

Rest Assured

Text: Matthew 6:24-34

Hymn: "The Gifts Christ Freely Gives" (LSB 602)

How did you sleep last night? Maybe you were thinking about your own personal finances, your health or the health of a loved one, the uncertain future, a regretful past. You tossed. You turned. You couldn't sleep.

Maybe you did sleep well, but you slept well for the wrong reasons. Everything is going fine. I have lots of stuff. I just paid off my mortgage. Blood pressure is 120/80. No anxiety at all.

Jesus teaches us this morning not to be anxious. We are people prone to anxiety. Why? Because we want to be in complete control—of our life, the lives of others, the weather, the economy, everything. But we can't possibly be. So what do we do about it? We worry.

Jesus' words to us could not be clearer: Worry is idolatry and idolatry is sin. "Oh, Pastor, you don't know my situation." That's right. I don't. But I know the Word of God, and worry is idolatry and idolatry is sin. Worry displays a lack of trust in the one true God who says, "I am with always to the end of the age" and "I will never leave you nor forsake you." The God who "satisfies the desire of every living thing," who "makes the sun to shine on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust."

So, how did you sleep last night? If you didn't sleep well because of sinful worry, the words of Jesus are for you. If you did sleep well but for the wrong reasons, Jesus' words are for you today. And that pretty much covers all of us.

Several years ago, a college team lost the big game in the final seconds because of a failed two-point conversion. Reporter asked the coach the next day, "How'd you sleep last night?" He said, "I slept like a baby." The reporter said, "Really?" And the coach said, "Yep, I woke up every thirty minutes and cried."

Worry and anxiety are too often a part of our life. God's Word for us today is both a word of warning and a word of true comfort and peace. Jesus starts out by saying, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Most modern translations translate the Syrian word, "mammon," as money, but it's much more than that. Mammon is all our material goods. Think about what those are. There's the money in the bank and maybe in our wallet or under the mattress. There's the clothes we wear and the ones in our wardrobe. Food, drink, house, vehicle, furniture, television, computers, telephones. Make a list. Mammon is all those material things you own. But that's not all. Mammon is all the earthly goods that we have, and of course the most fundamental earthly good we have is our life, our health, the functioning of our body and of our mind, all the things that make life on earth possible. And these things are not in themselves bad. The problem is not with the earthly goods but with our sinful hearts, which seek to make a god out of the thing that we ourselves can grasp and control.

And if instead of the One who gives you mammon as a gift to serve you, you serve the mammon itself, you are an idolater. You have become so engrossed with your life here and now with your desires and comforts that there is no room for God. Isn't that how it often happens? We dream or we hope of getting something, a job,

admission to the best college, a financial windfall, whatever, and then once we get it, it's not quite enough. We want even more. And after a while, we are so consumed with the stuff, the mammon, guess what we have forgotten about? The Giver of all good things. Mammon and the service of mammon, left unchecked, leads to unbelief. There is no alternative. Jesus' words here are true.

“Therefore I tell you do not be anxious about your life.” On and on and on in these short verses, Jesus says, like a commandment, “Do not be anxious.” Thou shalt not worry! But, Pastor, if I don't worry, what am I going to do with all my spare time? That's the point! God calls us to love Him and to serve our neighbor. When we are consumed with selfish worry, we forget about God and we really forget about serving and loving our neighbor. And there is no greater testament to that than all the people who are not here this morning—and I don't mean members of this congregation or those tuned in at home—I mean the people of the world. Why are they not here to receive the gifts of God, to receive Christ's forgiveness, to meet God where He promises to be and receive be strengthened by His eternal-life-giving gifts? Because they are worried about the things of the here and now rather than things eternal.

Worry is sin. Worry is idolatry. Worry, unchecked, leads to eternal separation from God. Think about the things we worry about: “Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” Is not life more than football or financial security or popularity or grades or an athletic scholarship or a big house or, or, or? It's a rhetorical question. The answer is supposed to be clear. But it's not all too often.

Jesus is using an argument from the greater to the lesser. Don't you think the One who gave you life is concerned enough to make sure you live and exist in this life? Do you think the one who promises to give us His kingdom and has already given us life and has demonstrated His love in innumerable ways would all of a sudden become stingy in the way he doles out of his gifts? He has already given you the most important thing He could ever give—the life of His own Son on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. If God has given you His most precious possession why would He forsake you now? Why would He leave you now?

Jesus is using this kind of argument to teach selfish worry-warts to trust in Him. He's saying, "You are in my hands and nothing can snatch you out of them."

The real question from this text then is this: Do we own our mammon or does our mammon own us? Do we own our stuff or does our stuff own us? Do you own your family, your work, your friends, your life, or do all of these things that are precious gifts keep you up at night because things don't always work out the way you in your finite wisdom think they should.

"If riches increase, set not your heart on them" (Ps 62:10). Don't worship them. Don't put your trust in them. Don't make them your god. We all know in our heart of hearts that if we reached a point where we had seemingly invincible good health and more riches than we could ever exhaust, how many of us, we would more likely turn our backs on God and His Word and salvation and eternal life than continue to fear Him and love Him and trust Him above all things. This is how much we are in love with this world and the things of this world. We take for granted all the gifts God has given us, all the manifestations and displays of His love toward us. Every day we turn on the tap and

out comes clean water and we think nothing of it but we panic as though the world is going to end when our wifi service is down.

What is it that can replace this false faith in our hearts? What is it that can drive away this sinful worrying and this sinful love and devotion and worship of our mammon? Only one thing can drive away false faith: True faith. And that's a gift. It's a gift that God gives and it comes as a simple promise: I forgive you all your sins, even your sins of doubting and worrying and ingratitude. That's why Jesus came to save sinners, to give us peace, true peace, peace of mind, peace of heart. He calls us to work but not to worry about our work. To us is given the task of our various vocations; but to God and His providence and love is left the success of our labor, its fruitful outcome.

Look at the birds. Look at the lilies of the field. God has built proofs of His providential love into nature. Aren't you more valuable than a bird or a plant? How valuable are you? You are so valuable that God sent His one and only Son into the world to live and die and rise for you. Your value is not in your stuff. Your value is in what God says about you. "You are precious in my sight." "You are my possession." I have "purchased and won you not with gold or silver but with the holy, precious blood and the innocent suffering and death of My Son, the Lord Jesus." And his death and resurrection proclaims that your sins are forgiven. You have been set free from your love of mammon. You have been set free from your sinful worry. You have been set free to live and love and serve and *receive* from the hands of our giving God.

How did you sleep last night? I don't know. But I know how God wants you to sleep. He wants you to be at peace. Not the peace that the world gives, but the peace that comes from the Prince of Peace. In Jesus' arms, in His care, in the power of the

Holy Spirit, under the protection of your heavenly Father and His whole army of angels, His ministering servants which are sent to serve you, may you sleep well tonight and every night until the Day of the Resurrection. In Christ you have nothing to be afraid of.

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