

Sermon Transcript for September 12, 2021

"Do not be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." It's interesting, this whole Gospel lesson that Jesus is talking about is basically telling us - don't worry. Now, of course, in our minds, since we're Americans, our next thought is "be happy", right? "Don't worry. Be happy." Which is one of the dumbest things to ever say to anybody. "Don't worry. Be happy." It doesn't matter if life is going to the pits. It doesn't matter if chaos is ruling and there's wars and rumors of wars. Don't worry. Just be happy. Like being happy somehow solves the problems or the issues of the day and can somehow cause you not to worry. But it is interesting that in all of this, we have this theme of don't worry. Don't be anxious. God will take care of you. God provides for you. Do you not understand that God knows what you need?

And yet our Old Testament lesson is about a widow who's basically preparing to die. She's going around, she's got a little bit of flour, a little bit of oil. She goes, and it says, the English says, she's going to pick up a couple of sticks. Literally, it says she's going to pick up two sticks as if you know, it's so desperate. Not only does she have very little flour, very little oil, she barely has enough even to make the fire to cook the oil and the flour into a bread that she can eat. I mean, this is dire times and yet the prophet goes, yes, give me some water and then give me some bread. She's like, what? All I'm doing is getting enough for me to die. That's it. And he says, well, trust me, or trust the Lord that has sent me. He has promised that your oil will never go dry and your flour will never be gone until this drought ends. Now think about that. I don't know if you remember but the drought lasted three years. So this little bit of flour and oil that she thought was going to go away in a day lasted for three years. So of course we see God's miraculous provision for this one widow at this one time for her life. And yet I guarantee you, there were plenty of other widows who didn't get those advantages.

And if you look at the hymn, what God ordains is always good. I don't know about you. But I was struck about how many times this said, what God ordains is always good, even though I'm going through hardship. And even though I'm going through want, and even though I'm suffering, God is still good. Even though I don't understand what's happening. Even though there's chaos in this world, God is still good. It's like, we don't say what God ordains is always good. I don't need to be anxious because God is always going to make everything go smoothly in my life and I'm not going to have any issues or problems or concerns. I'm going to be always have food aplenty, clothing aplenty and I'm going to be at peace. My kids are going to grow up healthy. They're going to get good jobs. My retirement is going to be full and robust and I'm not going to have to worry. That's not what God promises. What God is telling us is that we do not need to worry no matter what is happening, because our life is more than just the day-to-day activities and events and stuff that we have.

Now in America, we've very seldom been at want. I mean, it's hard for us as Americans to even conceive of the fact that people would have no food. And yet there are famines throughout the world. At any given time, there are people who are at want. Now, maybe that's mismanagement, bad government, or maybe it's drought and pestilence and other things that ruin the crops. Either way, what God says is telling us is we are called to focus upon the one thing that is most important, the one thing that will last not only in this life, but in the life to come.

We are called, as Paul says, to live by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit. Now, this passage follows immediately after the fruit of the Spirit: peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control, all of those. The fruit of the Spirit, Paul has just listed and he says, now live by the Spirit. You've

already gotten those things. Those are yours. Now live that way. Now when we are in want or when we are in worry, do we often project an attitude of peace or joy or contentment? Oftentimes when we are anxious about something, not only do we worry and fret, but we also tend to be bitter. And we tend to be at odds with other people. And we tend to think negative thoughts, which leads to negative actions. And it's a challenge because the worry consumes us and we no longer act in love and harmony and peace. I mean, the whole world today seems to be striving to force us to be worried about something. They're pushing us to be against one another because some have and some do not, or some are privileged and some are not privileged, or some are vaccinated and some are not vaccinated.

And we greet these divisions so that there might be strife amongst these divisions, because we're worried about something. The something is not always clearly defined, but there's something we should be worried about. I mean, that's what the news is all about, isn't it? The news isn't to tell you, oh, this went well today. And that worked out today. And this was a good thing that happened today. That doesn't happen very often in the news. Most of the times that went bad. This went bad. That was awful. This is horrible. These people did that nasty thing. And those people responded poorly to that.

And you get anxious and worried. That's not even your life. You're just worried about something because that's what the world does because it causes us. The world forces us and our own sinful natures participate in this. But we focus upon what is here and now what we want, what we think is right, and what God is trying to help us to understand here is that we have everything that we need, even if we are in want, even if we face persecution and trial and tribulation. It's interesting to note in our prayers, in the collect, we talk about our church and we ask that God would defend us because the church cannot continue in safety without Your aid. Now, for a lot of years in America, we have not thought that the church was in any danger. But nowadays you can imagine it and you can see it.

The world is actively trying to create chaos so that we might be worried, so that we might go to a source other than God to find our safety and our security and our hope. But the only place we find security and hope is in Christ. And He has promised, even in the midst of this chaos, He will provide. So we are then, if we do seek first the kingdom of God, what do our lives look like?

Well, it looks like what Paul is talking about. Do not provoke one another. Do not create more tension amongst and push the divisions. Do not envy each other. Do not look at those who have and say, I wish I had, or I should have. Forgive each other even though we know people are going to fail us and deceive us. And we know people are going to sin. We are called to restore our brothers and sisters with a spirit of gentleness, especially those here, those of us who are gathered together in the body of Christ. We are called to be at peace with one another, to forgive one another, to be long suffering with one another, to love one another so that our actions and our behavior with one another might be a beacon of light to the world out there that is in chaos and strife. We are called to be united in the bonds of love for the sake of our Savior, Jesus Christ. And we're to keep watch. We are called to pay attention to our actions and to seek, to ensure that we are not being dragged away from the comfort and the peace and the security of the Gospel by the cares of this world, or by the concerns of our flesh and the desires of our needs and wants.

But we are to carry each other and to love each other. We're to consider ourselves nothing and trust in God for our hope and our security. Let's face it, there's no system on earth that is ever going to save us. Doesn't matter what government you're talking about, or what special agency or what new medicine, or what miracle technology. None of it can deal with the primary problem that we have. We are sinners and we need

forgiveness. That is the one thing needful. If we can focus on that, if we can focus on this event, the hearing of the Word of God, the preaching of God's Word, the teaching and instruction, the fellowship, and the mutual consolation of the brethren. If we see this as the most important event of our lives, that's so important to us so that we might then share that with those who are out there, then we will not be anxious about anything. Then we will be salt and light in this world.

But only if we live by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit, which means don't be anxious. Trust God, even, even, if it means your death. Trust God, because what He has given us is greater than anything that we have here and now. Do not be anxious. God is with you. He has forgiven you and you are free from anxiety and He promises that He will never leave you till the very end of the age. He will bring you from life to life in Christ. We have been called by God to serve Him and give Him thanks here and now. And we will be called to glory, to praise Him evermore in life everlasting. That is our sure hope and confidence.

May His grace and His mercy and His peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.