

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

Jesus tells us here not to worry, not to worry about food or clothing or drink. He's not telling us that we should allow ourselves to starve to death or do nothing to procure the necessities of life. That would be a gross misunderstanding of this text. What he is telling us to do is not to worry about them, or anything else for that matter. Yes, we go about doing the things we need to get the necessities of life, but not to worry, do not be anxious, and do not internally tear ourselves to pieces to get and store up these things.

Instead, we should do as Paul and Joel remind us; turn our eyes to our God, one God, the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, The Lord your God, and there is no other who restores the land and provides for the people. We should turn to him and ask, 'What has he given us?' And 'how should we respond?

Pray

I know how easy it is to be anxious about the things of this life. Sometimes you can see why you are anxious. It makes sense that Tara might be anxious about sleeping at night because neither of our boys seems to have a regular sleep pattern. But sometimes our anxieties make no sense at all, or we don't know why that particular circumstance makes us anxious. We become anxious about things completely outside of our control or even things that do not affect our daily lives. Jesus wants to take away both of these anxieties as he tells us not to worry.

Whenever there is a call to praise, and thanksgiving in scripture there is always a reason. Praise and thanksgiving are not an end in itself, it always has an object. Joel gives multiple reasons for different creatures all culminating in the restoration that God has promised to a destroyed and famished land and people.

²⁶ "You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.

And my people shall never again be put to shame.

²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else.
And my people shall never again be put to shame. Joel 2:26–27 (ESV)

We also learn the same pattern of praise in the psalms.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion...

The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad. Psalm 126: 1,3

And again, the pattern is repeated in the letter to Timothy.

2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people...

...For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all 1 Timothy 2:1,6 (ESV)

What Paul is saying here, is that because Jesus mediates on our behalf, that is he says to the father 'These people belong to me'. Therefore, we should mediate with supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for the world around us.

And again, in the Gospel, Jesus when telling us not to worry points out that 'your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.' Matthew 6:32 (ESV) That is the necessities of life. And he says in 'Are you not of more value than they? Matthew 6:26 (ESV) That is the lilies of the field, the birds of the air.

Therefore, he also calls us to praise and give thanks to our God for all the gifts that he gives us, he gives us the reason for praise and the antidote to worry. (A good meditation this week is to consider the gifts highlighted in the first article of the creed and the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer, where we find out just how much God has given to us.)

When we turn to him, we see the great list of things, the litany of things that he has given to us ourselves, our time and our possessions. Most of all, he has given us His Son, our Saviour, to rescue us from worry. Not just our worry, but our sin, all of our sin including our sin of worry. That is as Jesus concludes a breaking of the first commandment, a symptom of little faith. A failure to trust in the goodness and provision of our loving God.

We never like having this sin, or any sin pointed out to us, but sins of the first commandment seem most harsh because they remind us of the depth of our sin and our constant desire to fear, love and trust in things other than the one true God.

God calls us to turn away from our idolatry of things on this earth, the treasures on earth that we seem to think we need to build up and store up, in order to prove or gain God's favour, or even to sustain ourselves without God. No, we have to look to God and see all the gifts he has already given us including things that we might consider treasures on this earth, but we don't worry about or idolize those treasures we accept them as gifts from God. Therefore, we see why we want to do as Paul says when he urges us that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all, so we look to God, and we say God has given us this place and thank you, God, for this place we will look after it, and we will come here, and receive your gifts in it. (Church building)

We look to our God, and we say thank you, God, for giving us a harvest. Produce that we have been blessed to grow in the ground, on the ground and as products of things that live on your earth and things that we have made with our own hands, or we have acquired by the work of others' hands. We look at these things and we acknowledge that these are gifts from God. We will use these gifts so that we don't have to worry about what to eat or drink or wear, and so that others will not have to worry about what to eat or drink and where, and that will be our act of thanksgiving to use the gifts that you have given us.

We will look at each day and say, God, we thank you for each day you give us, thank you for time. Each day that I wake up and I am alive, I will use it to give you thanks. (Morning and Evening prayer) And the way I will give you thanks is to serve the neighbours I have around me and I'll make myself available to regularly hear his word so that I can find restoration, rest and peace in him, and be sustained for a life of

service to others and not have to worry about earthly things, but will instead set my heart on heavenly things.

When we look to God and the gifts he has given us we see that he has given us the gift of Baptism to bring us into his new life and sustain us daily for Holy Living. And so, we thank him for taking us from the kingdom of darkness and worry and into the kingdom of light as we daily drown our sinful selves and rise to new life with Christ.

When we look at the gifts that God has given us, we see that he also gives us his very own meal, a life-giving meal of salvation. So, we learn and diligently study this meal so that we know what we are to receive and then we receive it often so that we get all the benefits. This reception is the act of thanksgiving, to say thank you God for your Holy Meal, I will come and receive it and receive from you all the blessings of forgiveness of sin, life and salvation so that my worry does not get a foothold in my life, but instead, I walk in your faith. And I will not treat your meal as if it is poison but trust your life-giving words in this meal.

When we look at the gifts that God has given us, we see that he has given us his body, the church, and specifically he has given to us and given us into a congregation in this place. So we give thanks for the people of this place and gladly participate in the life and work of this congregation and in the building up of his body as we care and love the people he has joined us to.

When we look at the gifts that God has given us we see that he has given us a pastor, to preach, teach and deliver many of the aforementioned gifts, so we thank God for all pastors and as our act of thanksgiving we do our best to build him up and support him in his role so that we can continue to receive God's gifts and so that others can receive those gifts of God with us. But we also go out of our way to pray for all pastors, to encourage and support them and if possible, to support pastors in training, so that others can also receive these gifts that we enjoy so often.

When we look at the gifts that God has given to us, we see that he has even given us Civil Leaders, as Paul mentions, kings and others in charge, although sometimes we don't like the way they go about it; we give thanks for these leaders and the peace and stability they give. We take God's command through Paul seriously and pray for them regularly, with the express purpose of being able to serve our God in peace, for that is what our leaders should facilitate.

When we look to God and see the gifts, he has given us we say thank you God for sending your Son to suffer and die, raised high on his horrible, painful cross for me. To restore me to a right relationship with you. We see that this gift is given to us because we are so inclined to worry, idolatry, taking his gifts for granted, acting as if I deserve or earn them on my own accord and I desperately need the forgiveness, new life and peace that this great gift Jesus Christ the Saviour offers. And as my act of praise for this gift of new life that you have given me, I will keep coming back to confess my sins that seem to build up and cause me much worry, I will come and confess them and receive your forgiveness. This will be my act of praise, so that this gift you have given me, the Son who has restored me, my saviour will maintain me in the relationship of peace with you so that I am serving you and not the master of this world.

Within this church organization, there are many things we could be anxious about. I will list a few that will be topics of discussion at our AGM and I will touch on in my report to this meeting. We might be anxious about the financial state of our parish and its congregations, and when you read the book of reports and proposed budget you will understand what I mean. You might be anxious about the state of the LCA and here I'm talking about the convention coming up in October and the main topic of discussion there, but we might also be anxious about the fact the LCA seems to be shutting down all its institutions and selling off all our property. But Jesus tells us not to worry. He gives the solution to this worry, he calls us to look to the things of heaven, the treasure of Jesus Christ who is in heaven for us and he reminds us that we are more valuable than even the birds in the air and wildflowers in the field.

As we list the endless gifts from our God, our giving and gracious God, our worries will slip away as our earthly life and eternal life are put into perspective and the abundance of his gifts and grace is revealed. Our worries will be overpowered as we identify all the reasons why we should give thanks and our little faith (another reason to give thanks) is strengthened by his great faithfulness.

Jesus says; 'Do not store up for yourselves...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...you cannot serve both God and money... do not be anxious... look at the birds of the air - are you not of more value than they... seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you'

Amen