

**8 February 2026**

**Matthew 6:25-34**

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## **Summary of today's readings**

Today's readings focus on God as creator of all.

We start by hearing the first story of creation in Genesis 1. The reason we read this today is to remind us that God created all things. He created everything to glorify himself, he created us in his own image and he was very pleased with all that he saw and all that he created.

Our psalm, psalm 136, is then one of praise and thanksgiving for all He created. It tells of God's creation of day and night, of the stars and all the creatures, reprising those elements of creation spoken of in the creation story of Genesis. We are reminded that God is good and wise, that we are very lowly compared with God and that we should give Him thanks and praise for all the beauty he has created, that he is a forgiving God and that he is there to look after us, if we let him.

Next we have a reading from Paul's letter to the Romans. It is from chapter 8, which is regarded as a pivotal chapter in the book. It is regarded as pivotal because it transitions us from the struggles with sin which dominate the first seven chapters to the triumphant declaration of complete security and freedom which is there for all believers in Christ. Today's verses are about the importance of being hopeful during times suffering, reminding us that the Holy Spirit has the power to support and protect us at times of weakness. It is a reminder that if we put our faith in God's love we will be rewarded with his eternal company and peace.

Finally we move onto our gospel reading, which is Matthew 6:25-34. This comes towards the end of his Sermon of the Mount, which runs from chapter 5 to the end of chapter 7. Our reading tells us that when it comes to our daily needs, indeed all our needs, we need to trust in God. It tells us not to worry and not to focus on accumulating wealth here on earth, but instead to remember that God has already given us life, a body and a world to live in, so we should not doubt that he will also take care of our daily needs.

The passage is sandwiched between the Beatitudes, followed by teaching on the importance of prayer and His gift of the Lord's Prayer: and teaching about our relationship with God and others, with that familiar instruction for us to do to others as you would have done to ourselves. Whilst the main theme of the passage is 'do not worry', within the context of our other readings today what we have is the message that we have an all powerful creator God in whom we should trust and to whom we should give thanks and praise; and that whatever trials and tribulations we suffer on earth, either periodically or throughout life, they are all worth it for the glory of spending eternity in the presence of God.

## Sermon

Worry and anxiety seem to be on the rise for so many of us these days. Worry about money, jobs, independence, housing, children, and grandchildren. Health worries and unforeseen responsibilities can strike at any time, and health for ourselves and our nearest and dearest often seems to dominate our later years. It seems that there is always something to worry about.

Today Jesus tells us what he thinks we should do to handle all this worry. He tells us to put God first in our lives, to model His life's pattern, to behave like Him, in other words, to 'seek his kingdom and his righteousness'. By maintaining a good relationship with God and by loving others, He tells us that our daily needs will be taken care of.

Being a practical person by nature I went in search of some sound coping strategies and 'to do' stuff that might help with all this worry that is about. Unsurprisingly, it did not take me long to consider the advice of St Ignatius, that contemplative in action, the one who says pray first – then go off and do!

Ignatius views worry not just as an emotional burden but as a significant spiritual state which he calls desolation. He encourages us to overcome this by prayer, which he sees as a heart to heart conversation with Jesus. He asks us to seek out the source of our worries, to separate our anxieties from reality, to take action on those matters that we can control and to entrust the rest to God.

Ignatius speaks, in fact, of two opposing states of the soul, those of consolation and desolation. Consolation is the movement of the soul towards God and is characterised by an increase in faith, hope, charity and inner joy. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit that brings peace and connects the soul with our creator, even in times of challenges and sadness. It is in this state of consolation where we are aiming to spend as much of our time as possible. The negative, the desolation, the worry is what we need to overcome.

In terms of direct engagement with God, Ignatius recommends that we undertake an exercise daily called Examen. This is a specific form of prayer which, among other things, we can use to process our emotions. It is a prayer that is split into 5 short parts and, performed daily, is not expected to take each of us long. It goes like this:

Firstly, take a few moments to come into God's presence, to attune ourselves to God and begin to feel His presence within us.

Next we are asked to give him thanks and praise. Many people use standard wording they develop themselves over time. For myself, I use a prayer given to me on my long retreat, which I am happy to share with you, should you wish.

Moving into the core of the prayer:

Next: you step through your day just passed with God, considering where you saw God at work in what occurred

Then: you ask yourself where you could have done better, particularly in terms of turning to God for support and advice

And finally: you discuss with God what is coming up in the immediate future and ask for his help. This is not about brow-beating. An important part of this is acknowledging where you are already getting better at turning to God first.

[If anyone would like to learn more about this type of prayer I am more than happy to put together a short session on it say, on a Wednesday after coffee, to put together a short sheet to refer to, or for those who like YouTube, I can point you to a good video.]

Ignatius also asks us to find stillness in nature. Ignatius recommends practical self-care, so we are advised to take a walk if we find ourselves worrying about something, get some fresh air and wonder at God's beautiful world as we gaze on the beauty of the scenery, the trees and plants all around us, to breathe in the fresh air and to stand just a little bit taller.

He also advises against allowing anxiety to paralyse us. That if we feel too overwhelmed to make major decisions we should wait until we feel in a calmer state before doing anything, because being anxious or worried distorts reality and leads to bad choices. Instead we should wait until we feel more at one with the world, with God and in a position of hope and thankfulness before we make any big decisions.

Ignatius asks us to focus on what we can control and to try not to let those things about which we can do nothing consume us. We should take what action we can in a way that we can influence or fix at that moment in time; and not to worry about the rest.

Finally, we are asked to surrender our worries, memories, understanding and will to God, and to place our trust in Divine Providence. He gives us the words of the *Sucipe* Prayer, which goes like this:

Take, Lord, and receive  
all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will.  
All I have and call my own  
You have given to me  
And to you, Lord, I will return it.  
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.  
Give me only your love and your grace, for that is enough for me.  
Amen.