

**A LITTLE BIRD**  
**Matthew 6:25-27**

**INTRODUCTION:**

When I am asked to conduct a funeral, I always want the service to be personal and meaningful for the family of the deceased. For that to happen, I try to learn as much as I can about the person who passed away and then I select songs and scriptures that seem to fit his or her life. Sometimes, as you can imagine, it is very easy to make a connection between God's Word and the person we are remembering. But sometimes, it is a real challenge.

When we were living on Long Island, I conducted perhaps the most challenging funeral I ever had. Ralph was a widower. I had never met him but he lived near our church building and the family asked me to preach his funeral. I made an appointment and went to the house to meet with the surviving members of Ralph's family and as we sat in his little living room, I explained that I had not had the opportunity to meet Ralph. "Will you just tell me about him," I asked.

One of his sons spoke up and said, "Well, he was really mean." There was a pause while everyone else just nodded. I waited a bit and then asked, "Is there anything else you can tell me?" A son-in-law said, "He was hateful." Everyone just nodded. I waited. "No one liked him." I waited. "Mom was happy when she found out she was dying because she was going to get away from him." (I'm thinking, "C'mon, people. You're not giving me anything to work with here.") Finally I said, "Isn't there anything nice you can tell me about Ralph? Isn't there any pleasant memory you have of him? Wasn't there anything good he ever did?"

Most just shook their heads until Dick spoke up and said, "He fed the birds. He fed the birds every day and then he watched them. I think he loved the birds."

Ralph may have been foolish but at least he did one thing that Jesus told us to do: he watched the birds.

Last week, I told you that in the book of Proverbs, Solomon said that we are to "consider the ant". This week, I want to think about the fact that, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us to "look at the birds". If we would look at the birds, we could learn a great deal – especially about how to handle worry, anxiety, fear and care. In Matthew 5:25-27, Jesus said:

*<sup>25</sup> "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your*

*heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup>  
Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?*

If we look at the birds, we can learn a lot.

**I. From the birds, we can learn about peace**

Folk, I don't need to tell you that we need a word of peace for today. For 2000 years, people have been greeting the coming season with wishes for peace on earth and goodwill toward men. I don't see much evidence of either.

There is so much conflict in the world that we can scarcely keep track of it all. There is a civil war in Somalia. There is a Sa' dah insurgency in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. There is a major Mexican drug war that has claimed over 10,500 lives and is ongoing. Pakistan is a roiling hot spot. Our troops are in Afghanistan and Iraq. There is tension with Iran over their nuclear ambitions. And that doesn't even mention the constant turmoil in and around Israel plus conflicts on the African continent and countless other places around the globe.

Until the Prince of Peace transforms the world, how can we cope with the unrest, the conflict and the strife? Jesus says to consider the birds.

People are striving, pushing and driving themselves frenetically. They work two jobs or more and moonlight on the weekends. They save and find that their savings aren't growing. They invest and find that their investments are losing value. They borrow to buy a house that, even after years of payments of principle and interest, is worth less today than it was when they purchased it. Taxes are increasing. Healthcare costs are spiraling. Joblessness is alarmingly high despite trillions in stimulus dollars so that even those who are still getting by are concerned about the future. How can we sleep at night with that uncertainty about tomorrow? Jesus says to consider the birds.

Birds don't worry.

<sup>25</sup> *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.*

Look at the birds and learn about peace. Birds don't worry: I've never seen a bird with a migraine. Birds don't worry: I've never seen a bird with a furrowed brow. Birds don't worry: why, I've never even seen a bird with crows' feet...at least not around their eyes.

But can I be perfectly candid with you about this? It is my nature to worry. I don't know if I was raised that way or if I'm just wired that way but it is natural for me to worry. For Jesus to tell me not to worry is for him to tell me to do something that goes against my nature. I confessed this to another preacher last week and he quietly observed, "Most everything that Jesus tells us is not natural."

Wow! He's right. The natural man worries. The natural man covets. The natural man lusts. The natural man gets angry and hates, envies and steals, gossips and slanders. And the natural man worries and frets. The natural man is not like Jesus and the natural man cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. But know this: you cannot change the natural man. The natural man must be transformed into the image of Christ by the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. If we could change ourselves, it would be in the power of the flesh and we can't do that. But God can change us.

Don't you understand that this is why it is so important that when we accepted Christ as our savior, when we repented and were baptized so that our sins could be washed away by the blood of Jesus, we were also given the gift of the Holy Spirit to change us? If we could change ourselves, we wouldn't need the Holy Spirit. My goodness, if we could change ourselves, we wouldn't even need a savior: we'd just need a little more time.

So when Jesus commanded that we aren't to worry, he wasn't simply giving us another thing on our "To Do" list for us to...worry about. He was giving us yet another reason to repent, be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit: so we can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and be changed by him.

So look at the birds and learn about peace. They have received a trusting nature from their Maker. And we can, too: a new nature.

## II. **From the birds, we can learn about priorities**

From the birds, we can learn about peace and we can learn about priorities. I want to read again those same words from Jesus:

<sup>25</sup> *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"* <sup>26</sup> *Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.*

Birds have it kind of easy. They wear the same outfit every day. They eat what they can find. No wonder they don't fret. No shopping, no cooking

and no dishes to wash. No closet to sort, no laundry to fold, no accessories to coordinate. Life is easier for the birds.

But wait! Who made our lives so complicated? We did. God didn't tell us to create cookbooks: we did that to ourselves. God didn't tell us to come up with new outfits for each season: we did that to ourselves. It wasn't His idea that woman can't wear white shoes before Easter or after Labor Day. He didn't say not to pair a black belt with brown shoes. He didn't command us to get new clothes for Easter. And He certainly didn't invent neckties. (I've heard some suggestions about who must have come up with neckties and I've heard some people say we should send them all back to him where they can be consumed in the eternal fire. I don't know about that, I just know God didn't invent them.)

So why do we put ourselves through all of this? Because we don't have our priorities as clear as the birds do. Birds have it right that life is more important than food and the body is more important than clothes.

If we would understand that life is more important than food, we would eat a healthier diet so we can nourish and sustain life instead of compromising our health for our favorite foods. (Last Tuesday evening, I was talking with a couple of ladies about such delicacies as batter-dipped Snickers bars and deep-fried Twinkies and one of them said she had heard about state fairs where they serve deep-fried butter! That doesn't even *sound* good to me but even if it is good, I'm pretty sure it isn't good for you. Then, while looking online for a picture of deep-fried butter, I also ran across a recipe for chocolate-covered bacon and one for a bacon cheeseburger between Krispy Kreme donuts. That ain't right!!!) If we would remember that life is more important than food, we wouldn't be eating ourselves to death as some of us are.

If we would remember that the body is more important than clothes we wouldn't deform our feet with trendy shoes. We wouldn't sacrifice protection from the elements for the latest fad in clothing. If we would remember that the body is more important than the clothing, we might spend more time exercising than shopping.

Jesus said that life is more important than food and the body more important than clothes and he wonders why we worry about such things as that. Hey, if we would be honest, we'd have to admit that much of what we actually worry about is far more insignificant than worrying about being hungry or naked. Often it's toys, trinkets and trivialities.

You have heard it said, "Don't sweat the small stuff and it's all small stuff." I don't agree with that. Some small stuff is pretty important. Many times, the details really do matter. But I do believe that Jesus would have us to

understand that we ought not to sweat the temporary stuff...and all stuff is temporary. Food? Temporary. Clothing? Temporary. Don't worry about the temporary stuff, give priority to that which is eternal: your soul. Just a few verses later, Jesus gave us the priority that will prevent worry:

<sup>31</sup> *So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'* <sup>32</sup> *For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* <sup>33</sup> *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Look to the birds to learn about priorities and you will stop fretting about food and concerning yourself about clothes.

### III. **From the birds, we can learn about privilege**

Look to the birds and learn about peace that comes from proper priorities and you will also learn that proper priorities come from learning about your privilege.

Birds are not worried about the future, but sing cheerfully. Elizabeth Cheyney penned this poem, "*Overheard In An Orchard*":

*Said the robin to the sparrow,  
"I should really like to know  
Why these anxious human beings  
Rush about, and worry so?"  
Said the sparrow to the robin,  
"Friend, I think that it must be  
They have no heavenly Father  
Such as cares for you and me."*

One of Sandy's favorite TV shows is called "The Locator". This show features a man named Tony Dunn who, for the last twenty years, has been helping people reach out and find estranged parents, long-lost loves or life-changing teachers, because, as Dunn put it, "everyone can and should fill that void in their lives."

Is it possible that you worry because there is a void in your life? Is it possible that you don't know, or don't remember, that you have a heavenly Father who loves you and who will care for you?

<sup>26</sup> *Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.*

And they are just birds. You are a child of your Heavenly Father, created in His likeness and made in His image. You are in a privileged position so any worry is needless, any anxiety is senseless, any fear is fruitless. And it is all unworthy of someone who knows he has a Father who loves him.

**CONCLUSION:**

Birds don't worry but they do work. The saying, "the early bird catches the worm" is designed to teach us the importance of diligence and hard work. But even the early bird takes time to sing. It can because it doesn't worry.

We can have no way of knowing what 13 individuals from Ft. Hood, TX might have been worried about on the morning of November 6<sup>th</sup>. We do not know who got new clothes the week before or who had dinner plans for that evening. But I guarantee you that by 2:00 p.m. local time, several families would have concluded that life is more than food and the body is more than clothing, even if that clothing is a uniform.

Then, on Tuesday, November 10, formal memorial services were conducted for those gunned down in the massacre on the base. There was the playing of "Taps", the 21-gun salute and even an address from the Commander-in-Chief. But surely the most moving element of the entire memorial service was the final roll call and shout-back.

Soldiers stood at attention while names were called out followed by the clear response, "Here, sergeant-major!" But thirteen times, after a name was called, there was silence. Silence because the soldier was absent from the roll call because he or she was a casualty of the massacre at the base.

I could not help but think of another roll call that is coming. I plan to be there to answer when the Lord calls my name. And I want you to be there to answer when He calls your name. Do you know for sure that you will be? When the roll is called up yonder, when your name is called, will there be eternal silence or will you be there?

**INVITATION:**       #774 – *"When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder"*