

Trinity Lutheran Church
May 25, 2008

Worry in Reverse

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. The text for the sermon is the Gospel, which was read earlier.

Someone has said that worry is prayer in reverse. That makes sense. When we worry, we depend on ourselves, not on God, the giver of all good things. Jesus makes a connection between worry and prayer in our text. He's just taught His disciples the prayer that we say at every Divine Service: the Lord's Prayer. Now He expands on that, talking about what makes us anxious. As we listen to the Words of Jesus, we learn that when we take our anxieties to God and turn them over to Him, prayer puts worry into reverse.

The question we need to ask ourselves is why do we let worry drive us backward? It's an easy question to answer. The answer is because we do not fully put our trust in God and His provisions for our lives. Some of us may be concerned about our daily needs, such as food and clothing. However, we should not be concerned about our daily needs, as these are provided for us by God daily. Luther, when explaining the First Article of the Apostles' Creed writes the following: [“He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.”](#) There are those who face devastation in their lives, such as those affected by the tornado in Colorado last week. They are desperately seeking daily needs of food, clothing, and shelter; yet we know God will provide for them because He has said that He will.

Those who are poor in worldly things are hardly free from mammon's idolatrous powers. He can make them his victims through their anxieties over their daily needs. Jesus reminds His followers that for God's children, such anxieties are faithless worries. Jesus lists two cases in point. First of all, Jesus says, since God provides life itself and its bodily needs, shall we not trust Him to provide our less important daily needs just as well? Secondly, since God sustains even the birds who do not have the ability to plan and store for their future, how much more will He sustain us humans who have these added gifts of God as well?

Our anxiety and worry is due to our dependence on something or someone other than God. We often find ourselves relying on all things other than God for our daily needs. We rely on credit cards to pay bills; we rely on hopes that we if play the lottery, that we will win millions. We rely on the things of this world, hoping that we will have all that we want, excuse me, *need* for our lives. In the end, that's what it boils down to: want versus need. We want and want and want. But how much of our wants truly translate into needs? Wants are luxuries; needs are necessities. Deep down inside ourselves, we know that what we depend on is not the final answer. Instead the final answer is Jesus.

Our Gospel reading for today focuses on a single theme of Jesus: "You don't need to worry." If our worries are about tomorrow – and they often are – then Jesus' words are a reality check. We can't change many of tomorrow's troubles and trials even if we want to. Worrying takes up our time and energy which we waste trying to change something which we cannot.

Jesus reminds us that our heavenly Father loves us infinitely more than He does the short-lived flowers. Reminding the people that the beauty of the flowers is short-lived, Jesus now argues from the lesser to the greater. If God dresses the passing flowers in the field with royal robes, how much more will He give ordinary clothing to His disciples who are going to live forever? He provides for our needs of both body and soul.

Luther, in his *Large Catechism* writes the following: “In addition, we also confess that God the Father not only gave us all that we have and see before our eyes, but He also daily protects and defends us against all evil and misfortune, turning aside danger and mishap of every sort. All this He does out of pure love and goodness, without our deserving it, like a kind father who takes care of us so that no harm may touch us....”

Why should we worry? “*Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*” These are the words of Jesus, giving to each and every one of us. Their purpose: to assure us that God will provide for all of our needs. He shows to us the Father's love by serving God to the fullest extent for us. Paul writes to the Philippians that Jesus “[took] the form of a servant,...and...humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” We don't need to worry because Jesus of the saving work of Jesus Christ, for you and for me. Christ came into this world to serve the Father by taking all of your sins and mine from us and putting them on Himself. He carried them all to the cross. When He entered the grave, they were buried with Him. When He rose from the dead, Jesus offered to us new life and forgiveness.

The greatest gift that we have received as Christians is the forgiveness of sins,

life, and salvation. The Christian is not to worry at all. Worry is like the unbelief of the heathen world. Unbelievers think that they “earn their own way in this world,” that they provide for their own needs. Trusting themselves, they seek after the mammon of unrighteousness. But the child of God lives by a different creed because he resides in a different kingdom. His heart belongs in the kingdom of grace. Since he has a heavenly Father who knows exactly what he needs, then why worry at all?

The greatest way to put worry into reverse is with God's gift of prayer. If worry is prayer in reverse, then prayer can be worry in reverse. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we move away from our own solutions and toward God. We let God know about all the things, big and little, that trouble us. We turn them over to His care and keeping. We are able to pray boldly the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread” knowing that God will indeed provide us with our daily bread. We can pray because we also rejoice that we have what we need: *“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

As we pray, we seek God's will and the coming of where God's will is always done: his kingdom in our lives. We do this trusting in the heavenly Father, who loves us so much to send His one and only begotten Son to take upon Himself our sins and worries.

There is no reason to let worry drive us. Worry may well be seen as prayer in reverse – and it always drives us backwards. But Christ's assurance in our text – that by His death and resurrection we are in His kingdom and all we need will be added to us – means that our prayers are always heard for Jesus' sake. Bringing our concerns to Him is

the very reverse of worry, and the promise that He answers can drive us also – drive us to faith and confidence and joy that is found in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, amen. Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, amen.