

Pentecost 9 / August 7, 2022

Luke 12:34

“Where your treasure is there your heart will be also.”

Proverbs 12 says, “Anxiety in the heart weighs a man down, but a good word makes him glad.” Do you have anxiety in your heart? Do you worry about things? Anxiety is sometimes defined as a general sense of foreboding. We can feel anxious about many things in general and nothing in particular. Like beauty, the difference between worry and anxiety is often in the beholder. Anxiety is chronic, but worry is temporary and often based on reality. Worry dissipates when the situation is resolved. People feel anxious when they are worried. Anxious people are always worried. People may dismiss anxiety as baseless, but if you suffer from anxiety that won’t help, it may make it worse. Some think that all people need is to be told, ‘there is nothing to worry about,’ without giving any good reason for their assertion. “Don’t worry. Be happy,” as if that’s all there is to it and its as easy as that.

A good word gladdens an anxious heart, but it has to be a true word. You can tell someone not to worry, but unless your words give a good reason, they won’t make a heart glad. A person once told me, just because someone says, you are being paranoid, it doesn’t mean someone isn’t out to get you.” A good word makes us glad, only when it is based on a substantive reality. Jesus says not to be anxious or to worry. He gives a good reason, saying, “It is your Father’s pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Rather than pious platitudes, He offers something real and substantive to alleviate our fears. He offers the love of our heavenly Father as the solid rock of our confidence.

Worry and anxiety are effects of the human condition, in bondage to sin and under the condemnation of death. Worry and anxiety reveal our sin and show that we need something greater than ourselves as the ground of our being. Worry and anxiety show our need to base our existence on God and build our lives on the solid rock of His love, expressed in its fullness in Jesus our Saviour. We worry and feel anxious, because of our fallen spiritual nature and the broken world in which we live. But in Christ we have confidence for daily living and nothing to fear, even in death. In Him, the Father gives us the kingdom of His love in time and for eternity.

It’s natural that people worry they may not have enough to eat, have warm clothes and shelter from the elements. Hunger, want and homelessness are a fact of life for millions of people. There are many dangers; some known, more unknown. Life is uncertain. We live from day to day and moment to moment. It’s not surprising people experience chronic anxiety. The human spirit suffers anxiety because of its sinfulness, whether acknowledged or denied. Jesus said that in the days leading to His return, there will be signs in the heavens and on the earth; wars and rumour of wars. He said, nations will be in distress and perplexity, “because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding on what is coming on the world.” Do you wonder what is coming on the world? The Lord is coming. He will come to judge the nations. For those who are without God and without hope, there is good reason for worry and anxiety.

Even if it’s a vague fear and general sense of foreboding, this existential anxiety is based on the reality of human sin and the innate sense of judgement to come. It is a dreadful thing to contemplate being judged by the living God. Righteous Isaiah trembled with fear when He was brought into the presence of God. Jesus said, “Nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known...whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light.” It’s dreadful to contemplate being called to account for every idle word spoken, every bad thought, every wrong done and every good left undone. That’s a sure source of worry, fear and anxiety. No wonder people don’t want to think about it, as if pretending it doesn’t exist will make it go away.

A cosmologist once commented that despite the intricacy of the universe and the precise way in which immense forces work together on a colossal scale, most of his colleagues won’t even consider the possibility of a Creator. In fact, a study found that of all scientific disciplines, cosmologists were least likely to believe in a Creator of any kind. When asked why, he said because, the existence of a Creator implies that the universe has a moral basis. That moral basis carries the possibility that we may be called to account for our actions and judged on the basis of our lives. People don’t want to think about that! The universe has a moral basis. God is the Creator. There will be a judgement, but Jesus has a better solution.

He offers Himself as the balm for our worries and the prescription for our anxiety. He is the Saviour, who has bourn our sins and the sin of the world, on the cross. He has settled our accounts with the Creator. In Him we have forgiveness and the peace of a good relationship with God. God calls us 'children' for the sake of Christ our Saviour. Christ calls us to Himself in faith saying, 'Come to me all you who are weary with worry and weighed down with anxiety.' He says, "I will give you rest." He is our rest. In Him we have the peace of a good conscience in relationship with God. In Him and for His sake, we have the blessed assurance that He will work all things in our lives to our eternal good.

Nevertheless, we continue to worry and feel anxious. That's the human condition in a world in bondage to sin and under the condemnation of death. Worry and anxiety reveal the sinful nature which continues to live within us. Our sinful nature needs to be recognized for what it is and drowned daily in repentance, in the water of baptism. Whenever you feel anxious and worried, remember your baptism. Return to God's promise to forgive your sins, renew you with His Holy Spirit and enrich you with His grace for the sake of Christ Jesus. Remember that in your baptism, God promised to never leave or forsake you. When you are worried and feel anxious, hear His words of absolution spoken by the minister, or by a sister or brother in Christ. Remember His promise to work all things in our lives to our eternal good for the sake of Christ our Saviour.

Worry and anxiety have a place in our lives in Christ. Rather than completely negative, fear, anxiety, worry and foreboding show us our continuous need to turn to God for the blessings of His grace and favour for the sake of Christ our Saviour. These things humble us, so that we bow down and say, "God have mercy on me a sinner." God humbles us in our sin, so He may raise us up in Christ Jesus. St. Peter writes, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you." Jesus tells us not to worry and be anxious, because God cares for us. That's the good word that makes an anxious heart glad! The greatest antidote to worry and anxiety is knowing God cares for us. He has given Christ to be our Saviour and the Holy Spirit to be our guide. We can't make it alone. We need Christ at the heart of our lives. He is our greatest treasure

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." Sometimes we worry and experience anxiety, because we treasure things wrongly. A theme runs through our gospel readings the past few Sundays. The theme of placing greater value on things that can be touched, seen and consumed than the invisible things of God; His word and promise of salvation in time and eternity. Martha was too busy making dinner to listen to Jesus. A man was more interested in having Jesus settle his inheritance than hearing Him speak about the inheritance of God's kingdom. Another man treasured the things of earth, but made no provisions for the kingdom of God. The things of the earth are important, but the treasure of God's love in Christ Jesus is most important! Jesus said, 'your Father knows that you need these things, "seek His kingdom and these things will be added to you."

We seek His kingdom by treasuring Jesus in our hearts as our greatest wealth. We treasure Jesus by gladly hearing His word in worship, study and personal reading. We treasure Jesus by pouring our hearts to Him in prayer. We treasure Jesus by giving Him away, sharing His word with others in our conversations and with each other in our fellowship as believers. We treasure Jesus by coming to His table to receive the spiritual nourishment He offers in His body and blood through the bread and wine of Holy Communion. He said, "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." Our greatest treasure is Jesus. He speaks a good word of forgiveness and love, which gladdens an anxious heart in time and gives life in eternity. God bless us always to treasure in our hearts Jesus as Lord. In His Name. Amen