

Sermon Trinity 15 2021

September 12, 2021

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, especially these words, **“Are you not of more value than they?”**

As I’m sure you’re all aware, yesterday was the twentieth anniversary of September 11th, 2001. I’m also sure that those of you who are old enough remember exactly where you were during the goings on of that morning. For example, I lived in the dorms at Indiana University. I was an RA there, and I remember clearly walking down the hall on my way to class and someone had drawn a picture on the message board on his door. It was a picture of a plane flying into one of the towers. I can still see the image. And he had written on it something about the happening. We still didn’t know what was going on. So, unaware, I continued to class. It was mentioned there as well, but class went as normal. After class I went to the store and bought a CD that had come out that day. Then I went back to my dorm room and turned on the TV. And there was the coverage. In fact, I remember seeing a replay of the tower falling on that coverage. I was on the phone with Jessica and I didn’t even believe what I had seen. But what I thought I had seen was exactly what happened. The tower had fallen. Then the other tower fell too. I was in shock. Of course we all were, weren’t we?

But why? Why was this so shocking, why did it create the reaction it created? Well, I’m sure there are a million reasons that could be discussed with that, aren’t there? It was shocking because it was an attack on American soil. It was shocking because of the horrible loss of life and the lack of respect of life it demonstrated—and I suppose the fragility of life along with that. There was a story I read this week that pointed that out. A woman whose boyfriend got caught near the twin towers that day was unreachable till that evening. When she heard from him and knew he was safe, it was such an understandably joyful moment, and it reflected that fragility. Shocking fragility. And shocking malice. All of it was so bad. But what did the shock come down to?

You could say in a sense it came down to a shaking in the certainty of our security, didn’t it? Our lives seem so secure, and that utterly disrupted it. It seemed certain that we would be secure from attacks initiated by other countries. It seemed secure that no one would have such disregard for life. It seems secure that when we send our loved

ones to New York City and they're seeing the sights there, that the ensuing result will be stories told over the viewing of pictures, not a sudden fear that we'll never see them again.

But something like 9/11 disrupts that security. So does a pandemic. That's our issue in the midst of this, isn't it? We've had our lives that felt so secure, and that's been shaken. Now there's insecurity about our health. There's insecurity that we could get this disease and, sure we could die, but we could also live and have long, long term effects; effects we don't even know about at this stage in the game. There's insecurity that a loved one could get sick. There's insecurity that this could have long lasting social and economic effects on us personally and our nation and world as a whole. There's insecurity that the government is implementing rules which make security seem more certain now, but in the long run open the door for restriction after restriction which could finally result in totalitarianism. There's insecurity, isn't there?

What does insecurity do to us? It leads us to worry. Isn't that what worry really is? Isn't it just meditation on insecurity? Why did you worry on September 11th? Because your sense of security was interrupted. Why do you worry with the pandemic? Because your sense of security has been interrupted.

And to be fair, there's good reason for this isn't there? As I say that, I would argue part of the reason this is the case is because we expect this world to be closer to utopia than we should actually expect it to be considering its fallen and broken in sin. But I think an aspect of that is that the desire for heaven is written in our beings. The desire for security and comfort and the like, God has written that into our hearts that we would yearn for it. And as we yearn for it, we seek it here. We fashion our interpretation of life around the expectation of that utopia, here and now. Likewise, we interpret reality in such a way to filter out as much as possible that disrupts that dream. So, in that regard we shouldn't feel secure at all. But in terms of the concerns we have, we should be honest that they're not bad in and of themselves, right?

I mean it's not bad for us to want to make sure that our country isn't attacked. It's not bad for us to want people to respect human life. It's not bad for us to want our loved ones to be safe or for us to not have to live with the effects of an illness. Right? All of that is worthy of desiring. But worry turns our attention away from just desire to an anxiety. But what does Jesus tell you?

He tells you to look at the birds. Learn from these wild animals. And of course on the face of it, it sounds ludicrous, doesn't it? What are we as human beings doing

looking at these unthinking, unplanning, irrational creatures for an example? But within the context you see the wisdom, don't you? It's simple. They aren't worried. They just get up in the morning, they find their food, they go to sleep. They don't worry about it. And God just gives it to them. And Jesus says learn from them. Learn from their behavior. Why? Not just because they have it figured out, but there's another reason. Because you are worth more than they are. God sees your life as worth more than the lives of those birds. You're worth more than the birds, and He takes care of them. Won't He take care of you?

If you watch my devotions, you heard me say this, but think about what Jesus is promising this, and think of how it connects to His death. In what form did Jesus come to earth? He could have come to earth in any form. He could have come as that grass, He could have come as that bird—of course we wouldn't have known it, and we recognize the ridiculousness of the thought, but even still how did He come? He came as a human being. Why? To redeem human beings. Why? Because that's what He finds so valuable. He didn't come as a bird, He came as a human because humans are of much more worth than birds. He came as a human because He wanted humans redeemed.

He wanted you redeemed. That's why He took your sin to the cross, that's why He died for it. And that's why He rose again, to overcome death for you, to overcome the death of your body. He values you and wants you in heaven. In fact, that's the promise that you have in Him by baptism. That shows you that He wants you there. That shows that He loves you. That He speaks this word into your ear now, shows that He wants and values you! O ye of little faith! He really truly wants to care for you! He really and truly promises to care for you! He really and truly wants you to have peace of mind and heart in the faith and trust that He will take care of you and that He will never leave you nor forsake you! So, why do you still worry?

Well, I've obviously gone around the whole rigamarole with that, but there's one thing I haven't touched on yet—and that's the thing that's the hardest in the midst of this. You still worry because you don't have control of it, right? You still worry, even though you know that Jesus exists and you know that He makes the promise to take care of you, you still worry because that care doesn't happen just how you want it to. It happens in a way that seems arbitrary and arbitrary is so hard to deal with because it doesn't make sense. You could even say it feels unfair. You worry, because you're afraid something will happen that you don't think will be fair.

Right, isn't that the rub of these concerns? It doesn't seem fair that the US—while certainly imperfectly—has tried to bring freedom to the world, and those who seek to destroy it are attacking. It doesn't seem fair that those people just got up one morning and were dead by the end of the day as the towers collapsed—or even less fair, lived for a time after; some for who knows how long. It doesn't seem fair that certain people have died from the coronavirus when others haven't, some healthier than others, some seemingly just better people than others. Lack of control feels like lack of fairness, right?

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. What do I mean? Well, on the surface that sounds like Jesus is saying, “Be the good Christian you are supposed to be then you'll be taken care of.” But where is God's Kingdom and righteousness? It's found in Jesus. It's found on that cross. And there you see the immense depth of His goodness, there you see the immense depth of His righteousness. There you see the immense depth of His love. And if He loves so much that He died for you, do you not think He doesn't actually know what's best for you. If He loves the world so much that He died for it, and God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, right? If that love is true—which the cross shows us it is—then do you not think He knows how best to love that world? Do you think that maybe the unfair thing is actually what He suffered and not what others do? Do you think that maybe the control belongs in the hands of the One who does love so perfectly?

Obviously the answer is yes. And it's yes because this love shows that **“you are of more value than** those birds. It's yes because He does care for you. It's yes because security isn't found in the utopian dreams we have in this world, in our ability to control and protect ourselves and our loved ones. Security is found in the promises of this One who loves and overcomes all evil in His death and resurrection. So, Christian, Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness. Don't worry about tomorrow. Let tomorrow worry about itself. Rest in this Christ. Rest knowing that you are of great value to Him. You are of value worth dying for. Amen.