

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“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.”

Every year, we hear that admonition and resolve to do better, seeking to follow what the Lord says. Then, no sooner than we walk out the church door, or maybe even before that after the sermon ends our minds wander into the realm where we are anxious, and the day’s trouble isn’t enough so we must add onto it.

The thing about this all, though, is we’re the ones to do this, sure we can think there are outside factors which cause us anxiety; family, work, the economy, the weather, politics, or whatever. Yes, those are real things in our lives. But when it boils down to it, being anxious about tomorrow or our lives in general happens in our own hearts. We are the ones to be anxious because our hearts are still tainted by original sin. One of the things our sinful hearts and minds try to do, and the world is all too ready to encourage and teach this as well is to psychologize anxiousness. It’s to turn into a feeling of being uneasy, nervous, or just worrying. Now those, to be sure, are manifestations and fruits of anxiousness but what Jesus is talking about is far deadlier and gets to the core of the issue. Jesus is pointing out something about ourselves, he’s showing there is idolatry in our hearts. Being anxious about life is worshiping a false god, it’s a sin against the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods.”

Just as every commandment comes back to the first, “you shall have no other gods,” being anxious about life and in life shows our sinful old man and the fact that we really don’t fear, love, and trust in God above all things. If we really did fear, love, and trust in God above all things and at all times we wouldn’t be anxious, we wouldn’t worry, and we would always seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.

When you worry, when you are anxious, you are called to repent. Jesus calls you to repent. Jesus gives you a way of examining ourselves in the Gospel reading that knocks you back into God’s reality when you find yourselves being anxious and worrying. Listen again to what Jesus teaches us, “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? 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, 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.”

Pay attention to what Jesus says to you in those words. There’s a line of thinking, so to speak, from the lesser to the greater in all this that humbles you and comforts too. When you worry and are anxious it’s ridiculous and almost laughable. Birds are frail creatures. They can fly right into your window and die because they mistook it for a flight path through your house unless you don’t clean your windows and they are too dirty to see through. They also don’t have a job to go to and they don’t have all the bills, obligations, and various other things that go along with life in this world. They eat, they fly, and they lay eggs. Or look at flowers and how beautiful a field of lilies is or sunflowers. They grow into beautiful sights for you and then wither away and die or are plowed over. As rich as a person may be, or the resources he may have at his disposable he can’t make himself simply grow into such a beautiful sight, yet he isn’t like those flowers which is alive today and tomorrow thrown into the fire.

You think pretty highly of yourselves and pretty low of God when you doubt that God will take care of you when the things of this creation are taken care of, and they will one day pass away. You will not pass away, and Jesus didn’t come

15th Sunday after Trinity—September 17, 2023

down from heaven and become a sparrow or lily. He took on human flesh. He is fully God and fully man. Failure to see, recognize, believe, and live this out in your lives is what God is getting at today in this reading and why he says, “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” There’s enough to do for today that you don’t need to borrow trouble, for sure, and don’t be anxious because do you honestly, I mean honestly, believe that God is going to take care of these things like birds and flowers around you and not take care of you? If that’s what you think, then, yes, you are indeed of little faith. All of us need to repent.

Here’s the thing, though. God does care for you because he loves you in Christ and has redeemed you. Even those times when it may appear God isn’t taking care of you, he still is, you might just not see it or realize it. You are of more value than the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. See Jesus, he is the Son of God, the Word made flesh. God has got some skin in the game of your life. He’s created you; he’s redeemed you, and he still takes care of you. Remember what you call God because you belong to Christ? You call God, “Father.” The Almighty God who has no beginning and no end and created all things by his word is the God, who you call “Father.” That means something and it’s significant for your life every day.

As a baptized child of God, you view the world differently. You see, hear, think, and live in this world differently as a Christian. You view it as one who calls God “Father” because he really is and as your Father, he takes care of you. He gives you daily bread, he guards and keeps you in his care, and he has given you a promised inheritance of eternal joy and peace because in Christ, you are his sons and daughters. Romans 8 asks and answers an important question related to the Gospel reading today “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Those are the promises God makes to you even as he says, “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” When he makes that statement to you, he backs it up with the promise and certainty that he will care for you even unto everlasting life. How do you know this? Christ has died for you. Christ is risen from the dead. You are baptized into Christ. This is most certainly true.

Now listen to that instruction Jesus teaches you, “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.” Strive for that in your new life in Christ. Live what Jesus teaches you as his people. “Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Jesus really means what he says here to you. He’s not simply saying, “evaluate and change your priorities.” He is calling you to a new heart and mind. It’s a new life and way of life, one lived by someone who belongs in a Kingdom somewhere else and is lasting and to someone else who is eternal.

The beauty then in all of this is that you are of great value to God. Called by name in Holy Baptism you know the Lord who is the Maker of heaven and earth and who has redeemed you by the blood of Christ. That changes everything, then. It fixes your eyes on Christ crucified for you and sees this world in and through him. It knows that God will not let you be put shame as you trust in him. Living your life seeking first him and his kingdom means you will not lack what you need. It doesn’t mean you will have everything you want; there’s a difference and we Americans confuse these things. Will you suffer? At times. Will there be times in your life when your old sinful man, the world, and the devil will try to get you to doubt that God really does care for you and takes care of you? Absolutely these things will happen, but you will be given all things as you seek Christ, his kingdom, and his righteousness. Jesus says you will, and

his word isn't like the birds of the air or the grass and lilies of the field. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

There's life, eternal life, in these words of Jesus. To cling to these words of the Jesus is to cling to the one who fulfilled all things and the one who suffered for you. It sees a righteousness that is found in the one who is the Lord, your righteousness. It's to hold onto the one who is your mercy seat with the Father and by him you know that God loves you, takes care of you, and hears and answers your prayers. It's a confidence to go through this life and not be anxious about the stuff, the mammon, of this world because your citizenship is in the Kingdom which is not of this world. So even times when you face hardships such as from storms, when the doctor tells you the cancer has spread and there's nothing more to be done, when those whom you love so much are taken from you God's love and care for you has not changed one bit. Jesus is crucified for you. Your sin is forgiven, and you have eternal life. That's who you and how much God values you. This is what is known and what is sure and certain amid all that is unknown and uncertain. You face these things and sing boldly today the great hymns we sing such as "What God Ordains is Always Good" because you know what? they preach to you, and you actually believe those words and that's the confession which has been placed upon your lips by God himself.

And you're not alone in this either. God has gathered you together into his Holy Church. You bear one another's burdens as the body of Christ. You gladly do good to one another as the household of faith. You "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another." This too is part of God's care for you as you are united in the fellowship that is the church created and sustained by the Holy Spirit through the word and sacraments. Seek those things in your life. Put those things first and do so together as the body of Christ, the Church. Conform your life in this way.

Dear saints of God, you belong to Christ. He is yours and you are his. Though the earth give way, though the heavens be moved your inheritance is Zion, the Holy dwelling of God and his people. Cling to Jesus and know you will be taken care of in this life and even into life everlasting. This is your confidence in Jesus for you. And so, as God's people cling to him and pray for his return. Until that day, go running to his word and sacraments and find healing, refreshment, and life. Lay down your head tonight trusting in Christ who has done all things well and rise tomorrow in that same grace which is yours in your Baptism. In all times and circumstances, give him thanks and pray "O Lord, we implore You, let Your continual pity cleanse and defend Your Church; and because she cannot continue in safety without Your aid, preserve her evermore by Your help and goodness."

As you leave this place today too, know what your future holds and what your Lord places before you. The day is coming, your Lord promises you, when you will be raised to immortality and incorruption, and you will see him face to face. On that day, the eternal day, there will no longer be any anxiousness or worry. All false gods will be no more and instead you will live with your Lord and all his saints in that new creation that is beyond compare which he has prepared for you. That will be a good and beautiful sight the Lord will give you which is not tainted by sin and for you dear children of great value to your heavenly Father as he clothes you in far more splendor than any earthly king could have ever imagined. This is the Kingdom of God and his righteousness which is yours now and will be forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.