

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

Earthquakes in Mexico. Hurricanes in Texas, in Florida, and in the Dominican Republic. Caribbean islands destroyed. North Korea threatening nuclear war. Riots in our streets. A country divided. Perversity rampant in our society. Christians persecuted by our schools and by our government.

Consider the things about which you have worried. Consider the things that cause you stress, that wake you up in the middle of the night. We worry about things we can't control. We worry about the unknown. We suffer from vague premonitions of disaster.

And the news media and facebook and twitter make it worse. Every storm is now a "killer storm." Every time the temperature goes up it's "deadly heat." When it snows it's an "apocalyptic blizzard." Natural disasters are reported to be of "Biblical proportions" by men who reject the Bible.

Health problems, credit card debt, student loans, financial difficulties, problems in relationships, problems at work, and even traffic jams bring with them even greater worry. And then we learn that worry itself is a danger, that stress has physiological effects, so we worry about worrying.

In the face of all these menacing threats and struggles, the Lord says "Do not worry." In the midst of turmoil, He speaks Words of peace. "Do not worry." His Words seem not to fit what we are experiencing. Is it that the Lord has not seen? Does He not know what you are suffering? Doesn't He understand how stressful it is? Perhaps you have felt like the disciples on the Emmaus road, who said to the risen Lord "Are you the only stranger *here*, and have not known the things that have happened in these days?"

Or is it that His Kingdom is not of this world? Is it that worry about life, about food and drink, about body, about clothing - is it that these things are of a different kingdom? Is it that if all these things were provided, there would be no worry? Of course not. We would still find things to worry about. So you must confess that worry doesn't have its basis in physical, temporal things, but rather in spiritual things. Faith doesn't worry. At its base, worry is antithetical to faith.

God desires you to be a good steward of the gifts He gives. He desires that you work hard, that you do your best, indeed that you do all things as for Him. You are to be financially responsible. You are to honor your debts. You are to live within your means. The Parable of the Talents, and the Lord's admonition that you "count the cost" are clear. But as the Lord teaches that we are to count the cost, He also says "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

And this truth convicts all of us. Each of us must confess that we have thought more about earthly things than about heavenly things. Consider the things that have kept you away from church, kept you away from Bible study. If you were concerned more with eternity, if you were concerned more with salvation, you would order your life differently. Consider too what portion of that which you have received you return to the church in your offerings. How has that reflected your concern for eternal things?

If you're honest, you must confess that you have been more concerned with the temporal than with the eternal. You have worried. You have served mammon rather than God. You have lived for the day rather than living for judgment day. And of that you must repent.

But do not despair. Do not worry. Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather, yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to your stature? God is gracious. God provides. Through His provision He wants you to know Him as the Good and Gracious Giver. He wants you to see His loving hand in everything that you receive.

And more, He loves you. He provides for the needs of this body and life. He also provides the most important things, the things of the life to come: forgiveness, salvation and eternal life. When the things of this life have turned to dust, His Kingdom remains. His Kingdom will never perish. And that you know that comfort, that you have that hope, God the Father sent His Son into this perishing, disaster-ridden world to purchase you, to buy you back, to make you citizens of His eternal Kingdom.

But worry doesn't get you there. Faith does. Faith overcomes worry. Faith, true faith, saving faith, trusts in God. Faith trusts in Christ, and His propitiatory death. The Lord who taught His disciples "Do not worry" did so in the shadow of the cross. The Lord that says "Do not worry about your life" knew that His life would be violently taken. The Lord who would be stripped of His tunic said "do not worry about what you will put on." The Lord who would endure the tearing scourge, the Roman spikes, and the spear thrust said "Do not worry about your body." For by these, by His precious suffering and death, He won for you an eternal Kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness", the Lord teaches. They are Words for you. And what you could never attain, holiness, He freely gives you. You believe that He died for your sins, even the sin of worry, you believe and all your sins are forgiven. You believe that He rose for your justification, and you are declared righteous before God by faith. You believe that He ascended into heaven, and heaven is open to you. By faith in Christ, you are a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

In the Kingdom of God, there is only one Master, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In the Kingdom of God, there is eternal life, life for you, life that cannot be taken away. In the Kingdom of God there is gracious, superabundant provision, for the riches of heaven are yours.

By faith, you do not worry about what you wear, for God gives you celestial raiment, the white robe of Christ's righteousness. By faith, you do not worry about what you will eat, for you will partake of the heavenly banquet, the unending feast. You do not worry about what you will drink, for God gives to you Living Water, of which a man drinks and never thirsts again. And He gives you your daily bread, as you pray He would. So for you, dear Christian, for you, redeemed of Christ, there is safety, protection, hope, and eternal peace. You who have been brought in to the Kingdom of God need not worry.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity / Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, 2017 A. ✠ D.

And that you know for certain, that you do not doubt, God's Gifts are wedded to concrete, external signs. Under the sign of Water and Word He gives His Spirit to fill you, to make you new. And under the signs of Bread and Wine you taste of that Heavenly Feast, the Eternal Banquet, as you eat and drink Christ. You eat and drink believing, and you receive the Promise and all that it brings: forgiveness, comfort, hope, and peace. You eat and drink, and all these things are added to you.

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