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Pentecost 12

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“Why Worry?”

Text: Luke 12:22-34; Hebrews 11:1-16; Genesis 15:1-6

[Today's sermon is a mild reworking of a sermon I preached three years ago. When I went back and read it, I liked it and so decided to proclaim it again.]

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

Did you hear the words of Jesus today - do not be anxious, do not worry - as good news, or as Jesus commanding you to do something? I think most of the time, it is the latter. That when Jesus says, ***do not be anxious*** or do not worry, we hear that as Jesus scolding us, wagging His divine finger at us who have fallen short in the “do not worry” department, and commanding us to change.

And I know you *want* to do this - not worry; you *want* to do what Jesus says and be a good Christian, and so hearing these words of Jesus you (once again) tell yourself to stop worrying and trust more. But it doesn't work. For what happens when you tell yourself not to worry is that you start to worry more, because you start worrying about the fact that you're worrying, and your burden becomes heavier and heavier.

But here's the good news: that's not why Jesus said these words today. Jesus has come not to add to your burden, but to carry it *for you*, make your burden *light*, and give you *rest* (Matt 11:28). So do not hear these words today as a command for you to fix yourself, but instead as Jesus comforting you. Jesus' reassurance that you have a Father who is taking care of you. Who knows what you need. Who created all things and is caring for all things - even the things that we so often don't even notice, like the ravens, the lilies, and the grass. And if them, then you too, who are greater and worth more than all these things. For you're not here today and gone tomorrow like them - you're His child, dearly loved.

And you were like that at one time - without worry - do you remember? It is when you were young. Young children don't worry a whole lot. They know that Dad has things under control. They know Mom's got it covered. Food, clothing, shelter, protection - *they're* worrying about those things so I don't have to. So children are free and care free. And even when parents don't come through or even hurt their children, those children often still look to their parents and rely on their parents for what they need. There's a connection there. A confidence there. A trust there.

It's when we grow up and get a little older that things begin to change. We move on from childhood and become adults, and increased responsibilities and obligations and the sin so prevalent in the world cause us to be anxious and worry. The care free days vanish like smoke. And it's not a change for the better, is it? When our untroubled childhood is exchanged for hypertension, ulcers, and sleepless nights.

And so today Jesus is inviting you back. *To be children again.* Children of a heavenly Father who has it covered for you - no matter what "it" is. For the biggest "its" of all - sin, death, devil, hell, grave, and eternal life, He has already taken care of for you. Covered by Jesus blood in your baptism, you're a child adopted into the family of God and under the constant care of a Father who won't let you down and would never hurt you. A Father who won't spoil you by being a sugar daddy, who will discipline you when necessary, and love you enough to tell you the truth. Or in other words, a Father you can count on.

And a Saviour you can count on. His ***do not be anxious*** was never so true as it was as He hung on the cross for you. And if *there*, not *here* also? For not for lilies, ravens, or grass did He die, but *for you*. He came as *your* brother, to take care of the big deal of sin, death, devil, hell, and grave *for you*. He battled them all so that you wouldn't have to. That you not worry about these, but live in the freedom from them that Jesus has won for you. That while these things are *realities* in the world and in our lives, they not be *worries*. They were overcome by Jesus for you. His resurrection proof of His victory and His promise of eternal life.

So that's why Jesus says don't worry. Don't worry because you don't have to worry. Your heavenly Father has it covered.

That is also the word for you today from Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah. We often make the same mistake with these words, about these folks, as we did with Jesus' words and think: I have to be like that. I need to have a stronger faith. I need to be more steadfast. Like them. And while that may be true, what Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah would all say to you today is this: this chapter is about *God's* faithfulness, not ours. This is about *His* steadfast love, not ours. We just believed His Word, that He would do what He said. And He did. And He does the same for you.

This chapter puts the meat on the bones of Jesus' do not worry. For all these people had plenty to worry about. Abel had his brother Cain who wanted to kill Him - and finally did. Death rose up at the time of Enoch too, when they all frightfully witnessed their father Adam's death and perhaps wondered what would happen next? Noah had the sin in the world and God's Word of a destroying flood. And Abraham and Sarah - going from place to place, living in tents, among some people who were friendly and some who were hostile, and too old to have the children that God promised . . .

But God provided. He is a God who gives life after death, who protects and preserves, who saves from a sinful world, who watches over His children and keeps His promises. All of them. Sure they had their share of troubles. You will, too, as long as you live in this sin-filled world. But it's not you against the world. It's not even us, the Church, against the world. *It's God for the world.* God giving His Word and keeping His Word in the midst of a world, of people, intent on destroying themselves.

You see, the question really isn't: why is there so much sin and death in the world? So much to worry about? There's so much sin and death in the world because sinners do sin and sin does death and that's who we are. And if God hadn't stepped in . . . that'd be the end of the story, and a story that would have ended long ago. Long before you and I ever came along.

But God did step in. He stepped into the Garden on that frightful day of sin and gave Adam and Eve His Word, His promise, to be their Saviour. His promise that turned: *If you eat of it, you will surely die*, to: *Because you ate of it, I will surely die*. For you. And then He stepped into the world at Bethlehem to do just that; to be that Saviour. To be destroyed by His own to save His own. To take all the blows that a sinful, dying, and hell-bent world could give, and in His resurrection say to His disciples, say to you: *that's all done now*. No more worries. Your Father has kept His Word.

And [Abram] believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

And so you too. Believe the Lord, your righteousness. When the Lord says to you: you are my child, I will take care of you. When the Lord says to you: I forgive you all your sins. When the Lord says to you: this is My Body, this is My Blood, given and shed for you. Believe the Lord, believe His Word and promise, and it is given to you. Forgiveness in a world of sin. Life in a world of death. Confidence in a world of worry.

For nothing pleases God more than when you believe His Word. Nothing. We sang it in the Introit earlier: ***the Lord's delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man*** - or in other words: not in anything you can do - ***but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.***

So what are you worried about, dear child of God? Your future, your children's future, our nation's future, the world's future? Is it something your Father cannot provide? Is it something He cannot see you through? Is it something greater than He? Then don't be anxious about it. ***Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*** You have His Word. You have His promise.

Or think of it this way: if it is true that ***where your treasure is, there will your heart be also***, then know this: God's heart is with You, for that is where His greatest treasure, His

Son, is. With us. With you. Sent for you and given to you. Word kept; promise fulfilled.

So worry . . . ?

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

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.