

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity  
09/08/2013  
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
Matthew 6:24-34  
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Word of God for our consideration this morning is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter.

*“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”* The statement is from our Lord so of course it’s true. *“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*

Doesn’t trouble seem to come in volleys? Not only among individuals but even in congregations troubles come in volleys. We’ve had at least 7 people in the hospital in the last month. Doesn’t it seem that one thing happens and then another and then another. Many times all this trouble will come upon a congregation or person in one day. Sometimes it’s spread over several. Our Lord says, *“Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”* In that statement Jesus is saying, “Then, why are you worrying about tomorrow?” A good question isn’t it? Why are we worried about tomorrow? It’s foolish to do so.

First of all we don’t know if we’re going to make it to tomorrow. We’re likened to grass upon this earth. The Psalmist says, *“As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.”* And the Psalm for today says about humans, *“When his breath departs he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.”* We have no guarantee of a tomorrow, at least not by God and

He's the only One that counts. But even if you do make it to tomorrow, you're not in control today, so why would you think you can do anything about tomorrow.

Now understand, Jesus isn't saying you shouldn't plan for tomorrow, you should. It's prudent but as you're planning tomorrow you should say and remember "Lord willing" the whole way. Planning isn't the same as worrying. Get through today by relying on God to fulfill His promise to forgive you, strengthen your faith and to give you the things that you need to make it in this life. Things like food, clothing, drink and shelter. Plan and work hard, but don't worry. Trust in your merciful God.

Instead of worrying about today and tomorrow and future days as though God weren't in control or didn't care God says we should do this: "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*" The first and foremost thing to have on your mind is the things of God. Jesus says that the work of God "*is to believe on the One Whom He has sent*". That's primary for us all. Before anything else and more important than even our life, our family, our career, our good deeds and our things is that we have faith. All those other things mean nothing without faith.

Is that too harsh? "Our life means nothing without faith." Well think about it this way: What value is a spouse, children, a job or career or a garage full of stuff if you don't have faith in Christ? You live out your 70 or 80 years here, you die without faith and so hell is your eternity. Of what value are all those things absent faith at that point in your life? It is harsh but true.

The Father promises to bear with His faithful children and provide them with all they need for this body and life. The curse that followed The Fall makes

it plain that God never promised this life will be easy. Yet in spite of our sin God promises to sustain you all the days of your life. You breathe in air most of the time without giving it a second thought. Air is a gift from God. Water is a gift from God. Life without either would be much more difficult, impossible in fact. Yet air and water are provided without us worrying about them. They can't be provided by worry. God provides them for us.

All the things God created are gifts to you. See, you are the point of creation. Nature is here to serve you and we're blessed to be God's responsible stewards. But if God gives creation to mankind, even to unbelievers, just imagine what's in store for those who by faith receive Jesus Christ. Already He has forgiven your sins. Already by faith you possess a heavenly home, an eternal heavenly home with Christ. That home is fully furnished and ready to go. That's what Jesus' death on the cross earned you. So Christ says receive the things of faith first, that's the eternal stuff, and God takes care of your temporal needs as well.

But keeping your faith here in time is difficult. Our sinful nature doesn't work or think that way. The sinful nature has needs and desires and it's not interested in anything else. We, according to our sinful nature, want all our desires, good and bad, fulfilled and fulfilled now. And when it doesn't happen, when it seems God doesn't hear us we worry and fret. We forget God and chase after other things to fill the void. *"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your*

*heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."*

The Gentiles seek after temporary things. That's an indictment of us as a people. Jesus means the unbelievers seek after these things. The unbelievers worry as though there is no God in heaven looking down on them and sustaining them. They don't believe in Him so why shouldn't they worry. Everything is left up to them. Because they don't believe in God they believe their life depends on them alone. But the world demonstrates that control is an illusion. In the Gentile's way of thinking there is no One looking over them and sending His holy angels to protect and deliver them. There is no Word creating and sustaining all things. "There's no god" the unbeliever says, "so let us worry today as the world spins out of control, for tomorrow we die or we starve or we're left naked." Bleak isn't it?

Look at the fields on your way home. See the flowers? God did that, it's part of the creation He's given you. He put the flowers among the grass. See those birds as you tool down the road. They don't have shovel, rake or watering

can. They don't till, plant or water the seed in the ground. And they sure don't provide the seed to begin with. Yet they eat.

But think about this? Did God die for the grass? Did Jesus go to the cross for the birds? No, redemption was for you alone, not the angels, not the birds and not the grass. Yet He takes care of them all.

He died for none of them but provides for them all. But Jesus did die for you. That means you've already received the best gift possible. You're forgiven of your sin, all of them. And not only did Christ die for you but through His Word and sacraments He gives you faith so that you receive all the work He did for you in living and dying as the cursed God/man Jesus Christ. He humbled Himself for you. He didn't do it for the grass, birds or even the angels in heaven: He did His greatest work for you.

We know all that by the gift of faith...but your senses say, "Clothes, food, drink and shelter I can see." Those things are real because I see they're here. I smell them. I taste them. I hear them. And I touch them. They're real. But the Creator and the Redeemer I must hold by faith for I cannot yet know Him with my senses. If we're not careful our senses have us pursuing the gifts of creation over and above the gifts of salvation. Faith becomes back burner stuff, pushed to the rear by our need to eat, drink, play and sleep. If we're not really careful, if we don't tend to the faith, the creation becomes more important to us than the Creator.

And that gets us to the first of the Gospel reading for today. *"[Jesus said:] 'No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God*

*and money.*” Jesus warns you because He loves you and redeems you. You can’t be devoted to the creation more than the Creator. If you are then you forfeit the Redeemer. But it just isn’t easy to do what Jesus says here. The eyes of faith are harder to believe than the eyes of creation. Creation was cursed in the fall and with it our sight and ability to believe.

The devil, the world, and most of all our sinful nature, war against the eyes of faith. They all say, “Don’t believe faith. Believe your physical eyes, what you see by the light of the created sun.” Our fallen nature is all too ready to listen as the rest of our senses are also deceived. It’s hard to cling to faith over our physical eye sight. But Jesus urges us on and equips us just for that purpose. *“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

God, who provided for you, saved you while you were yet an enemy of Christ, how will He not, now that you have faith in Jesus, continue to bless you as He always has? If He’s that God why won’t He take care of you? Look at what He has already done. From that perspective ‘worry’ looks kind of silly, doesn’t it? God forgave you in Christ. To be forgiven is to be at peace with God. It’s to be named as His very own child and a recipient of all He has to give, even eternal life. That describes you and that’s what you have in Christ today. Amen.

*The Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.*