

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity
12 September, Anno Domini 2021
St. Matthew 6:24-34
Pr. Kurt A. Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary.” You might as well go ahead and insert our names in place of Martha’s. Is there anything that we aren’t troubled and anxious and worried about? In solemn remembrance we were made mindful again that we are surrounded by people who hate this nation. The housing market has everyone wringing their hands wondering if now is the time to sell, but then, where would we move. We have a president who is quite actively trying to turn neighbors in hatred toward one another because of their private medical decisions and threatening punishment for those who don’t fall in line. Prices of everything are continuing to rise. Death strikes and robs us of our precious loved ones from the womb to the nursing home and everywhere in between. Natural disasters sweep through communities and leave a trail of devastation in their wake that will take months if not years to recover from. Children are being abused and murdered.

The details may be different for you but the sub-plot is the same: everything seems set against you, your job is full of stress or maybe you’ve lost it and can’t find another, your health is deteriorating, your children are living lives and going in directions that you know will only bring them heartache or worse. It is precisely because of all of this, because the dark, chaotic reality of sin surrounds you on every side, that Jesus says to you His dear and beloved child in the simplest and clearest way “STOP worrying.”

How can Jesus possibly say something like STOP worrying? What possible reason could we have to stop worrying? Does Jesus have any clue what the heck is going on down here? How can we not wring our hands, constantly grumble and moan, let out long hopeless sighs, be pessimistic, and even contemplate, if only for a second, quitting this mess completely? Jesus’ words really just sound like a pipe dream, not spoken with any kind of understanding of “reality”. The reality of sin, death, chaos, rising debt, busy schedules, crumbling marriages, and struggle.

Repent. We worry because we think these are reality, that these are what are controlling the narrative. They are not. Jesus is reality. The Father’s love and faithfulness to you are reality. Forgiveness is reality. Your Baptism with its promise of forgiveness and the Father’s daily love and care is reality. The Body and Blood in, with, and under the bread and wine given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins are reality. The rest is just a smoke screen put up by Satan and your sinful flesh to distract you. The problem isn’t Jesus or His Word. We are the problem. ANY amount of worry, no matter how we express it, betrays the fact that we still want to believe that any good comes from the mammon of this world. It also betrays the fact that we don’t believe that our heavenly Father actually does love us more than birds and flowers. We simply don’t trust God with our whole heart. Instead, we worry.

But, dear child, your heavenly Father WILL take care of you. THAT is reality. Jesus knows this

and He wants you to know it, to believe it with every fiber of your being even as you stare at the grave. God loves you dearly. He told you to call Him Father. Today Jesus pulls back the curtain of this life to show you that the Father is working behind the mess of what you see for your temporal and eternal good. And not just yours but all of the elect, all of His precious children. Just don't confuse your earthly condition with the Father's love. The Father loved His Son dearly, but that didn't mean that Jesus didn't suffer. Just the opposite. Satan and the world hated Jesus all the more because the only One that Jesus feared, loved, and trusted was His heavenly Father. And certainly if there was anyone who had cause to doubt the Father's care it was Jesus. He never transgressed a single commandment in thought, word, or deed. He obeyed His Father's will perfectly, day and night, and still Jesus suffered more than anyone who has walked this earth.

Even though Jesus didn't have a place to lay His head, He never doubted that His Father would give Him His food at the proper time. Not once – not as He was forced to lay His infant head where ox and donkey fed, not as His friends and neighbors turned against Him, not before Judas stepped out of the shadows to betray Him, not as His closest friends turned tail and abandoned Him, not in middle of the lies, not as the fists and lies pummeled Him, not as the bits of bone and metal tore through His flesh, not as the thorns were being pressed into his head, not as the nails were driven through His hands and feet, not as the sun's light failed and His Father forsook Him – not once, did Jesus stop believing His Father's promise to love and care for Him. Why? Because He didn't have to. Jesus knew that His Father loved Him, that His Father's will was good and gracious, and that His Father would save Him – even if that meant death. And His obedience and trust is given to you, as though you never doubted, as though you had never let your heart be deceived and led astray by earthly wealth and pleasure and success.

Now, look at the birds and flowers. The same God that made you, made them and makes sure that every single one of them is taken care of. Birds don't plant seeds and water them to get food. God just provides it for them. Some of the most beautiful things in this world are inanimate objects that CAN'T do anything to provide for themselves. And yet, there isn't a fashion designer in the world who could make you look as spectacular as a single lily. But your Father didn't send His only-begotten Son as a bird or a flower. Jesus came to save you. He took your human flesh, he suffered death FOR YOU. You didn't ask Him to. You didn't even deserve it. But your Father was willing and Jesus was willing.

Unbelievers worry about things like food and clothes because they don't know God as Father. YOU don't need to worry. You know the Father. Jesus has shown you His love for you. Your worry changes exactly zero and only makes things worse because it turns you away from the One who made you, who loves you, who cares for you and gives you life in this world and the next. You aren't God. But that's okay, because your Baptism makes you a child of the only One who is God. You will have what you need. God saved you from hell. He will make sure you have enough to eat.

Instead of worrying about silly, yes, silly things like food, drink, and clothing, seek first what really matters – the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And if you want to find the kingdom of God, just look for Jesus. And guess what. You don't have to worry about finding Him. Jesus has made even made that easy for you. He is with you where His Word is faithfully

preached. And just look at the altar. There He is. Not a symbol of Him or an empty mental picture of Him. But Him, your Lord and Savior and Shepherd. He gives you His Body and Blood to eat and drink so that as you are surrounded with all the things that make you want to worry you can receive the very Body and Blood that suffered under and conquered all of them and makes you a participant in that victory. He gives these to you so that you can say without a shadow of a doubt “Yes. Jesus died for ME. He gives this Supper to ME so that no one can tell me it’s not true. I have no reason in the world to doubt that my heavenly Father will give me EVERYTHING I need for this life and the next.” That’s reality. May God grant each of us to know and find comfort and joy in our Father’s unfailing care and mercy, especially in these increasingly dark and difficult times.

In the Name of +Jesus.

(Please stand.) The peace of God which passes all understanding, will guard you hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.