded us why we can trust God:

How great is a Father’s love for His Children! That which friendship cannot do, and mere benevolence will not attempt, a father’s heart and hand must do for his sons. They are his offspring, and he must bless them. They are his children, and he must show himself strong in their defense...Abba Father! He we who can say this has uttered better music than cherubim or seraphim can reach.

Living in the Kingdom economy begins with the presupposition that our Heavenly Father knows our needs and God wants to provide us like a good Father. **(Insert pic of cross near the beach)**

And this is something Jesus always practiced and modeled for us.

Just down the hill, maybe a quarter mile, from where Jesus taught our lesson for today, Jesus taught 5,000 men plus women and children and the disciples, when the hour grew late, told Jesus to send them away.

Instead of sending the crowd away, Jesus said “You give them something to eat.” And the disciples said, “Jesus, we have only five loaves and two fish.”

Jesus’ disciples were overwhelmed by that question. “Do I have enough?”

Jesus said, bring the loaves and fishes to me. And then Jesus told the crowds to sit down on the green grass in groups of fifties and hundreds. And then Jesus did something critical. He lived out of a Kingdom economy.

And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Matthew 14:19–21

If we are looking at things from a material standpoint, five loaves and two fishes is not enough to even five people, let alone 5,000. But notice what Jesus did. His first move was not to have anxiety about not having enough. There is no hint of merimnao. Instead, He took what the little bit He had been given

and gave to His Father first. And His Father out of the abundance of His Kingdom resources ensured there was enough—more than enough.

Do I have enough?

What Jesus has promised us and has shown us is that we have access to this kind of abundance. But it begins with taking what we have been given, that little bit, that doesn't seem like enough, and placing it in the Father's hands—entrusting Him with it, practicing a Kingdom economy.

Do you have enough? So many of us today are worried about having enough.