

Luke 12:22-40 – Pentecost 9 – Seek His Kingdom – August 10, 2025

+In Nomine Iesu+

The one who fears God has nothing else to fear. In our Gospel reading today from Luke 12—as Jesus travels toward Jerusalem—Jesus understands the importance of trusting God. And with the cross looming before Him, He tells us to let go of our anxiety. He reminds us to have faith in what He is doing—as His kingdom comes.

And here, Jesus takes His Disciples outside. There is something valuable in taking a walk when we are anxious—for body and soul. And Jesus gets His Disciples out into His creation where things like ravens, lilies, and grass have much to teach us. And we will let them start us on our way today.

Jesus begins with a call not to worry. But this is not so easy for us. Or is it? We hear such words and we have a whole host of excuses for our worries. We realize that worry is unhealthy for us—even spiritually unhealthy. But it is easy to defend our own—why we can worry—while others should not.

But the grammatical form of Jesus verb—do not be anxious—implies that we should be constantly free of anxiety. God Himself is the One who provides for us. He protects us and cares for us. And He does all things well. We should rest comfortably in His hands.

And the issue in this passage concerns the basics of life—food, health, clothing. Of course we need such things. But such things should not have our hearts. We should not be so distracted by our physical circumstances. These needs are secondary.

Now, of course, we should work for our necessities. This isn't about being irresponsible or reckless with our money. We should make wise and godly decisions. But true life is found in higher things. It is found in the kingdom of God. And that is what demands our attention first.

The first example Jesus gives us involves an unclean creature—at least according to Mosaic Law. Ravens were not the most highly respected bird in ancient Hebrew culture. I am pretty sure we have crows rather than ravens living in the trees around the parking lot. They are loud and obnoxious—and they make a mess.

But Jesus says that God is still aware of their needs. They don't plant, or store grain. They have no plan for the future. But God feeds them. And if He cares for these obnoxious, unclean birds, how much more will He care for us?

And here, Jesus takes up some practical considerations about anxiety. What does worry contribute? Does it add anything to your life? This text literally reads, *and which of you by anxiety can add a cubit to his life*.

Some debate whether Jesus is referring here to length of time—or something like growing taller or losing weight. Either way, we can see that our anxiety doesn't help. If anything, we just make things worse for our health. With worry, we borrow problems from tomorrow—or we borrow problems that will *never* actually materialize.

Some of the mental activities that we practice, accomplish nothing. And anxiety is one of those practices. It comes easily to us. We sense that there is much in our lives that is beyond our control. And we would like more control. But in the end, worry doesn't change anything.

Next, Jesus calls us to stop and smell the roses. He calls us to examine the beautiful flowers. Here, he has lilies in mind. We fill the room with them at Easter. Again, there is something therapeutic about a garden—about flowers—by God’s design. And although we might work hard to care for them, their beauty is all their own. God has granted them a splendor that far surpasses anything Solomon with his great wealth could muster.

Even the grass, which lives for such a short period of time demonstrates God’s thorough care. It is cut and thrown into the fire—or the green yard waste tote. But it still receives God’s blessing—sunshine and rain. And if God cares for the grass—that is around for a few weeks or a few months—how much more will He care for His people?

And here is Jesus’ point. Worry casts doubt on God’s care. Jesus hits the problem head on. He addresses His hearers—ancient and modern—as people with little faith—inadequate faith. The essence of trust is to recognize that God will take care of what is in His hands. We seem to be able to trust Him with the forgiveness of sins. We are pleased that He deals with us in grace and mercy. But we can’t seem to trust Him with our bills, our health, or the direction of our lives.

Jesus makes an important distinction here. The unbelieving world pursues a certain kind of life. For them, life is seeking the best they can get for themselves. Everything that they do is connected to the accumulation of wealth—of the things they want—of the lifestyle that they want.

Jesus says it this way, “And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things.” And in Jewish ears, *the nations of the world* refer to all those who do not really believe in the one true God.

There is a futility to this kind of life. It is going nowhere. We heard it last week in our reading from Ecclesiastes. “For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.”

Jesus is speaking to His Disciples here—although the crowd listens too. Remember this whole teaching discourse began with a family conflict over an inheritance—a willingness to tear a family apart for the sake of money. And Jesus doesn’t split the money fairly. Instead, He tells *The Parable of the Rich Fool*. And He warns against the ways of covetousness. Greed tears apart our very souls.

Life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions. And so, let us not fill our lives with the relentless pursuit of such things. Let’s not let the pursuit of things damage our relationships or dominate our minds.

Jesus calls for a single issue to be the Disciples central concern. And this is His will for us as well. God’s kingdom. People will often say that money is the thing Jesus talks about the most. And He certainly has money in mind as He teaches here. But even in this context, the real issue is fixing our eyes on the kingdom of God. Jesus uses the term *the kingdom of God* or its synonym *the kingdom of heaven* about 120 times in the Gospels.

Back in Luke 6, Jesus says, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” And this blessing informs our text. There is something better than having money.

And it is worth hearing Jesus' whole comment here in our text, one more time. "Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Now, the subject of the kingdom of God has drawn the attention of a lot of theologians. Much ink has been spilled through the years. And we won't exhaust this idea today. For the Evangelists, it is all wrapped up in Jesus. Remember His ministry all begins with the line, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Jesus uses term *kingdom of God* synonymously to refer to His teachings—and by that I mean all of them. So, seeking first His kingdom means to embrace His identity—as the Messiah—the Son of God—the King of Kings. It is to submit to His will for humanity—for the individual and the community. It is to agree with His insight regarding forgiveness, life, and salvation. It is to recognize His plan for our redemption.

I think this is what Paul is getting at in Ephesians 1. He says, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

To seek God's kingdom, then, is to find life in His grace. It is to be in the presence of Christ. It is know and ponder His Word. It is to pursue the things of God—the things that are above—as we talked about last week. And it is to live as image-bearers—as His representatives in the world. As members of His family—as citizens in His kingdom—we just conduct our lives differently. We reflect His righteousness in a world unconcerned with really knowing God—a world in pursuit of selfish gain and personal pleasure.

And there is nothing to fear as we seek the kingdom of God. In fact, Christ's kingdom serves to wash away our fears. God's desire is to give His kingdom to those who love Him—to those who seek Him. He wants to give His kingdom to His sheep. He calls His followers here, His *little flock*. And the pastoral image is interesting.

Sheep can be skittish. They can be frightened easily. They often follow the herd. And Jesus is saying that we are something like that. But Jesus is also saying that we have a Good Shepherd. He cares for His own. He gives us what we need. And He guides us where He wants us to go.

I like the way Jesus says it in John 10, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

So, we do not need to worry about the provisions of this life. We do not need to fixate upon them—simply because Jesus tells us not to. He draws our attention elsewhere—to His kingdom. Even to the extent that we can be generous with others. He calls us to lay up treasures in heaven—in the kingdom of God. And this is using our

resources—especially our thoughts and conversations—but even our money—to ensure that the kingdom of God is in our midst.

And our generosity—with our time, words, and money—does more than supply aid to others. It also reveals our hearts. Where our treasure is, there our heart will be as well. How we use our resources—the priority we place on them—communicates our values. Whether we have too little—or we have enough—when we give all of our thought, our time, and our priority to our possessions—it reveals something amiss. And it reveals that we are not confident in God’s care.

Many of us find life frustrating. We cannot control our own affairs and circumstances. So many things are outside of our direction. But desire for such control is beyond our calling in God’s kingdom. And spending all our energy on materialistic goals—and heaping up treasures—empties life of God’s purposes for us.

He wants us to seek the kingdom of God. He wants us to give ourselves over to His kingdom completely. His blessings are found there. And such seeking frees us from worry and anxiety.

Sure, the true spiritual life—the kingdom life—as Jesus sees it—is not a life of comfort. Discipleship comes with a cost. Jesus calls us to take up our cross and follow Him. There is risk, weakness, and sacrifice. And it is certainly counter-cultural. Following Jesus might not feel very secure.

But, there is no need to worry. Anxiety has no place with us. Christ has come for us. And God knows what we need. He provides—often in surprising ways. And even more, His plan reaches beyond this world—and beyond this life. There is an eternal solution to the problems we face right now. And we are invited to wait with both hope and certainty.

We are citizens of the kingdom of God. We have been adopted into the family of God. We are baptized children of God. We fear, love, and trust in Him above all things. And the one who fears God has nothing else to fear. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+