

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, A²D 2010

Matthew 6:24-34

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 You may worry, or you may have faith. You may worry, or you may have God. You may worry, or you may have a Heavenly Father. Worry is for the Fatherless, for the Gentiles, for the heathens, not for you. You cannot have two gods. Every act of worrying is breaking the first commandment, distrusting your Heavenly Father, or doubting whether He really does have your best interests in mind.

2 There is a liturgy of worry into which the devil, the world, and your sinful flesh invite you to participate. Consider all the dangers you face. What if this month's paycheck doesn't cover all the bills? What if the test results are positive? What if your computer crashes, your house burns down, your car won't start, the policeman wakes you with a knock on the door, your kid doesn't make the team, your husband spends another evening away from you, your party loses another election, or your dad's Alzheimer's progresses? Any one of those could happen, which would be bad. But it would not change your Heavenly Father's love for you.

3 Worry is sin, pure and simple. It is not fitting for children of the Heavenly Father to worry because worry wars against faith. They cannot coexist. If you give in to worry, it eats away at faith. If you succumb to faith, it dispels worry. 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. 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? Which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his span of life? Which of you by worrying can add a single dollar to his bank account? Which of you by worrying can add a single minute to her day, an ounce of food to his pantry, a shred of respect to his reputation, a thread of clothing to her closet? Worry accomplishes nothing except to make you doubt your Heavenly Father's provision for you. Repent.

4 You cannot love both God and money, both God and mammon. Jesus' warning against the love of money and things is closely related to His command not to engage in false worship by worrying. Worry is the means by which mammon is worshipped. Consider your stewardship of money, for instance. St. Paul admonishes Christians to give generously and cheerfully. Elsewhere, he declares that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Do you give generously and cheerfully? Or are you like the Pharisees and scribes who bristle at Jesus' preaching about money because they were lovers of money? Your sinful flesh is a Pharisee. He loves money, which is exactly why you need to give it. God does not need your money. All of His elect will be saved if you never give a dime. He will give daily bread to all people, even if you wickedly hoard everything He gives you. You need to give and give generously because the Pharisee of your heart is wily and cunning. Tithing is a Christian discipline, akin to praying or meditating on Scripture. You do it because your flesh hates to do it. You do it to chasten and discipline your flesh against your former love of money. You do it in order to learn how to give generously and cheerfully. You must not give only what is leftover and comfortable. You must give what is first, what is uncomfortable, what seems to jeopardize getting all your other bills paid. To give more than you think you can, to give your tithe and offering first from your paycheck, to give what seems foolish is to give to drive out worry. This manner of giving is what fights against worry and worship of mammon.

5 Look at the birds of the air. They do not work long, late hours and yet each one has enough to eat every day of life its Creator has given to it. And what is a single sparrow worth? Consider the flowers of the field. They do not sweat or fret, hurry or worry, and each one is never without beautiful array as long as God gives it life. And what is a roadside lily worth? But you, you who have been reborn

through Holy Baptism, who have been marked with the very name of the Triune God, what are you worth? The life of God.

6 Grass can flourish and fade; sparrows can fly and fall. God never gave His life for them. But for you—not for sparrows, or lilies, or angels—for nothing else in all creation except for you, for humanity—God died. The Second Person of the eternal, Triune God took human flesh in the Virgin’s womb. The purpose of His living was to die, and not just to die a natural death—for the sinless Son of God death was never the natural end—but to die the death of sinners, separated from God the Father. You are worth the life of Jesus.

7 There is another liturgy, the liturgy of faith, into which Jesus invites you to participate. “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. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Worry is for the Fatherless; you have a Father. In Holy Baptism, God has adopted you, made Himself your Father, and promised to take care of you better than any earthly father. He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for you, will He not also give you everything you need to support this body and life? If God has given you Jesus, if He continues to give you Jesus, you can trust Him with all those other things that you used to worry about as well. Every day God gives you life, He gives you enough to support you in that life. “Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” “If we live, we live to the Lord, and, if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom 14:8).

8 About what, then, will you worry? Nothing. Everything else pales in comparison to this fact: you belong to your Lord who loves you in Jesus Christ. Even if food and drink and clothing cease, your Lord has promised to deliver you from this vale of tears to Himself in paradise. What shall we eat? Even if food runs out, we shall continue to eat the Bread of Life, the Body of Jesus, born of the Virgin, crucified for you. What shall we drink? Even if drink runs out, we shall continue to drink the Blood of Jesus, poured from His pierced side for you to forgive your sins. What shall we wear? Even if clothes wear out, we shall continue to wear the righteousness of Jesus, His holiness, delivered to you in Holy Baptism, draped over you in Holy Absolution.

9 The cure for worry is in what you will eat, what you will drink, and what you will wear. Eat the Body of Jesus that forgives all your sins, even worry. Drink the Blood of Jesus that washes away anxiety. Hear His word of Absolution that silences all the voices of worry. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, His holy Word and Sacraments, here to forgive your sins, and all the rest of your daily bread will be added unto this. What is there left to worry about? Nothing.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

Pastor Jeff Hemmer