

Many members. One body united in Christ.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity
St. Matthew 6:24-34
13 September, Anno Domini 2026

Children of the Heavenly Father,

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our Lord asks you this morning "Why are you anxious? Why do you tie yourself up in knots, lay awake late into the night catastrophizing the future, constantly read the news and check the stock market, doom scroll through social media, and burn the candle at both ends working to get one more thing done? Does any of it help? Has your worrying ever actually made anything better or prevented times of affliction? Why do you doubt the love and care of the One who robes flowers with unmatched splendor even though they will be ingloriously shredded to pieces by your lawn mower or ripped out of the ground to be discarded like trash? What reason do you have to think that THIS time you won't have your food at the proper time from your Almighty Father's hand? Do you think He can't or won't take care of you if robots and AI take your job, the entire monetary system collapses, and the economy comes crashing to the ground? Doesn't He feed the birds of the air even though they don't plant crops or build up retirement accounts?"

The answer to our Lord's questions is simple but shameful - we worry about these things because we don't trust our heavenly Father to do what He promised. We let our sinful flesh steer our thinking so that the worst things we can imagine happening to us are things like missing out, pain, sickness, poverty, being mocked, rejected, persecuted, or dying rather than God's eternal judgment. The sin that has completely corrupted our nature has turned our eyes and hearts away from our good and gracious Creator, who withholds no good thing from His creation or His beloved children, to covet after and worry about fleeting and sometimes even evil things.

We so often fit the description of the psalmist in Psalm 49 which we prayed during Matins this past Friday, "Man in his pomp yet without understanding is like the beasts that perish." (Psalm. 49:20) We love and strive after having all manner of earthly things while giving little or no thought at all to the One who alone can give those things and before whom we will give an account of how we used whatever He has given into our stewardship. How often has the devil been able to use what God in His love and mercy has given to turn you away from God and fill your heart with unbelieving worry and anxiety?

But has your worrying ever added a single a dollar to your bank account or a moment of peace to your day or an hour to your life? More likely, it has taken away a few. Beloved of God, worrying is only and always destructive to you. It wreaks havoc on both your soul and your body. It closes your ears and your hearts to the voice of God your Father

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and can bring on heart attacks and ulcers and headaches and any number of other physiological problems. It can fill you with anger and despair. St. James writes quite pointedly “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” (James 4:1-4)

And yet, we foolishly continue to think and behave as though our worrying, not God, is going to save us because it is going to make us prepared. We call our anxiousness frugality or being responsible. But it is neither of those things. It is idolatry. It is unbelief. It is sin. By your worrying you signal to both God and the world that God's love and His Word are not to be trusted. Of course, we would never use those words, but that is the sermon that our anxiousness preaches to everyone around us. We may say to our children that the things of God are the most important, but do we then order our days and priorities accordingly? Or do our children see us filling all our time and theirs with worldly things? Do they hear us speaking anxiously about things going on the world or our finances but don't hear us praying to God for help?

The sad truth is that we spend endless hours and dollars to keep our bodies from sickness and death. We anxiously wonder whether the stock market or gold or real estate is the best way to ensure financial security, a comfortable lifestyle, and the ability to check things off our bucket list. We put ourselves in endless amounts of debt to have houses and cars and vacations and streaming services and cellphones and piles of packages for everyone at birthdays and Christmas. We have our children up late into the night doing homework after several hours at practice chasing after scholarships to schools that promise lucrative careers while at the same time telling them in no uncertain terms that Christianity is evil and stupid, so that many of our children come to despise us and Christ. We check the news dozens of times throughout the day and scroll through social media because we are afraid that we are going to miss out on something everyone else tells us is the most important thing. We are filled with such anxiousness and stress about our schedules, politics, money that we aren't sleeping, we aren't spending meaningful time with our families. On not infrequently, we find ourselves trying to numb the worries with drugs, alcohol, video games, mindless television, pornography, and a host of other things.

Meanwhile, the things that make for peace are right in front of us, but we are just too busy to sit down and read the Bible or gather our family together to eat and pray. There are too many important things to do to spend time teaching our children the Small Catechism. We are so exhausted that we find it nearly impossible to wake up on the Lord's Day and gather with our eternal family in our Heavenly Father's house around His table. Our minds are racing with so many worldly concerns that we give hardly a thought to our need to be fed and nourished with the life and rest-giving Word that proceeds from God's

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mouth and receive the Holy Supper of our Savior's Body and Blood given and shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins. Wallets that opened readily to indulge our hobbies and chase our desires suddenly snap closed when our neighbor is in need or we hear the Lord's call to tithe to support the preaching of God's Word. Lips that we readily opened to repeat the devil's lies and the world's evil and vulgarity suddenly close when called upon to pray, to confess our own sin, call out the world's sin, or sing the praises of God's name.

Today, again, our Lord calls us to repent of our worrying and our anxiousness, to receive His forgiveness, and to joyfully and with all confidence trust our Heavenly Father who has demonstrated His great love for us by sending our Lord Jesus Christ. God puts absolutely no stock in the things we so often chase after because we think they are so important. Jesus, the Second Person of the blessed and holy Triune Godhead, was born of lowly Mary and laid in an animal feeding trough to make known to us that God regards the poor and lowly and despised of the world. The Son of Man had no place to lay His head though even the foxes have their holes and the birds their nests. He whose glory fills heaven and earth was crowned with not with gold or the praises of men but with thorns, robed in the stripes of the Roman scourges, allowed Himself, even desired for OUR sake, to be shamefully nailed to the cross and lifted up from the earth. He did all this so that our eyes and hearts would be lifted up and away from earthly things and from death to look instead at the great mercy and love of God. In Jesus' cross, God shows us the truth about everything the world values and insists is important and even good and that we so often, to our great shame, find ourselves worrying about. God reveals to us that the cross is beauty. THAT is truth. THAT is good. CHRIST crucified is our life and our wealth. And that is exactly what the world and our flesh hate and flee from.

Our worry is rooted in our desperate desire to make sure that THAT doesn't happen to us, that we don't have to suffer and die, that we don't have to deny our flesh its desires and go without creaturely comforts at every moment, that we won't be mocked and hated and maybe even killed by the same world that did that to Jesus.

When we stress and worry about these things, what are we doing? We are not praying to God from whom comes all our help. We are not reading God's Word. We are not hearing and believing what God actually promises to us through Holy Baptism. We are not hungering and thirsting for Sacrament of the Altar because we think so little of the treasure that it gives. We are allowing ourselves to be satisfied instead with worldly, temporary, and even evil things. We are not investing our time, energy, and resources into the things of the kingdom of God, just as the devil wants it. Satan accomplishes his purposes against us by drawing our attention out and away from the Means of Grace to focus instead on seeking after the kingdoms of the world and their glory while leading us to foolishly believe that there will be time later to seek after God's kingdom or that God doesn't REALLY care whether His children receive the Means of Grace or hear His Word or pray or teach our children to know and call upon Him.

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What if Jesus had turned away from God's Word and gained His daily bread by taking the devil's offer to turn the stones into bread and fill His belly? What if Jesus had fallen in worship at the devil's feet in order to avoid the suffering and pain of the cross which His Father had appointed for Him? What if He had given in and come down from the cross just to prove His tormentors and murders wrong? If Jesus had loved His life in this world and the things of this world, you and I and all people would stand hopelessly but justly condemned under God's righteous judgment. Like the rich man who ignored Lazarus or the rich young ruler who was saddened at the prospect of not having his things, without question we would be cast eternally away from God's presence into eternal torment with the devil and his angels because our worrying and anxiousness confess who our true gods are.

But Jesus DIDN'T love His life in this world! He loved His Father. With His Father He loved you. And He loved His Father's will to save you by His own death in your place. None of the things that we are so often filled with worry about can do that for you. Everything the world seeks and praises are at best passing away and at worst are the very means by which the devil seeks to drag you away from Christ and the means which He has appointed for your salvation. Christ alone gives you the peace of a clean conscience before God. Christ alone gives you things that are eternal. Christ alone takes away sin and death. Christ alone shields and protects you.

The rest and peace that we all long for can only ever be found in Christ Jesus. Having more of what ever earthly thing you desire means nothing to God. Jesus tells you plainly that Gentiles, pagans, unbelievers chase after these things precisely because they think they mean anything or are signs of God's favor. They aren't. Hear again the truth from God in Psalm 49 "Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases. For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him.

For though, while he lives, he counts himself blessed — and though you get praise when you do well for yourself — his soul will go to the generation of his fathers, who will never again see light. Man in his pomp yet without understanding is like the beasts that perish." (Pslm. 49:16-20)

Dear children, your Heavenly Father who knit you together in your mother's womb, who has numbered the hairs of your head, who rules over the nations and causes them to carry out His purposes for you, who set the sun and the moon and the stars in their places and upholds everything purely out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in any of us, loves you with a perfect and everlasting love. He knows perfectly, far better than you or me, exactly what each of His children need in this life and He will provide it. Sometimes He will do that in very ordinary ways. Sometimes He will cause jars of flour and oil to miraculously never run out. In His great depth of love for you which offered up His beloved Son to death to save you, He knows whether wealth or

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poverty is good for you, a time of ease or a time of affliction, health or sickness, life or death. Which ever and whenever He gives you any of these things, look at Jesus' cross and believe that what God ordains is always and only good, even if it's outward appearance is as death.

How silly, then, to worry about clothing when your Baptism into Christ has robed you in the royal robe of Christ's own righteousness! How silly to worry about food and drink that only for a time fill the belly when from this table you feast on the crucified and risen life-giving food of Christ's flesh and drink His Blood which forgive your sins, strengthen you in faith, shield you against the devil's accusations and temptations, and assure to you again, as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, that God loves you, perfectly. This same food also assures you that He knows exactly what you need in this world and will make sure that you have them even when you fail to ask or give Him thanks and that you will be with Him in eternal paradise where your heart will never know another anxious thought because you will see with your own eyes the truth of what God has already told you in His Word belongs to you now - His kingdom and His righteousness.

Beloved of God, stop worrying about things that God already knows you need and promises to give you. You have been given an eternal treasure which moth and rust can never destroy and no thief can steal. Content yourself with that as your highest good so that having or not having the things of the world become of no concern to you. And with St. Paul, say to the devil and the world and even yourself "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith — that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:7-11)

In the Name of Jesus+

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.