

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord speaks words of comfort and hope: “Do not worry about your life...” Of course worrying about life is what many of us spend a lot of time doing. Financial stress, planning for retirement, concern over physical health, anxiety about family and children, uneasiness about sick family and friends, nervousness about the future, fear of death, all these drive us to worry.

At times we feel as if we have responsibility without control. The unexpected happens, and we’re not prepared for it. We look at the state of our country, the state of our economy, the turbulence and violence in the world, the divisions in our nation, and then come hurricanes and flooding. And there’s nothing you can do about it. Except worry.

But the Lord bids you “Do not worry about your life...” Indeed, those consumed by worry He calls “O you of little faith.” Because worry is antithetical to faith. Faith trusts. Worry doubts. Faith trusts without seeing. Worry fears the unseen. Faith knows that the God who controls all things, the omnipotent God that created and sustains heaven and earth, works all things together for the good of those who love Him. Faith trusts in God. Faith doesn’t worry.

But the flesh, your flesh, doubts. Doubt is the opposite of faith. Doubt is what the serpent created in Adam and Eve. He tempted them to doubt God’s Word. Worry is like that. And your fallen flesh has even caused you to worry that perhaps God’s will isn’t what you want. Worry is multiplied when anxiety and fright drive you to be obsessed with fear of the unknown, an endless fabrication of defeatist “what ifs?” and self-pity.

So money, job, health, and spouse become things over which you worry. And that worry can be consuming, debilitating, emotionally, physically, but most of all spiritually. Worry is antithetical to faith. Worry is doubt, and to doubt God and His clear Word is sin. Sin separates from God and leads to death. All men die. There’s nothing they can do about it. And with the death of a sinner comes eternal condemnation. And that should strike fear in every man.

The Lord says “Do not worry about your life...” But He is not exhorting you to carelessness. Worldly complacency is not the answer. Ignoring the presence of sin and its consequences is not trust. God, by telling you not to worry, is not teaching that you should live carefree in fleshly indulgence. Irresponsibility is not the answer. Negligence does not flow from faith. Although it is the response of the sinful conscience, that is not what God wants.

But that, irresponsibility, is the answer of the fallen world to the things that men cannot control. The fallen respond to the stress of the unknown with apathy and even contempt. That’s how the world treats the Christian. As the Word of God convicts the world of sin, the world responds “don’t worry, be happy.” The world says “no worries.” The world says “let it go.” The world bids you be unconcerned with the results of your actions, unconcerned with sin and its consequences. That is not what God means when He says “Do not worry about your life.”

What God means is that you must trust in Him. It is a question of His nature. The fallen world sees God as fickle, unpredictable, angry. But faith knows better. Faith knows that He is a God of order, the God of love, the God of peace. That you trust, that you not worry, that you put away doubt, that you believe, that you have hope and confidence and peace, the Lord says to you

“Your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things... Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

God, who formed you in your mother’s womb; God, who placed the planets and hung the stars; God, who circumscribed the globe and gave the oceans their limits; God who spoke and there was, God who made the birds of the air and the lilies of the field and causes them to prosper and grow, God desires that you trust in Him. He desires that you believe in Him. He makes you a Promise, that His Promise work faith in you.

Faith trusts. Faith believes that God, the Triune God, is the God who Provides, the God who Heals, the God who Sees. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hope defeats worry. Faith overcomes doubt. Faith trusts in the unseen. Faith is stable, content, responsible, unshakable, strong. Faith commends all things to the God who made you, the God who loves you, the God who redeemed you.

The seeming difficulties of life, the ups and downs, God uses to your good. By them God purifies you, teaching you to trust in Him, preparing you for the life to come. By the tribulations of this world God makes you trust all the more in Him, and that trust, that faith, is salvific. As God strengthens your faith, He protects you from harm, and He prepares you for everlasting life. And therein lies your hope, dear Christian.

The ultimate fear, man’s greatest worry, is death. Death underlies the vague premonitions of disaster that plague the fallen flesh. But God has defeated death. God has overcome the curse, the greatest enemy. To do so, to take away your death, God Himself died. In His perfect death there is forgiveness for all your sins, even the sin of worry.

He has atoned for your sins. He has paid your price. And He defeated death, that you who believe in Him will never die. He has removed all worry in His resurrection. So you need not worry, dear Christian. You are free to trust in God, where there is hope and joy, confidence and bliss. Come what may, you are in His strong, protecting hand. And His hedge of angels surrounds you.

That your confidence be sure, He has joined His salvific Gifts to concrete, external symbols. His Word comes with water, that you see and trust. His Body and Blood He joins to Bread and Wine, that you receive in faith and not doubt. Faith sees the symbols, but faith trusts in the unseen, as forgiveness and life are washed into you and placed into you. Faith trusts in Christ. And that faith, saving faith, God makes yours.

So you do not ask “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?”, for God bids you eat and drink Christ. And you do not ask what shall we wear, for God vests you in the clean, bright robe of Christ’s righteousness, the righteousness that you seek. And you do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow is for you a day of joy, for God has given you hope, hope in the resurrection of the body, hope in the coming of your Lord in glory, hope in the heaven He has prepared for you.

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St. Matthew 6:24-34

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity / Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, 2016 A.✠ D.