

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – 2025

Genesis 15:1-6

Hebrews 11:1-16

Luke 12:22-40

We're all familiar with a binary personality matrix – two character traits that exist opposite each other. Perhaps the most common is introvert or extrovert. An introvert is usually described as being reserved, contemplative, prudent and a good listener. An extrovert is usually described as bold, sociable, adventurous and outgoing (also known as a comfortable talker). On this binary scale, most of us are in the mushy middle. Other binary scales, very simplified, might be optimistic or pessimistic, risk-taker or cautious. Here's another: anxiety prone or vacuously carefree. Do you believe that people are hard-wired with these traits? Are there traits in you, traits that you didn't like much, that you intentionally overcame? Emotions are tricky things. Is anxiety an emotion? Are we 100% captive to our emotions? The definition for anxious is "experiencing worry or unease or nervousness, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome." We've all experienced it. We're all familiar with it.

So then how does it hit your ears when Jesus says: "Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on" (Luke 12:22)? That statement is an imperative, a command form of speech. Jesus is not coddling you. He's direct. If you're doing this, the Lord Christ is telling you to stop. Have you ever spoken with someone who doesn't want to change his position on a particular matter? Have you ever spoken to someone who has clearly made up his mind and doesn't want to be bothered with facts? In regard to anxiety in our lives, Jesus floods us with facts, evidence to reshape our outlook. Here are the facts: God has created every one of you. With great tenderness, with purpose and zeal – bestowing upon you the gift of life. God has redeemed you from sin and death, at great personal cost, claiming you as His own by the blood of His Son and fitting you for heaven. Neither of these realities are in jeopardy of cessation. Life in this world is often a tumult. Your salvation is not. You belong to Almighty God. He has seen to it in the most astounding way. And He still shepherds you. He still gives you all that you need for this body and life.

This life has obligations. Wonder bread doesn't grow on trees. We have to work. By the sweat of our brow, we have to work (Genesis 3:17-19). We need an income. We have to plan for a place to live and a great multitude of other things. Who do you suppose knows this? Does God know what we need? Do you believe that God has machinations in place that ensure that we are cared for? Our value to Him ought to be obvious. Your joy and love and concern for *your* children is a fraction of our heavenly Father's joy, love, and concern for you. Over and over, Jesus goes into poetic detail about this reality. You are called upon to believe it! A reprimand then breaks into the Lord's discourse: "O you of little faith!" (Luke 12:28). Ouch! Little faith, *me*? Yep, me. Questioning my Father's goodness; questioning my Father's provision; questioning the value that I have in His heart? That's got to change. Jesus is super-direct. He doesn't offer a meandering bit of hesitant advice. He tells you exactly what to do. The imperatives flow. There's a hinge verse, a hinge statement, a hinge between the first section and the second section of this Gospel lesson. This statement redirects our hearts and minds and it replaces anxiety with action. Seek the Father's kingdom! "Seek his kingdom and these things will be added to you" (Luke 12:31).

Christians are an active bunch. There isn't a single psalm that lauds the virtues of being a spiritual couch potato. It is true, we receive our salvation as a gift. We don't work to achieve our standing before God. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV). In this we are passive. But the Christian life is active, engaged; we energetically pursue righteousness; we energetically defend the truth; we energetically learn God's Word; we intentionally and humbly and faithfully seek our Father's kingdom. This attitude pleases our Father, it balances our lives, and it puts anxiety to flight. Anxiety distracts us. The Lord calls us to be alert, focused, prepared. Why? Because He will return come at an hour that we do not expect (Luke 12:40).

Seek His Kingdom sounds very much like the Third Commandment. What is the Third Commandment? Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it (Small Catechism). Seek His Kingdom and Remember the Sabbath Day are both imperatives. Christians don't get to choose whether or not to obey the Ten Commandments based on other concerns in life. Obedience is part of being a Christian. By faith, we are obedient. We will act in a way that glorifies our Lord. We will act in a way that genuinely serves our neighbor. We will endeavor to keep His commands – we avoid sin, we strive to keep ourselves holy and we seek His Kingdom. That is precisely why we are here. The Kingdom of God defines this place. Christ's kingdom is a present reality. It is our Father's good pleasure to GIVE you the kingdom (Luke 12:32). The giving has begun. The kingdom is already a present reality. This kingdom is more glorious than the material blessings which we need, which God opens His hand to give us.

Food, clothing... we have to have those things. We procure them as necessities of life but we aren't "seeking" them. We seek Christ. The purse of our heart holds the treasure of Christ's Kingdom. This purse of our faith holds the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The faith that God has breathed into you does not grow old or fall apart (Luke 12:33). Your faith is tended by the dynamic Lord of Life. Christ is our treasure. The Savior established His kingdom by coming to us, by being made one with us, taking on the form of a servant. Eternal God was vested in the humble flesh of our humanity – to establish His kingdom, a lasting place for you to abide. He lived perfectly. As a man, He lived perfectly. Every commandment, He embodied. Every virtue was and is present in Him, and, by dying on a cross, Christ's eternal Kingdom was established. Jesus bore our sin. He took it from us, took it into Himself. The punishment we deserve, He suffered. We are forgiven! That is God's Kingdom. God planned it. God accomplished it. God sets it loose among us. Seek that, for it is all around you. Fix your eyes on that, for His Kingdom comes to you this day, a small Easter, as we are gathered in His resurrected name. He is with us. Immanuel, God with us – and He comes as One who serves.

By faith Abraham, by faith Noah, by faith Sarah – all these saints had different vocations. Each was called to act. In their own way, each was called to act. We walk by faith. We conduct our lives by faith. We seek His kingdom by faith. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1). Each of us has a different station in life – none is above or below another. Your particular station is a gift of God. He uses you in your vocation to

make His kingdom visible. What a privilege! What an honor God has given you! “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning” (Luke 12:35). We will not be Christians who grow dull of heart and mind. We may be but a little flock but there is great power here. God’s Word is the power of salvation, and it is unleashed into your soul through proclamation of Christ crucified and risen (Romans 1:16-17). When He comes, we will be ready. To greet Him now is the act of faith that keeps us ready. As Christians, we know that His kingdom envelopes us, empowers us, defines us. Like the saints of old, we desire a better country, a heavenly one (Hebrews 11:16). God has prepared for us a city (Hebrews 11:16). By faith, we are seeking our homeland (Hebrews 11:14). We are strangers and exiles on the earth (Hebrews 11:13). What was true of Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Sarah is true of us. We look for a city whose designer and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). Each day we walk by faith knowing that God is with us. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes (Luke 12:37). We are the blessed of Christ the King. We seek His kingdom.