



# DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

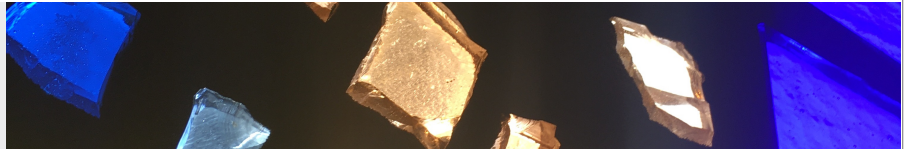
## Week of January 29, 2023 (Matthew 6:24-34 [and 7-23])

### Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion:

You, O God, are our creator and sustainer. You continually offer yourself and your world, and you call us into community that reflects your image.

In this world where the birds of the air are cared for, we pray that our neighbors might also experience that care. You have given enough that no one need go hungry, and so we ask for the humility to take only what we need, and the compassion to share what we have, and the courage to demand equity even when it costs us. May the day come when indeed no one is in want.

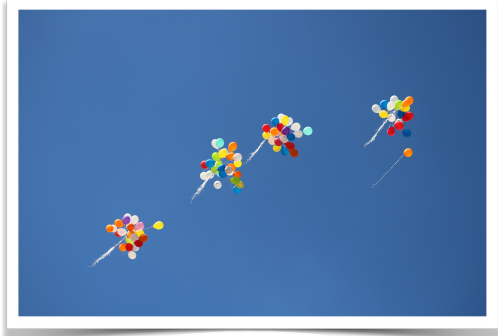
In this world where the flowers of the field are lovelier than the highest-fashion label, we pray that we would recognize beauty in our neighbors. You have made us in every shape and size and color and accent, and so we ask for the grace to accept one another, and ourselves, and the desire for...



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**Context:** Last week we began the Sermon on the Mount, what many (myself included) believe to be Jesus' greatest teaching. In Chapter 5 we have the Beatitudes, and then Jesus gave an introduction of sorts to his teaching. He explained that we are the "light of the world" and the "salt of the earth", and that what he is about to teach is not an abolishment of the law, but a fulfillment of it. He will challenge contemporary understandings and practices of the law, but that does not mean he is nullifying it.

In Chapter 6, he begins his teaching with some basic teaching on doing the right things for the right reasons (e.g.: "whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet..."). In 6:5, Jesus shifts to a teaching on prayer, which ultimately leads to what we call The Lord's Prayer.



Then his teaching shifts to the famous "do not store up treasures on earth..." (6:19), which becomes a teaching on economics. It seems to take a turn in 6:22, when he talks about the eye being the "lamp of the body" and how a "healthy eye" fills the whole body with light. But this phrase ("a healthy eye"), is an idiom saying that a "healthy eye" sees what is good and right and then

...our community to reflect the diversity of your meadow, and the peace that comes from truly knowing one another in all our glory and thorns. May the day come when indeed we live together in unity and it is more beautiful than royal robes.

In this world where there is so much to worry about, so much to prepare for, though we are never truly ready, so much to keep up with, we ask for the blessing of community committed to one another's well-being, for a sense of responsibility for others, not only ourselves, and for a deep trust in your promise to provide.

May the day come when the kingdom of heaven is lived on earth. We ask in the name of the One who calms the sea, and us, with a word, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

## Compassion & Justice

Be sure to join us in-person on February 12th. After worship we will assemble sandwiches for the Simpson Shelter!

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leads a person to do what is good and right. It's as though Jesus is saying "to store up treasures in heaven is to see needs in the world and to use your privilege and resources to meet those needs". So while this may seem like a tangent, it's actually right in the flow of his teaching.

As he closes this teaching, he shifts to the beautiful words "do not worry about tomorrow" (6:25). This passage often gets separated from the previous teaching, but as you can see it's actually the whole point he's been building towards. It begins, "therefore...", which means "all that I just said is leading to this point: Do not worry about tomorrow..."

As you read verses 25-34 (the focus for this week, pay close attention to Jesus' words. Maybe read it through a few times and meditate on it.

### Questions for Reflection & Discussion:

1. In this passage Jesus instructs his disciples not to have anxiety about the future. What are some of the sources of your own anxiety about the future? What practices do you use (or could you try) to hand those anxieties over to God?
2. As this passage is a continuation of verse 24, how does reading this passage as being specifically about *economic* anxiety, change your understanding of what Jesus is saying?
3. In what ways do you experience a tension between trusting God and trusting societal values today (economically and otherwise)? What do you think it might mean to trust God rather than society today?
4. In what ways do you (or your community) provide for the needs of your neighbors? In what ways do you (or your community) trust your neighbors to provide for you?
5. What are some of the worries that you (or your community) are borrowing from tomorrow? What might it look like to let go of those worries in order to focus on the worries of today?

