



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School
1611 E Main St., Watertown, WI 53094

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, August 11, 2019

“Our Excellent Kitchen Chef and Generous Butler”

(Luke 12:22)

Rev. David K. Groth

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life”

(Lk. 12:22).

Collect: O Lord, grant us wisdom to recognize the treasures You have stored up for us in heaven, that we may never despair but always rejoice and be thankful for the riches of Your grace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Sociologists say it isn't just your imagination. The pace of life is accelerating. Most of us are busy; busier than we used to be; busier than those who lived before us. We are working more, sleeping less, eating on the run, trying to do several things at once. A poll of freeway drivers, for example, revealed that the majority of us are texting while driving. (No surprise there.) 25% admit to eating and texting and driving at the same time. And 12% of us will make an obscene gesture while we eat, text and drive, surely because of our insistence on trying to do all of that at once. We call it "multitasking" – doing as many things as possible at the same time, and, probably neither paying attention to nor enjoying any one of them very much.

The National Safety Council reports that cell phone use while driving leads to 1.6 million accidents each year, causing nearly 390,000 injuries. The United States Department of Transportation said that in 2017, 3166 people lost their lives as a direct result of distracted driving, most of which was texting. I submit anxiety is at the root. If we don't return the text, we worry people will assume we're uninterested, inaccessible, lazy, rude, indifferent. Maybe Jesus was thinking about our distracted driving when he asked, "Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?"

"Do not be anxious about your life", Jesus said. What are your anxieties today? Education debt that accumulates so fast, but takes forever to pay down? A dull and lifeless social media profile? Maybe you worry about your kids, or your aging parents. Maybe you worry about the growing load of expectations at work, or simply whether or not your business can stay afloat. Maybe you worry about our nation, our government, our culture. Mass shootings. Global warming. Disappearing species. The cost of assisted living. My guess is

if we put our heads together, we could come up with quite a list. But Jesus is saying anxiety is not the answer. In fact, Jesus suggests that at its heart anxiety can be a symptom of a spiritual problem, a spiritual sickness.

“Do not be anxious about your life” he says. “Consider the ravens” he says. “They neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them.” Those are important words, but difficult. If you watch birds you know they work hard to make a living. They spend most of the day thinking about and working at food and shelter. Jesus knew that too. His point, however, is that the birds do not worry about the future like we do. They feel no urge to strain to see a future which they cannot see. They don’t seek security against the future with the vast accumulation of goods. They work hard, and sing and then go to bed, but they do not worry.

Worrying about the future is one the things that seems to set humans apart from other creatures. We worry – a lot. The baby takes a long, long nap and we’re just sure it must be terribly sick. Your teenage driver is late in coming home, and you just know there’s been a horrible accident. We do worry a lot about our lives. We give our worries the power to shape and form the way we live. We spend an inordinate amount of time and energy trying to save ourselves and secure our futures, and that’s called idolatry. Think about it. It’s nearly impossible to trust God and worry at the same time.

This text does not invite us to fail to plan or set goals. Jesus is not advocating a shiftless, reckless, thoughtless, and lazy lifestyle. He’s not forbidding hard work, planning or saving. He is forbidding a care-worn, worried fear which robs us of Christian joy and robs others of our Christian joy and its witness. He is forbidding the kind of worrying that, in effect, assumes there is no God, or assumes that if God exists, we can’t count on him to take care of us. That’s the way of pagans. That’s not the way of God’s people, whom he brought out of Egypt with a strong arm, and whom he redeemed on a cross with outstretched hands.

Sometimes we are anxious about our lives because of

our sin. We know our sin, we know our guilt, and we know it would be within God's rights to wipe us out. So we are anxious. We attend to our work while also keeping a wary eye on God.

Have we forgotten God loves us? Have we forgotten Jesus died on a cross to suffer the punishment of our sin? Have we forgotten we are his baptized children? Have we forgotten he gets no pleasure from punishing us? That's his alien work. What pleases him most is having mercy on repentant sinners. So anxiety over our sin is not the answer; confession and absolution is!

Luke remembers Jesus said, "Consider the ravens." It makes me think of my Grandma Reul who spoke of crows as thieves and murderers. "Consider the ravens" Jesus said. They neither sow nor reap." No, they pick at carrion and garbage, and love to ambush the nests of other birds and eat the eggs or the nestlings. Consider *them* Jesus says. See how God even takes care of the likes of them!

Here's a wonderful quote from Luther. "Thus, our dear Lord holds before us the example of the birds, as if to say, Birds do not have a care in the world; for they know they have an excellent kitchen chef and generous butler whose name is the heavenly Father. They say to us, 'Do not worry! Haven't you heard what kind of cuisine and cellar we have, namely, as wide as the world is wide! That's the reason we fly wherever we wish, we find our food, and the table is well-prepared. The same heavenly Father wants gladly to be *your* kitchen chef and butler, if you would only believe it or want to have him. He proves it by what he does; he gives you land, granary, cellar, and barns; he gives you abundance much more than he gives the birds – learn to believe, sing, be happy, and let your heavenly Father do the caring for you. You are surely the unhappiest people when you worry and do not choose to trust in God.'"

Paul wrote, "Have no anxiety about anything" (Phil. 4:6). He wrote that, by the way, from a Roman prison, when there was good reason to be anxious, because the Romans had

the nasty habit of executing Christians. Yet Paul urges, “Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

Peter wrote, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” And again, from Luther, “Cast your worries on God’s back, for God has a strong neck and strong shoulders. He can easily carry the load. Moreover, He has *commanded* us to commit our cares to Him. Nor can we lay and cast too much upon Him. He likes it all the more.”

“Do not be anxious about your life” Jesus says. He’s teaching us a fundamental lesson of life. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot secure our own futures. Nothing can save us . . . not your hard work, not your busy schedules, not your full and diversified portfolios, not all your righteous acts. They are as filthy rags before the Lord. Nothing can save you, not your friends, your family. Not your nursing home insurance.

Did the psalm assigned for this week speak to you as it did to me given the news? Psalm 33: “The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false hope for salvation; despite all its strength it cannot save.” Arming yourself with an AR 15 or AK 47 . . . that’s not going to save you. It only offers a false hope for salvation and a sham sense of security. Put a guy with an assault rifle up against the angel Gabriel and my money is on Gabriel every time.

The point is, nothing can secure and protect you against the future. Only God. Some things only God can do. Saving us, securing our futures, only God can do that. Nothing else, and no one else can give us that peace which surpasses all human understanding . . . only Jesus. Therefore he says, “Do not be anxious about your life.”

There would be reason to worry today . . . if we were atheists drifting aimlessly through space, unwatched, unloved and completely vulnerable, no mighty ones to do the Lord’s bidding. There would be reason to worry today . . . if we were

agnostics, not knowing who God is, what he wants from us, intends for us, whether he loves us or hates us, is pleased with us or ticked off at us.

But we are not atheists or agnostics. We are the baptized children of God, for whom God has laid down his life. Which means he loves you unconditionally, without reservation, without lingering resentment because of your sin. Remember he shed his blood to wash away your sin and its guilt, leaving no evidence that it was ever there in the first place. He now sits at the right hand of the Father, omnipotent, and yet also has this unconditional love that stands when all else has fallen. He's the one to trust!

In our text Jesus says besides, "Your Father knows that you need these things." He knows our needs because he knows everything. This is comforting, but *only* if he is gracious. Think about it: if the Father knows our need and does *not* give, we are no better off than having a god who doesn't know our needs. But that's not the kind of Father we have. We have a Father who knows our needs, *and* is gracious and generous and promises to take care of us.

"I tell you" Jesus said, "do not be anxious about your life." He is offering us the opportunity to live life to the fullest, each day, without anxiety; without fear, measured not by how much we were able to produce that day, or cram into it, or squeeze out of it, but to experience each day as another gift from God.

He's already taken care of the big things. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And he promises not to overlook our other needs. "Seek first his kingdom, and all these things will be added to you."

"Therefore I tell you" says Jesus, "Do not be anxious about your life." Amen.

