

“Don’t Be Anxious...Don’t Be Afraid”
(Luke 12:22-24)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Last Tuesday night at Bible Study, Pastor Mueller’s excellent sermon from Sunday came up and it was asked of me, “What can we do to stay away from the materialism that pastor warned us about?” My answer wasn’t very optimistic. It’s too late, the problem is already in us. It is true that most of us consider cable or dish T.V. to be a “necessity”. It is already hard for me to imagine life without Netflix. How sad!

So my answer was not in terms of what we do against something “out there” so as to ward it off (like starting commune) because – and you’ve heard the saying -- “we have seen the enemy and it is us.”

But rather the answer is the Lord’s guidance against *self* and to take hold every, single day of your **baptism into Christ**: Crucify your sinful self; drown it, crush it, smash it, kill it. And rise up again in Christ to live in His life and His blood that covers all the materialism in us so that we may live in such a way as to see Christ in our neighbor so that we are moved to give what we have to Jesus who gave all He had to us. The answer has always been Jesus. There is no other way, no other truth, and no other life.

But the split second that we see the truth before us about the new life and desire to live it, we begin to worry: “But can I really do that?” “Can I make that sacrifice?” “Won’t I run out?” “What if I don’t have enough left over for myself and my family?” “If I don’t live like the rest of the world and don’t live for ‘me, myself, and I,’ then *I* will lose, *I* will miss out, *I* will be compromised. Haven’t you heard? Don’t you know? This life is short, so we need to make the most of it. If you don’t look out for your yourself, who will? If you don’t take care of #1, who’s going to do it for you? There are two kinds of people in this world: those who use and those who let themselves be used, so guess what – says the flesh – I’m not going to be used, I am going to be a user. At least that way, I come out on top in the end. It’s the only way to live. It’s the only way to go.

And this point of view is the one that leads to losing life altogether. We resist the truth so much. We fight it every day. But we are not here for ourselves. We are here to be like our Savior. We are here for those around us. When we learn this, really get it, then finally, we begin to know peace and joy, but in the meantime we resist this truth like crazy.

That is, we want to embrace the devil’s philosophy that there are only two kinds of people in this world: those who use and those who let themselves be used. But its fallacious; it commits the flaw of the excluded middle. There’s another option: **there are also those who serve**. And those who serve give so much and yet those who serve *gain* so much. The world can’t see it. The flesh denies it. We want to go the other way, because it seems so right to live only for ourselves and to “love” others only as long as we are getting something out of them.

I can imagine our Lord looking at us with eyes of great compassion and asking you and me: “And how’s that working out for you, O you of little faith!?” As we hold to the things that turn to dust we try to console ourselves with desperate reason, “But they aren’t dust *now!*” says the flesh, but hopefully someday we begin to understand that the only things worth having and the only things worth fighting for are the things that *last*.

Can you even begin to imagine having everything, but then at the last facing death so that everything you have is nothing; or – on the other hand even if you have very little in this life – having Christ so that when facing the end, you continue in life (but even better than before) with more than you can imagine!

But we resist, so our Lord in His great love and mercy gives us Luke 12 and the continuation of what we commenced last Sunday. We don’t have to be like the rich fool, we *don’t need things*. All we need is the Lord. But again, then our very next reaction is worry, anxiety, and fear. Again, “but what if I run out?” “What will be left for me?”

Over the years, I’ve been amazed at the tendency to hold on to certain things. You know what I’m talking about, the stuff in that box in the attic, the pile in the closet, the over-flowing cabinets in the garage. We collect things. And speaking for myself, I forget about most of the stuff I’m holding onto. I don’t miss it. I don’t really need it and yet I gather.

But that’s the easy stuff. If we decide to have a garage sale, Traci and I have been able to part with stuff in the past, but what about the day-to-day resources? This is where things get a bit more challenging. At the same time, our Lord in Luke 12 – while much is certainly said about earthly treasures and what our attitude should be towards them – this chapter is not *just* about that, but also about heavenly treasure. Jesus concludes today’s gospel reading with the words, **“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”** (v 34)

He does not want us to merely consider our relationship to earthly treasure, but to consider our relationship with heavenly treasure and let me cut to the chase: the greatest heavenly treasure is Christ Himself. And if you have Jesus Christ – and you do baptized Christian – then consider: what will He permit to happen to you? Will you be forsaken? Never! Will you be left behind? Absolutely not! Will He stop providing for you? Not in a million years. Consider – or carefully and meticulously examine – the ravens and the lilies. The Lord feeds the birds and He makes the flowers beautiful. If He will do this for a bird and if He will do this for a flower that looks better than King Solomon all decked out, what will He do for His baptized child, you?

This is why He is telling us not to worry. That’s a word – “worry” – that we hear a lot about. Here in this gospel, it is to live in such a way as to “hover between hope and fear” (Just, *Concordia Commentary: Luke 9:51-24:53*, 511). Now if we leave a person only staring at the earthly treasure side of the equation – and we become preoccupied with all the fear questions like “but what if I run out?” etc. – then guess what? The only result is worry. We continue to hover between hope and fear and to try to console such a one under such circumstances with the words, “Don’t worry!” just doesn’t work! Telling a person to not worry when all they are

doing is worrying, will usually generate frustration and most typically just perpetuate a cycle! But notice that this is not all our Lord says.

There's the other side of things. The message is a glorious proclamation: ***"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (v 32)."***

There is more to the words "good pleasure" than meets the eye. The "good pleasure" of our Heavenly Father is based on His determined will for us. This good pleasure of God is already guaranteed. The kingdom of God for the Christian is not a far-off, theoretical possibility as in "maybe someday". Instead the kingdom of God has already been given to those who have faith in the King, the Lord Jesus Christ. ***Spoken to the disciples elsewhere in the Word, Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." (Luke 17:21)***

Among other things, this means the guarantee of provision for every need – every need for the body and every need for the soul – everything is covered. Everything. Some of our best days as a married couple were in seminary. We were pretty poor. I had a full course load, but also worked part-time through seminary (except during vicarage). One afternoon after classes, I was getting ready to leave for work (I was a salesman at Radio Shack in Fort Wayne, Indiana) and Traci mentioned to me exactly how much we were coming up short for paying the monthly bills. That evening I sold a computer system, the commission from the sale was *exactly what we needed to cover our bills that month*.

But to be kingdom children is to have far more than this. And Luther leads us to recognize just how much is included in our "daily bread": We pray in the Lord's Prayer the fourth petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." Our catechism asks, "What does this mean?" Answer: "God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving."

Then the catechism further asks, "What is meant by daily bread?" Answer: "Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband, or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."

Behold how richly the Father pours out His blessings upon us. The fact that our bodies are strong enough to be here, to live and breathe, to love our families, to share friendships, to live in this gorgeous place, and the list goes on. But there is yet more, to have the determined will/good pleasure of the Father already set for you dear Christian means that you also have already the heavenly gifts: you have Christ, Savior and Lord; your sins are wiped away by His blood which covers them; and even your death has been dealt with so that when you die, you will yet live (the resurrection means your body will be gloriously restored); and you have the Holy Church to keep you in this true faith and you have THIS bread and THIS wine that keeps you united to Jesus, your King and the One who removes all fear through His perfect love.

Rejoice! We have GREAT reason not be anxious and GREAT reason not to fear! We have been given the Kingdom and the love of God has destroyed our fear!