

SERMON FOR
THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
ANNO † DOMINI 2021

*“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life...
But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”
—Matthew 6:25, 33*

Notice: Jesus doesn't say, "Do not be anxious," period. He says, "**Do not be anxious about your life**" (Matt. 6:25). Indeed, there are some things that should concern us; but life isn't one of them. All life, including yours, is a gift from God. He made you, formed your inward parts, knitted you together in your mother's womb (Ps. 139:14). You are fearfully and wonderfully made, a wonderful work of God, created in His own image (Gen. 1:27). He has given you your body and soul, eyes, ears, and all your members, your reason and all your senses, and still takes care of them, giving you food and clothing, home and family, and all you need from day to day (Ps. 145:15-16). All this He does out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, though you do not deserve it. Therefore you surely ought to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

But, instead, you are anxious. Oh, it may not be obvious to those around you. You may not even realize it yourself. After all, when's the last time you said, "What shall I eat?" Not because you couldn't decide, but because you didn't know where your next meal was going to come from? Or when's the last time you didn't own a drawerful of tshirts? Or didn't have access to clean drinking water? We have all these things! And we have them in abundance. But that doesn't mean we're not anxious about them. Rather, like the rich young fool who built bigger barns to store his many crops (Luke 12:13-21), the more things we have the more we fear losing them, and so the more we want in order to ensure that doesn't happen. But all this really does is betray our little faith. It shows that we are anxious about the life God has given us, not quite believing that He will do as good a job at providing for us as we can. How far we are from the words of St. Paul: "But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content" (1 Tim. 6:8).

And while it's true that **life is more than food, and the body more than clothing** (Matt. 6:25), that doesn't mean God doesn't care about your body. You are your body. You're not just a soul trapped in a worthless shell, but, like the first man, Adam, you are a body and a soul combined to form a living creature (Gen. 2:7). This means God cares and provides for all of you. He Himself took on human flesh in the person of His Son, Jesus, becoming like you in order to redeem you for Himself (Phil 2:8). He actually

suffered and died in your place, shedding real human blood and tears for your sin. He rose again from the dead in a body, for, He says, "a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). God raised all of Him to save all of you. And He will raise all of you, body and soul, from the dead on the Last Day, putting you back together again to live under Him in His kingdom forever (John 5:25). So, yes, God cares about your body. He cares about your soul. He cares about you.

Now, of course, we know this from the Bible, God's written revelation to mankind. But this truth is also plain from the world God has made. **"Look at the birds of the air,"** says Jesus: **"they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"** (Matt. 6:26). Meaning you are. In fact, "you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:31). Human beings are the pinnacle of creation. Only after God made man does it say He saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good (Gen. 1:31). It wasn't the birds Christ came to save. The Word did not become feathers and fly among us (cf. John 1:14). Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, people, you and me (1 Tim. 1:15). And so, if God so feeds the birds of the air, then how much more will He give to you, His human creature?

"And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matt. 6:28-29). Solomon, you may recall, was David's son, king of Israel, and maybe the wealthiest man to ever live. Because he asked for wisdom and not riches, God gave him both, saying, "no other king shall compare with you, all your days" (1 Kings 3:13). So, you can imagine what kind of clothing he wore: better than anything you can buy at the most expensive shops at NorthPark. And yet, Jesus says that's nothing compared to grass! Not that grass is so fancy, but think of Him who clothes it. Solomon probably hired someone to make his garments; God paints the lilies with His grace. And, again, if He is so mindful of them, then how can we doubt His concern for us? Grass is temporary, alive today and ashes tomorrow. We are immortal; we will live forever, because Jesus lives, and we are baptized into Him.

"Therefore," He says, **"do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all"** (Matt. 6:31-32). He knows. He's not blind to your needs but well provides them, before you even think to ask. No one else in the whole world may know you and what you need, but your heavenly Father does. Which means you don't have to worry about your life, because He's on it. He's got this. And He shows no partiality. **"For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust"** (Matt. 5:45).

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). That’s your priority. That’s what you should be concerned about. Your physical needs are taken care of. But what about your spiritual ones? How does one seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness? It helps to know the kingdom of God is not a place but a person, Jesus, who rules and reigns from on high by His Word (Heb. 1:3). His kingdom comes when He gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word, believe in Him, and live accordingly.

But the Holy Spirit works through means. He calls to faith by the Gospel and enlightens with His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation, delivered in and through Holy Baptism, the Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper. And if you’re thinking that sounds a lot like church, you’re right! That’s where God’s kingdom comes, because that’s where these things are uniquely found: where God’s people gather to receive them. Your soul needs clothed and fed, too! And just as God gives you your daily bread, so does He give you the living Bread from heaven, that whoever comes to Him shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Him shall never thirst (John 6:35). So does He clothe you with the robe of Christ’s righteousness that covers all your sin. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

And the more you seek after that, the less anxious you will be, by His grace. The more you will fear, love, and trust in God above all things. You may even learn the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).

“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matt. 6:34). And yet, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). We live in an anxious world. But you don’t have to be of it. You are so incredibly loved by your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Seek Him where He has promised to be for you; the rest is already yours.

In † Jesus’ name. Amen.

Soli Deo gloria

Questions for Reflection:

- How have you been anxious about your life?
- Why don’t you have to be anxious about your life?
- What should you be concerned about instead? How is even this a gift?

