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Ser. #281-15

Let us bow our hearts in prayer: Our Father who art in heaven,
Lead us not into temptation. C: Amen.

For the last 4 years, I have not re-read the full text of this Gospel
just before the sermon.

I, instead, read only a portion of it that I had focused on
for our meditation that Sunday.

But this year, I am purposefully going to re-read the full text,
because if there is one thing that we need today,
it is God's Word teaching us that there is no need for worry;
He has everything under control for your good.

Our text for meditation... we read as follows in Jesus' name.

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"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and
love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the
other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will
eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put
on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?
Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather
into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of
more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit
to his stature?

"So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the
field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you
that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and
tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe
you, O you of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall
we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the
Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all
these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His
righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry
about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." ^{NKJV}
So far the Words of our text.

These are Your words, heavenly Father.

Sanctify [us] by Your truth. Your Word is truth. ^(John 17:17)

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Dear Fellow Redeemed, the Father's grace, mercy, and peace
are yours in Jesus Christ, our trusted and true Lord & Savior.

One of the things that I love about the true Christian faith
is that it is rooted, grows, and flourishes in reality.

Consider our text:

Jesus is not what some call an "ivory tower theologian"
someone who lives in this abstract world of concepts
and ideologies, where everything works out perfectly,
as if life could be lived in a vacuum shielded from sin.

He is "down to earth," "in the trenches" with us.

He knows the perfect requirements that God demands,
and He teaches the people accordingly.

But He never once forgets about the reality of troubles
that hinder us from keeping those demands.

Consider the last sentences of our text:

**Therefore do not worry about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will worry about its own things.**

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

He does not deny that there are troubles,

in fact, He acknowledges, every day has its own troubles.

A few He mentions in our text: those things concerning
your immediate person, your body and life, what you eat,
what you put on.

But there are other worries, aren't there?

Worries about what people think of you,
about how to act in certain situations,
about if there will be consequences for things you have done.

And there are also worries about what others will do:
others who, like you, are sinners w/ sinful urges & inclinations.
Sometimes it's not just one person but institutions or society.
They influence religious persecution, economic failures.
They seek to immortalize our culture or instigate wars.
Some are just plain fear-mongers.

And then there are those things that happen to us in this world
corrupted by sin and **subjected to futility**, ^{Rom.8:20}
which **groans and labors with birth pangs**, ^{8:22} of disasters
like wildfires, floods, hurricanes & tornadoes, droughts,
earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and so on.

And if I, my neighbors, and this corrupted creation
were not enough to cause me trouble every day,
there is yet one more who troubles me, the devil.
He and his demonic minions, though unseen, are very present.
St. Peter warns: **your adversary the devil walks about
like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.** ^{1Peter5:8}
And St. Paul: **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against powers,
against the rulers of the darkness of this age,** ^{Eph.6:12}
against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
The devil is hell-bent on tempting you to distrust God's Word.

Yes, there are troubles every day of our life,
& yet, Jesus tells you, in the face of your troubles, not to worry.
In fact, He tells you it is a sin to worry,
because worry is a fruit of idolatry.
And in our text, Jesus uses a very common, very subtle idol
(mammon), to make His point for us.

Our text begins, "**No one can serve two masters....
You cannot serve God and mammon.**

Then He continues: **Therefore...**and lists what we do
with our mammon, we buy food and drink and clothing.
(We could just as easily add in there: pay our mortgage/rent,
utilities and transportation, insurance and health care.)

Soon that mammon, the money and assets we use daily
in order to make all these things happen,
looks more like a god than it does a God-given tool.
The world seems to run by it, society glorifies it,
you work for it and and the devil would have you worried
if you don't have "enough" of it, whatever enough is.

Anything we put our trust in or depend on we serve as our god.
That's why Luther's explanation to the 1st Com.
(**You shall have no other gods.** ^{Ex.20:3}) is different
from the beginnings of the explanations of all the other com.s
The others all start, *We should fear and love God so that...*
but the explanation to the First says,
We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

Our worrying is a fruit of our false trusts, or rather our mistrusts.
It's also a fruit of our distrust of God to take care of us.

There are lots of things that you worry about,
a lot of things that you distrust God about,
perhaps even forgiveness, at times.
Can God really forgive me for what I've done?
Will He also forgive me for my worrying about my forgiveness?
What if He doesn't? How can I make it up?

When you find yourself worrying about things,
this is reason to give yourself pause and to consider your God,
not your false god, the one causing you the worry,
but your one true Triune God, who causes you to trust
and gives you ample reasons to trust Him,
even, and especially, when feelings or appearances
would challenge such trust.

In our text, Jesus points to God's care for the birds and lilies.
How God continues to lavish His care for this creation,
even in its current state of corruption,
so that each year life is sustained, not just human life,
and not just the life of the animals and plants we eat,
but even the life of those things that seem to exist
simply to provide beauty and charm to this world.

But there is an even better place to point you to
so that you may learn to trust your gracious Triune God: Jesus.
As I said at the beginning, Christianity is for real.
It's for real people with real troubles and real worries.
Jesus wasn't an "ivory tower theologian," and God isn't some
far away, looking-down-on-you-from-above, kind of God.
God is "down to earth," literally.
Born of the virgin Mary, into poverty.
He had real troubles, none of His own making, of course,
being the Son of God and without sin,
but constantly surrounded by sinners, both friend and foe,
people innocently trying to protect Him from His work,
people trying to trap Him, speaking evil of Him,
and plotting to kill Him.
He was tempted by the devil in the severest of conditions,
yet He remained righteous even in His Father's eyes.
He did not just preach about not worrying, He lived it.
He even died it, trusting the Father to take care of Him
and to justify, not only Himself but all of humanity.
And He now lives, proving the futility of our worry.

Though everything looked to all the world as Jesus' failure,
yet His faith-filled death was the victory.
It was how Jesus could honestly say to His disciples:
In the world you will have tribulation;
but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. ^{John 16:33}
It's how St. Paul inspires you when tempted by the devil:
Having disarmed principalities and powers,
[Jesus] made a public spectacle of them [at His resurrection],
triumphing over them in it. ^{Col. 2:15}
It's how Jesus now also forgives your mistrust and distrust
and emboldens you, even **you of little faith,**
to believe yet more firmly as He gives Himself to you,
crucified and risen, in His body and blood.

He speaks of the reality of troubles that you can easily see,
and gives you His reality of complete victory,
though it is a reality you cannot see completely... yet.

In temptations hour, when worry seems the only option,
there is a better one: trust.
Trust in the Triune God, who created, redeemed,
and sanctifies you.

And what should you do with that worry?
Place it at the cross. Watch Jesus bear that burden.
And know that there is nothing to worry about anymore.
In temptations hour, when worry seems the only option,
pray with our Lord, **Lead us not into temptation.**
And consider Luther's faithful explanation of it:
God certainly tempts no one to sin,
but we pray in this petition that God would guard & keep us
that the devil, the world and our own flesh
may not deceive us
nor lead us into misbelief, despair & other shameful sin & vice;
and though we be thus tempted, that we may still in the end
overcome and retain the victory.

So when Jesus says, **Therefore do not worry about tomorrow,**
for tomorrow will worry about its own things.
Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

This does not mean it's okay to worry about today's troubles.
It means you can commend into His faithful hands
your body and soul and all things, even today's troubles.
So you can relax and live in peace.

Jesus is with you, you have nothing to worry about.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria