

Sermon Trinity 15 2020

September 20, 2020

Matthew 6:24-34

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Gospel Lesson, previously read.

I think many of you have heard me tell the story before, but in the year that my seminary class was finishing and was awaiting calls, we had a significant portion of the class who didn't get them. Here we had moved to the city of Fort Wayne in all of its splendor, we had uprooted lives, some had uprooted families, many had given up opportunities for much more lucrative ventures, vocations which would bring significantly more glory in the eyes of the world. We had spent two years sitting at the feet of our professors, spent another year in a church on vicarage, then another year in the classroom; all in preparation for that moment when our names would be called and we would hear the designation of which congregation our Lord was calling us in service to His people. But about a third of the class came to that point only to find there would be no announcement of their name. All of this work, and it felt for naught. Imagine the anxiety. Seminary isn't cheap, how would payments be made upon the significant debt incurred? How would food be put on the table for the wives and children of many of these men? What would they do if they had no other experience or training to fall back on and a call never came? And for those whose plans were in place, whether it was continuing study as in my case, or those who knew their names would be called, there was anxiety for these brothers. Worry for them and their families. Guilt that our future was not in question as theirs was.

It was in the midst of that that our current synod president preached a sermon that rings in my ears to this day. He preached on the words from John chapter 14, "**Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.**" And as he said what he said, I've always associated it with the words Jesus speaks in this lesson. Do not worry. O ye of little faith.

I know I've mentioned that word before, *oligopistoi*. *Olig* as in a few or little, like an oligarchy is a rule by a few. *Pistis*, that word for faith. *Oligopistoi*, o ye of little faith. You have your worries, o ye of little faith. But don't. Don't worry.

President Harrison told us so well. Don't worry. Do you worry that God has abandoned you? Do you worry that the God who has brought you this far would just forsake you? Do you worry that the God who has called you by name in baptism would leave you? O ye of little faith.

And look at all of the ways that you have worried before. Look at all of the things you have been afraid would come about and be so bad, and yet weren't. Look at how you worry about them. O ye of little faith.

And of course, that word isn't just for a bunch of fourth year seminarians. You have your worries too. I know you do. And think about how interesting it is. Look at what Jesus is pointing to. He talks about not worrying about what these people in His hearing are going to eat and what they're going to wear, and we for our part are generally in very different circumstances, aren't we? Think about that time and place. Think about what that meant for those hearers. Don't worry about what you'll eat. God sees the birds of the air and he feeds them. They aren't so concerned as to make sure they gather sufficient seed to plant their harvest for next year, but God feeds them. And clothing, the lilies of the field aren't concerned about beautiful raiment, yet Solomon didn't even look that good. And what's the point? Why does He pick these things? Because they had a real worry about where these would be coming from. Where was their next meal? In the refrigerator? Obviously not. It wasn't that simple. Where was their next set of garments coming from? Costco? Obviously not.

And so look at how God has cared for us. We should think that this would relieve us of worry, shouldn't we? And yet it's still there isn't it? Oligopistoi, ye of little faith. Yes you have your worries about the coronavirus. You worry about getting seriously ill with it. You worry about your loved ones getting seriously ill and even dying. You worry about your living situations, about the future. You worry about politics, what this election will mean for our country. Then we have Supreme Court Justices dying and that only makes it worse. The future of the country seemingly hangs in the balance. And we worry about, don't we? All of it.

And yet what does Jesus tell you? **Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.** He says, don't worry about it. He tells you, **"which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?"** And that's the truth isn't it? Your worrying doesn't help you live longer—ironically it's clear it causes you to die sooner. Nor does it put food on the table and clothes on your back. No, your worrying doesn't prevent anything. Your worrying doesn't make anyone better or healthier. Your worrying doesn't ensure that the government will do what it should according to God's will. So why do you do it? O ye of little faith.

Instead hear what Jesus tells you, **"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."** Now, that sounds like Law,

doesn't it? As we talk about Law and Gospel, it sounds like Jesus is commanding something. It sounds like He's saying that if you just seek the Kingdom of God rightly and seek to be good enough, then God will make sure He rewards you with His care. And when we think about our worry, that could only make us worry more, couldn't it? It could only make us worry that much more about food and clothes and illness and politics, couldn't it? Because if we don't do it right, then God's just going to cast us all off and we'll be left to suffer.

But Christians, this isn't a command, it's an invitation. After all, what is the Kingdom of God, what is God's righteousness? Or perhaps more pertinently, in whom is the Kingdom of God, in whom is His righteousness? Jesus, right? This is the kingdom with Jesus. It's the Kingdom He won for us. The victory He's won over sin, over death, over the devil, by His life, death, and resurrection. It's the promise of His eternal care, the eternal beauty found in the nail scarred hands and the spear-pierced side. The blood that poured out there for you and for your sin. And it's the promise of that Kingdom coming to you in the waters of baptism, opening its doors wide that you would be brought in. You fear for clothing, there it is, the clothing of Jesus' righteousness. You fear for food, here it is the body of Christ, His very blood.

Christian, if He has done this for you, for your eternal care, will He not make sure He watches over you as He carries you to that Kingdom? Of course He will. That's the point of what Jesus is saying. He's saying that if your Heavenly Father sees the birds and cares for them, if He clothes the flowers, He certainly will take care of you. After all, God has found you worth dying for. He will make sure He watches over you. He had your name in His book before the foundation of the world. He baptized you and spoke that name that you would know you are His. He will care for you!

Now, as I say this, there two things that need to be noted. First is something that was pointed out by a commentator I read for the sermon. That is to say that this doesn't mean the Christian is without care. It wasn't wrong for my brothers in seminary to desire to care for their families. That's right according to their vocations as husbands and fathers. That's something they were called to do. It's right that they should care. But, in the midst of that care, Jesus calls us to the understanding that the you need not be anxious because your Father in Heaven knows your cares and concerns and knows what is best.

What does that mean? It means that when it comes to your worries, know that God does know what is best. Know that He cares more for you than you do. Know that He cares more for your loved ones than you do. Know that He cares more for your

future than you do. Know that He cares more for this country than you do—not as a nation perhaps, but her peoples such that any hope you have in politicians, whether it be Trump or it be Biden, these are ungrounded— **Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.** Don't trust in any person or government over and above your Lord. Because they will never care for you more than He does. That's the first thing to know: that He knows what it is best and cares for you.

In fact our Lutheran Confessions say “God ordained in his counsel through which specific cross and affliction he would conform each of his elect to ‘the image of his Son,’” In other words, God knew beforehand what challenges to give us. To what end? Because it's good for us to be like Jesus. It's good for us to experience these challenges. It makes us holier, more focused on our Lord and His call to us. As I said, this is good for us, God knows what's best for us. That's the first thing, but that leads us to the second thing to know.

Second, understand that this doesn't mean that it will be easy. I heard a great sermon making that point last week. It referenced the Israelites in the desert. The pastor said, just like them, we often think the journey will be easy, that it will be the utopia. But that's not what God tells us. The Utopia will not be until we arrive at the Promised Land. Which means that things will be hard at times. There will be cares that will wear on you. This will be hard.

But in the midst of it, what do we do? O ye of little faith. Trust Him. Trust Him because He cares for you. Cast your worries, your anxieties on Him because He cares for you. Know that He sees you and knows you. Know that He will never leave you nor forsake you. Know that His love for you, for your loved ones, for this world surpasses any love we could know anywhere else. Know that He is trustworthy and true. He has shown you this in the death of Christ. In the promise of His Kingdom come, that Kingdom He brought you into in you baptism. Trust in Him, then, ye of little faith. He is faithful and all this will be added to you now, and even more so eternally. Amen.