

Sermon August 7, 2016 - Pentecost 12

There's a Reason Not to Worry

Luke 12:22–34 (35–40)



Dear Friends in Christ,

May God's peace and comfort be with you today as we hear his word, especially as we allow the Gospel reading for today to comfort us and give us hope especially in the times of worry.

We do worry don't we? Some don't but most of us worry in one way or another.

"I'm not a Christian," somebody said and continued: "...not that I need God, or religion or stuff. Though it would be nice to know where I am going. To feel more

grounded. Have a purpose. And I wish I could cope with stress better than I do. Or even find someone I could talk to about the things that worry me. My job is not safe anymore. I can't face all that job-loss stuff again—It's happened twice before. Especially with my loans to repay... And I'm just hoping that dad's medical tests won't show anything bad. Specially now that he has left mum and is living alone."

Do those comments sound familiar? I think so. Even, perhaps, some of us have said something similar at some point or another. Maybe we didn't say we didn't need God, but certainly felt worry because of the things that surround us, and the things we were or are facing now.

So, what do you worry about? The list could be endless, I suppose, and different for each one of us. Some worries likely to make the list might be health, money, kids, parents, job, our congregation. Yes, I do worry about the state and size of our congregations, of Faith and Emmaus.

Yet, in our Gospel reading for today Jesus compels us not to worry. Worrying is not good for health, worrying is detrimental to our spiritual lives. Jesus teaches us not to worry, and even the secular world also tells us not to worry. People from every field of human care agree with Jesus on the issue of worrying.

It is said that health Canada has asked this question, a riddle more like: "What lies at the bottom of the ocean and twitches? Answer: "A nervous wreck."

We know that worry is useless. "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (v 25). Jesus asks.

Doesn't matter how much I worry about the state of our congregation, doesn't matter how much we worry about our health or anything else we can't by our own change the shape of our state.

But there is something else we need to consider, if you didn't know before, hear this now, worrying is a sin against God, against the First Commandment (vv 29–30) for when we take things into our own hands rather than leaving it as a first priority to our Maker and Redeemer, we then go against God, who said he will care and watch over us. Because when we worry, we are not trusting God above all things, therefore we do attempt against the first commandment.

The irony of our anxiety is that we lift ourselves up to be in the place of God, as if we could control what will happen in our future. As somebody said: "Our anxiety does not come from thinking about the future, but from wanting to control it."¹

Of course only God can control our future, so when we want to control our own future we do usurp God's place, it is as if we are more powerful than him.

Now that's a bit of exaggeration, don't you think? Maybe so, yet we are in agreement and knowledge that we do worry, and some of us worry a lot, even when we have enough in life, we do worry.

But Jesus gives us his comfort and the assurance that we don't need to worry for He is the one who provides, sustains and cares for us.

He tells His disciples and by extension to each one of us, "...do not be anxious about your life..." (v.22) "And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried." (v. 29)

Do not be worried and do not seek for he will provide. He will make things happen. That's his promise and what he promises he will fulfill. Therefore, we need to trust him and his words. For those words give not only hope but true hope. And are not just placebo words, so that you know, don't need to worry and expect that somehow things will be better as in a false hope, or so that, as the secular world accuses us with, so that we keep the masses in the dark. No, Jesus's words of not worrying are not just for soothing consolation at the face of our difficulties, but his words come because of who he is, who the Father is and what the Father does.

As you see when Jesus says "Do not seek . . . nor be worried." We find in those words a good lesson, a lesson of trust for when Jesus provides, when we do seek in the right way his provisions and God provides our worries end.

The seeking of the food and drink and the worrying go together. Cease the one, and the other may also cease. But in the Gospel reading for today we hear that God already know what we need, that we need food and drink. That we need resources to survive our journey, until the day he calls us home. Until then he will provide all we need.

Now that we know, the question is, do we trust him for his provisions? In our hearts we do, but in our actions many times we fail. But how are we not to trust him? Think of it! The Gospel reading tells us that God, the Father provides even for birds and flowers which we know are not as valuable as we are. As we humans are! God say that you and I are of much more value than they. We are the crown of his creation, and if God takes care of the lowly creatures, he will surely care for the crown of his creation.

We all have seen his provision, even those who deny his existence, even the fallen creation provides a confession of God's faithfulness and provisions.

Creation also speaks of God's faithfulness, look at the birds who don't worry about their food. Flowers by their beauty praise the Creator. Jesus speaks through his creation to encourage us to let God be God and to let us also be his trusting creatures.

And whatever our needs, whatever worries we have, we should bring them to him for he will be able to provide for us all.

¹ Kahlil Gibran (1883 – 1931) was a Lebanese-American artist, poet, and writer of the New York Pen League, best known for his book *The Prophet*.

And he wants us to be assured of it. He wants our anxieties, our worries to be handed to him.

Do you have any anxieties, any worries?

Here is another lesson, that our anxiety proves our misdirection. When we do have anxieties caused for our worries, it is because we have looked for the provisions and peace of mind in all the wrong places. As Jesus says: "For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them" (v 30).

It is true, even in our spiritual quest we have the same problem. Once a man told D. L. Moody, that he was worried because he did not feel saved. Moody asked, "Was Noah safe in the ark?" "Certainly he was," the man replied. "Well, what made him safe—his feeling or the ark?" "How foolish I've been!" the man said. "It is not my feeling; it is Christ who saves!"

It is Christ who saves, it is God who provides. That's why Jesus says: "Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you" (v 31).

Jesus calls us then from our ways of seeking and worrying in the wrong places. Seeking and worrying that causes us unnecessary anxiety and which robs us of happiness and joy.

Fortunately for us, God breaks into our worrying world with his kingdom and takes our worry away.

In fact he broke into our world already, suffering in his body the pains of this world, and of our sins as he lived and walked this earth and died on the cross of calvary for our sake. Jesus lived with all the reasons for worry on this earth, but he lived perfectly worry free for you. And for here is another truth that fills our hearts with joy and peace of mind, Jesus says that the real and only reason not to worry, it is because It is the "Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Jesus kingdom is also your kingdom, not by our worrying, but by his cross and rising to live for us. The kingdom is ours, even when we worry, because of his grace that forgives us our worries, and restores hope in us, hope in the midst of needs and hardship.

And a third lesson we learn is that the kingdom will change our worry to the ability and the freedom to share, to give to those in needs, and when we do so, we store up real treasure that we don't have to worry about (vv 32–34).

Today therefore, in repentance, we name our anxiety as idolatry, we confess them to God and seek his kingdom not only in the way of material provisions by also spiritual, in the way of forgiveness first.

No worries! And that does change the way we see things in the meantime. This fallen world we know only too well, and we know ourselves. But . . . while we always have things that worry us and we cannot stop our worrying, ours is the Kingdom in which the King takes our worry away.

Amen.