



THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

AUGUST 26, 2012

*Don't Worry, Be Happy...**In Christ!***

Sermon Text: Matthew 6:31-34

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

Fellow Seekers of God's Kingdom,

What are you most worried about? What occupies the greater part of your thoughts during the day? Are you worried about how you are going to put healthy food and nutritious drink on the table for your children and yourselves, or maybe you're worried about how you are going to pay for the inevitable new pair of shoes or the new school clothes all growing children need? If you aren't worried about these more simple necessities of life, perhaps you've spent some sleepless hours at night more than a little worried about how you were going to make that next payment on your car, or your mortgage or rent or some other major debt you owe if you should happen to lose your job like so many others have these days.

Whatever the case may be, Jesus tells us in our Text; *“Take no thought...”* – that is,
‘Don't worry’ about these things!

The unbelieving people of this world – those who do not have God as their King, those who reject Christ as their Savior – these people spend much of their time consumed with worry. And not only do they worry about getting the simple things in life, such as food, drink, clothing and shelter. But they worry even more so about how they are doing in comparison to their neighbor. Many view life as a rather heated ‘competition’ to “keep up with the Jones’s” by doing everything they can to obtain whatever riches of this world they can accumulate before their days on this earth are ended.

Having rejected the one true God as their King, they really have no where else to turn and in many cases have, in effect, made for themselves idols of material things and ‘the getting’ of material things their preoccupation in life.

And so Jesus tells us we are not to be like these unbelievers - *worried* about these things.

We don't have to be and we *shouldn't* be.

Why?

God's answer to us, His Dear Children, is in Verse 32 of our text: "*Your heavenly Father knows you have need of these things*".

Does this mean that we shouldn't be actively engaged in honest employment so that we earn the money needed to purchase food, clothing, shelter, etc. and are thus sufficiently possessed with the necessities of life?

Does it mean we should simply sit reading the Bible all day long in government-paid housing, eating government provided food and fraudulently accepting government welfare money, when we are able to work?

On the contrary! God *wants* us to be engaged in honest work, as St. Paul writes in his second epistle to the Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 10: "*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*"

So we see we **are** to be engaged; *viz.* 'concerned' with supporting ourselves and our families by way of honest work God may provide us. In fact, God tells us: "*...if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*" (I Timothy 5:8)

What Jesus is rather telling us in our text is that we ought not to be *so concerned*, so preoccupied with 'getting' – even if its just 'getting' the most simple and most basic necessities of life – such as food, drink or clothing – to the point where we are led to **worry** and sin.

Make no mistake about it, my friends, real 'worry' **is** sinful. For the 'Sin of Worry' is ultimately a lack of trust in God and His promise as our Heavenly Father to provide to us, His children, with all that we need for our physical well-being in this life.

Such sinful distrust may in turn lead to our taking comfort in material things and thus we are in danger of displacing God from His rightful place in our hearts and our lives as our God, and actually turn us to what amounts to worship of material things. This, of course, is idolatry and disobedience of the First Commandment of God's Law: "**You shall have no other gods.**" And it is this, the getting of material things, that the 'Gentiles' – the unbelievers of this world – are all about and that to the exclusion of God in every aspect of their daily lives. Dear Friends, your God doesn't want you to be as the unbelievers. He is your heavenly father and He has so much more in store for you as His dear children.

Have you fallen into this sin – the 'sin of worry'?

If so, I urge you: Confess this your sin honestly to God and sincerely repent of it. Then, casting all worry aside, only believe the forgiveness God freely offers you in the Gospel – *the atonement of your sins for the sake of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ* – and you will be forgiven. Then pray the Holy Spirit will help and strengthen you so that you might be able to resist the temptation to worry should it come to you again.

To what then should our thoughts be turned *as our priority*?

In Matthew 6:19-21, We read: “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*”

And in our text, Jesus tells us: “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...*”

Before we proceed, I think it’s important we consider and understand first, to whom is Jesus speaking in our text?

Jesus is speaking to true believers – Christians – of all times. He is not here speaking to unbelievers. For you see, *Seeking God’s Kingdom and His righteousness* is something *only* a believer in Christ – a true Christian – can do.

Why? Because it requires **spiritual discernment and faith**.

Oh, the natural man – the unbeliever – even one who has never read one precious word of Holy Scripture may indeed convince himself that he is seeking “truth” or “a higher power”, (etc.) after the realization from seeing God’s creation around him, that there is indeed a Creator. Or an unbeliever may even yet be aware of the however faint writing of the God’s law in his own heart, as this may yet be given witness by his own conscience. But this is **not** what Jesus regards “*seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*”.

Also, in the case of an individual who after having read or heard the Scriptures – namely that all human beings are born sinful, the enemy of a Righteous Angry Creator God, condemned to an eternity in hell on account of one’s sin, and unable to do anything towards their own salvation and that they may only come to salvation through faith in the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ – if such a one rejects what Scripture plainly teaches and instead seeks to gain salvation with his own work-righteousness, he too may foolishly convince himself that he is “seeking God’s Kingdom”. But such a one is not truly seeking God’s Kingdom and His righteousness. Rather what this unbeliever seeks is to create a caricature of a god with whom he believes he can negotiate the disposition of his eternal soul based upon his own imagined merits.

Neither of these is what Jesus regards as “*seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*”.

How can we say this? Because *God’s Kingdom and His righteousness* is **Gospel!** For God’s Kingdom is built upon Christ and His righteousness. Christ Jesus humbled Himself, took on our humanity, lived a sinless life and fulfilled the Law in our stead. Then He suffered and died in our place, so that we might be clothed in robes of His pure righteousness and share in His resurrection from the dead to live in God’s Kingdom. ***That is Gospel.***

Human beings do indeed have natural knowledge that *there is a God* (from nature) and that He demands holiness to His Law (as the Law is written in man’s heart). But in Gods’ Kingdom, the works of the Law are precluded and what natural unregenerate human beings do *not* have, is a natural knowledge of *God’s Kingdom and His righteousness*. This can only be known and believed

from hearing the Gospel. And so unbelievers are incapable of seeking God's Kingdom and His righteousness for it requires spiritual discernment and faith, gifts of God worked in man's heart by the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the Gospel.

And Scripture itself testifies that this is true: "...*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" (1 Cor. 2:14)

My Friends, Jesus tells His disciples of all times, "...*seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness...*" This, then should be that which our Christian hearts, souls, and minds desire first and foremost above all else. For hearts and minds that truly know their unworthiness on account of sin and yet believe in Jesus and have received their soul's redemption in Him by faith alone – what these redeemed hearts, souls and minds desire most is *not* material things – **not** 'earthly treasures' that moth and rust are able to destroy – but ***the Kingdom and Kingship of God in their lives.***

And not because the 'seeking' can or ever could earn for us a place in that kingdom as though it were a meritorious work. For *each and every* attempt of man to gain salvation by his supposed good works – *his own work-righteousness* – has absolutely **no place** in God's Kingdom.

Even the smallest spark of desire within a person to seek God's Kingdom – to learn more, to grow in sanctification and to do good in appreciation for what God has done for you in Christ – is a **Gift from God and of God, Himself. For even that 'smallest spark' is faith!** And truly seeking after God's Kingdom and His righteousness is a fruit of faith, worked in you by the Holy Spirit.

So, what does the Bible say is *God's Kingdom*?

In Romans 14:17, we are told: "... *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*"

My Dear Christian Friends, we can be **absolutely certain** that we have this righteousness – **not** the fading worldly work-righteousness of man – but the *righteousness of God* in the suffering and death of the god-man, Christ Jesus on the cross. And certain all the more that this, *Christ's righteousness*, is offered to all human beings as a free gift, a gift that is ours *by God's grace through faith alone* in Him. For God "...*will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*" (I Timothy 2:4)

And we have true peace with God. And this *not* by anything we have done, or deserved. But solely for the sake of the innocent suffering and death of Jesus Christ, we have the forgiveness of all our sins and so we are fully reconciled to God in Christ. The Debt of Sin has been satisfied ***once and for all*** and so every human heart troubled by sin may find rest and solace once more in it's Creator.

And it is because of Christ's work of redemption for us sinners that we cannot help but have true *joy of faith in the Holy Ghost*, and therefore, a great desire to serve God as our King. It is a heartfelt and most sincere desire to live a holy, sanctified life in word and deed in service to God and our fellow man. And it flows from a forgiving, believing, and thankful heart as a fruit of

true Christian faith for the free Gift of God, in Christ, namely the Forgiveness of Sins, Eternal life and Salvation!

So how do we as children of God and heirs with Christ "seek the Kingdom of God" in a world such as ours – a world filled with so much greed and emphasis on gaining material wealth?

We do so by making the number one priority in our lives, the Means of God's Grace –the Gospel of Jesus Christ – in Word and Sacrament, whereby we receive the Forgiveness of Sins, Life and Salvation. We seek His Kingdom first when we hear the Gospel message in church services, when we make time for family devotions, prayers and personal Bible study in our own homes and when we seek out opportunities to tell others about Jesus. Furthermore, we seek His Kingdom first when we support our local orthodox congregation of believers (whenever possible) with our talents, our gifts and our prayers, and by placing our unwavering, trust in God. And we can be certain, that even though we merit nothing in or of ourselves, *yet for Jesus' sake*, Our Heavenly Father will provide all that we need according to His unsearchable wisdom to sustain our lives and preserve our souls unto His Kingdom. This includes clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, land and cattle, and all our goods, and all that we need to keep our bodies and lives in this world. For this He has indeed promised us.

In Isaiah 41:10, we read:

"Fear not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Today Jesus would impress upon our hearts that if we will but *first* seek the spiritual blessings of "**righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost**", ALL of which are ours *by Grace alone through faith in Christ Jesus*; we will receive every material blessing – all we need, and more – for our physical bodies in this life as well. For He says: "... *seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" Furthermore, with *seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness* first in our hearts and minds, worry about the things pertaining to this earthly life will have no place to take root in our lives.

And so our Lord and Savior King says in verse 34: "*Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take care of the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*"

Simply put, we are not to worry about tomorrow. There are enough evil things going on in the world around us **today** about which we could easily be overcome with worry – are there not? And we can be sure too, the Devil, the World, and our own sinful flesh will continue to do their utmost best **this day and every day** – from this moment in time on through our very last day on this sinful earth – to try to fill our hearts and minds with worry and doubt, in ambitious attempts to distract us from keeping our focus on God's Kingdom and His righteousness.

So, If you wish to be depressed, take your eyes off the Goal of Heaven – look behind you, ...and dwell upon the events and the many sins of your past.

If you wish to be troubled – take your eyes off the Cross, concentrate on, and allow yourself to be overcome by the evil of this day.

And if you wish to be COMPLETELY dismayed and defeated – forget the empty tomb of our risen Lord. Look to the future of this world, ...and worry to death about what it might hold for you!

But if you – as Child of God and an heir with Christ to the Kingdom of God – seek God's Kingdom first and hold fast by Faith to *His* righteousness, the Wondrous Peace of God through Christ, and the Amazing Joy of faith in the Holy Spirit,... God will strengthen you and will sustain you all the days of your life ... and more!

For Jesus promises each and every true Christian seeking His Kingdom: “...*be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*”

And now may the Peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus Our Lord and Our King. Amen.