

7th Sunday after Pentecost July 24, 2022

DO NOT WORRY! DO NOT FEAR!

Luke 12:22-32

Scripture Readings

Psalm 33

Luke 12:33-40

Hymns

29, 263, 518 (alt. Worship Supplement 2000 #789), 42

Hymns from The Lutheran Hymnal (1941) unless otherwise noted

+ *In the Name of Jesus Christ* +

Jesus said to his disciples, “For that reason I tell you, stop worrying about your life, about what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Certainly life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap; they have no warehouse or barn; and yet God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than birds! And who of you by worrying can add a single moment to his lifespan? Since you are not able to do this little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was dressed like one of these. If this is how God clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith? Do not constantly chase after what you will eat or what you will drink. Do not be worried about it. To be sure, the nations of the world chase after all of these things, but your Father knows that you need them. Instead, continue to seek the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. (EHV)

There are some thoughts and feelings that are so common to human beings that they could pretty much be considered universal. Some are good: joy and compassion, for example. Some are not good. Two of these very common, universal “negative” thoughts and emotions that all human beings experience at times in their lives are spoken about by Jesus in our text for this morning: **worry** and **fear**. Unfortunately these two are not only very common in all of us, they are two of the worst thoughts and emotions that we can have. It’s not surprising then that Jesus speaks against these two “beasts” that we all must battle in our lives when He says a number of times in our text, “**Do not be worried,**” (v.29) and “**stop worrying**” (v.22) and in the last verse of our text says, “**Do not be afraid**” (v.32)

That’s nice. I think we’d all agree that we’d really like to not be worried about things and we’d really like to not be fearful in life. But this is easier said than done, isn’t it!? Just because Jesus commands us “**Do not Worry! Do Not Fear!**” that doesn’t automatically make us stop being worried and fearful.

I mean, have you seen what's going on around us right now? Wildfires burning in every direction, smoke filling the air, and oh yeah, we're still dealing with a pandemic! Easy for Jesus to say, "**Do not Worry! Do not Fear!**"

However, the answer to **worry** and **fear** is found in Jesus. In our text we see that Jesus not only is the answer to **worry** and **fear**, He has the answer to **worry** and **fear**! We pray that the Holy Spirit would bless our study of our Savior's words this morning and fill us with that peace that transcends all understanding—and **worry** and **fear**—the peace of God that is found in Christ Jesus!

When you look at the words Jesus spoke to His disciples (His "followers") in our text you can see clearly just how masterfully Jesus teaches this lesson to all who hear and follow Him. It's a lesson He wants you and me to hear and apply to our lives today as well. In our text Jesus gives us at least three reasons why we shouldn't **worry** or **fear**.

I

It's Not Practical! In other words, Jesus reminds us that it doesn't even make sense to **worry**! If you ever need a reminder that we human beings are truly broken and bent in the wrong direction because of sin, all you need to do is think about the fact that we have such a massive problem with **worrying**. It is one of the least productive and most self-destructive thing we humans can do! And yet, for many of us, **worrying** is probably the one area of life we can claim to truly be "experts" in!

Jesus' words in our text expose this problem with our sinful minds and hearts and reminds us that it's not even practical to worry. For one, He reminds us that life is much more than just physical and material things. **Jesus said to his disciples, "For that reason I tell you, stop worrying about your life, about what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Certainly life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing."** (v.22-23). The things of this life can't and won't last and they can't bring true happiness and fulfillment.

Next Jesus reminds us that worrying can't do you any good! "**And who of you by worrying can add a single moment to his lifespan? Since you are not able to do this little thing, why do you worry about the rest?**" (v.25-26) In fact, **worrying** does just the opposite! Medical science has known for quite some time now that worrying is bad for your health and can actually subtract hours from your life!

II

It's Not "Natural!" Now, don't misunderstand what I mean here. For fallen mankind it is as "natural" for our sinful flesh to **worry** and **fear** as breathing! But Jesus points our eyes to the natural world around us and gives us two good examples from nature as to why we shouldn't **worry** or **fear**.

He confronts our worries about what we will put *into* our body: what we will eat and how we will provide food for ourselves. He points us to the birds of the air. "**Consider the ravens: They do**

not sow or reap; they have no warehouse or barn; and yet God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than birds!” (v.24). Do you see the birds of the air starving? No! Will God feed and nourish the birds and forget the disciples of Jesus? Of course not!

He then confronts our worries about what we will put *outside* of our body: our clothes. This time Jesus points us to the flowers of the field. **“Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was dressed like one of these. If this is how God clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith?”** (v.27-28). Is this a **worry** we should really be tempted to have? How many of us haven’t done this before: You walk into your bedroom. You open a closet so full of clothing that it looks like you can’t even stuff one more outfit in there and you say something like, “I have nothing to wear!” Does this tell us something about the abundance God has blessed us with?

When we look at nature, when we look back at our own lives, or when we look into our own refrigerators and pantries and closets we must admit the Lord has provided—and He has provided us much more than we need!

In our text Jesus “builds” on His reasons why we shouldn’t **worry** or **fear**. He pointed out first that **1) it isn’t practical or helpful for us to worry**. He then pointed to examples from nature and showed us why **2) it isn’t “natural” to worry**. Now Jesus points to the most important reason why we shouldn’t **worry**—and it isn’t a “practical” reason or a “natural” reason, it’s a spiritual reason!

III

3) It’s not faithful! Jesus’ words in our text remind us that when we **worry** and fret about earthly things, such as food and clothing, we are setting our hearts and minds on the very things that unbelievers focus their lives on. **“Do not constantly chase after what you will eat or what you will drink. Do not be worried about it. To be sure, the nations of the world chase after all of these things”** (v.29-30a). Jesus is referring here to unbelievers, the **“pagan world”** (NIV) around us that does not know or believe in the true God.

We shouldn’t have the same focus and **worry** that the unbelieving world has because we aren’t of this world. We are children of God, our heavenly Father. Jesus reminds us in the very next line of verse 30: **“but your Father knows that you need them.”** (v.30b) The construction of that phrase in the Greek is emphatic. We could translate that phrase: **“Your very own Father knows that you need them!”** We do not have to fret and **fear** like the Godless around us because we know we have a heavenly Father who already knows our needs and provides for us! So much so that He has made us, His children, the heirs of His kingdom of heaven. Jesus puts our fears to rest in the last verse of our text, **“Do not be afraid, little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.”** (v.32)

As I mentioned earlier, Jesus is the answer to **worry** and **fear** and He has the answer to **worry** and **fear**. Therefore, He does more for us than just give us reasons NOT

to **worry** or **fear**. He points us to Himself and instructs and encourages us as to what we should do instead of **worrying** or **being afraid**.

1) Seek the Kingdom of God (v.31) This is to be our first priority! When we “**hunger and thirst**” for the kingdom of God and His righteousness Jesus promises we “**will be filled**.” (Matthew 5:6) In Him, in His Word and in His eternal kingdom is where we find true fulfillment, fullness, and joy! Jesus also promises that when we “**continue to seek the kingdom of God...all these things will be added to you**.” (v.31) If our focus is only on earthly things we will lose the heavenly. If our focus is on the heavenly, the earthly things are “thrown in!”

2) Be watching and ready for Christ’s return (v.35-40) These words from Jesus come immediately after our sermon text. Jesus reminds us that His return can come at any time, unexpectedly! The eternal bliss of Christ’s heavenly kingdom—our inheritance which our heavenly Father has chosen to give to us (v.32)—awaits! Jesus doesn’t want us to miss out! “**Be dressed, ready for service, and keep your lamps burning. Be like people waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. Blessed are those servants, whom the master will find watching when he comes. Amen I tell you: He will dress himself and have them recline at the table, and he will come and serve them. Even if he comes in the second or third watch, they will be blessed if he finds them alert. But know this: If the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. You also be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you are not expecting him.**” (Luke 12:35-40 EHV)

Faith and trust are what Jesus looks for in His followers, and will be what He looks for in us when He returns again. Faith and trust in Jesus are what push out **worry** and **fear**, for faith is the absence of **fear** and trust is the antidote to **worry** and doubt. Listen to that great definition of faith which we find in **Hebrews 11:1** “**Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.**” (NIV)

Faith and Trust are what Jesus creates in us through His faithfulness, His protection, His provision, and His unconditional, sacrificial love for us. His is a love that shouts to us for all eternity “*Look at my cross! See how much I love you! See how much I sacrificed for you! See how much I have given you there! Can you trust me to take care of everything else?*” We can! And with Jesus’ help we will trust Him with a worry-free, fear-free faith till the very end! Amen.

—**Pastor Luke Bernthal**

St. Stephen Lutheran Churches
California