

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

These words, taken from our Gospel reading for today, speaks well to the theme and basis for this message.....

- Luke chapter 12, verse 32.
- “Fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give to you the kingdom.”

Let me begin by asking you a question. What are you afraid of?

- And related to that, how much does your fears consume you?
- Is it something that you think about often?
- Does it alter how you spend your time and what you do?

For some, fear can even paralyze them.

- It has been reported that 9 out of 10 Americans think that the world today is more unsafe than when they grew up.
- 1 out of every 4 women say that they think they have been followed by a stranger in the past year.
- 1 in 5 people have a fear of being caught in a bombing in a public place.

What is it that you are afraid of?

- Maybe it is the unknown.
- Maybe it is the future.
- Maybe it is your health.
- Maybe it is losing a loved one.
- Maybe it is the well being of your family—especially in the years ahead after you are gone.
- Maybe it is death itself.

In our Gospel reading for today.....Jesus does speak to us much about fear.

- He had previously been addressing the crowd....
- But now, here today He addresses specifically His disciples.
- And that includes you and me.
- It is as if Jesus turns to us—dear children of God our Father—and instructs us.

Jesus says to you and me.....

- Do not be anxious about your life.

- Don't worry about what you will eat.
- Do not worry about your body.....or what you will put on.

And then Jesus takes this even further.....

- He says which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to your span of life?
- Actually, the experts and medical folks have reaffirmed what Jesus says here by telling us that worrying does not extend your life but actually takes away from it.

Medical experts tell us that even something small, if it sticks around as a nagging concern in the back of your mind can effect your heart, and your blood pressure, and result in a heart attack or a stroke.

- We are told worrying releases stress hormones that speed up your heart rate and breathing, raise your blood sugar and send more blood to your arms and legs.
- And as a result impacts your heart, blood vessels, muscles, and other systems.

The Finish Institute for Health and Welfare says that worry can shorten your life expectancy by 2.8 years.

- I think that is a conservative estimate.....
- Not to mention the loss of joy and peace for the years you are alive.

Worry certainly doesn't help anything but in fact hurts you.

- If you are like me, you go to the doctor worried about your high blood pressure.
- So you worry.....which causes your blood pressure to go even higher.

Don't worry. We ALL KNOW THAT.

- But it is easier said than done.

What is the problem?

- How do I NOT WORRY?

Just in asking that question, in that way, it illustrates the problem.

- What can I do?
- It is not about you and me. We can't do it.

It is a matter of who you put your trust in.

- When we worry, we try to be the creators of our own lifestyles and providers for all our desires and needs.
- We slave away at getting the things that we think make for a good life.

Slaving away is probably the best description because it aptly describes our condition before God.

- We are enslaved to sin, to our evil desires, to our SELF-CENTEREDNESS.
- We try to earn what we deserve—and we succeed because we have earned death.

We think we have to do it. We have to handle it. It becomes a matter of misplaced trust.

- We put our trust in ourselves rather than the lavish love of our Lord to provide for us.
- We turn to ourselves rather than casting all our cares upon Him, which in fact, He invites us to do.
- Jesus took a cross, the load of our sin, and cruel death to free us from anxiety and worry, to relieve us from the burden of trying to play king of our own kingdoms.

Each time you worry.....trace it back to who you are putting your trust in.

- Man.
- The Government.
- Even your material possessions.
- Which all leads you back to what is at the head of this list.....YOURSELF.

Any of these sources result in fear for good reason.....

- They are fleeting, they will not last.
- And they ultimately are not in control, cannot save themselves, and will fail.
- Sooner or later they will fail and probably sooner than later.

Jesus instead tells us to put our trust in things eternal, put our trust in Him.

- The One who has power and might and control over all things.
- Even death.

Jesus says, “Life is more than food, more than clothing.”

- He says to consider the ravens.....they neither sow nor reap; they have neither storehouse nor barn and yet God feeds them.
- And He tells usof how much more value we are than the birds.

He also says, consider the lilies how they grow, they neither toil or spin yet even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them.

- And if God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you.

And then Jesus even seems to take this a step further.

- He says, “Sell your possession and give to the needy.”
- That is.....do not put trust in earthly possessions but rather show that you are a servant of the One whose treasure is in heaven.

Again, easier said than done.

- So I don't put my trust in myself. But rather trust in Jesus.
- How do I do that? How do I PUT MY TRUST in Jesus?

And again I say to you, in asking that very question, it again speaks to the whole problem and what this is about.

- That word “I.”
- How do I do that?
- Just like you can't handle things yourself, you cannot trust in God on your own.

The trust that you have in the Lord, that is a gift given to you also.

- Oh, you can reject it, you can put up a wall, you can crowd Jesus out; but you cannot on your own trust in Jesus.
- That faith that God has given you.....it is an inheritance.
- Jesus freely offers it to you.
- One of the banners hanging in the back of our sanctuary.....”Jesus is the Author and Perfector of our faith.”

What do you do to earn an inheritance?

- By its very definition, you don't earn an inheritance.
- It is a gift.
- For some, many of the earthly possessions they have is an inheritance.
- Not something they have done but something given to them.

So it is with all the lavish gifts Jesus pours out upon us.

- Including faith. A faith that you can not obtain on your own, but only reject.
- To stop worrying is to stop turning to self and open up and allow Jesus in.

Don't worry, trust in Jesus.

- That trust in Him is called faith and it is a gift given to you.
- To have faith and trust in Jesus; is to keep your eyes and heart fixed on Him.
- Jesus is ready and wants to be the centerpiece, the hope, the strength of every thing you face.
- He tells us that today.

Hear again further what Jesus had to say about all this in our Gospel reading.

- Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried.
- For all the nations of the world seek after these things **AND YOUR FATHER KNOWS THAT YOU NEED THEM.**

Instead, seek His kingdom and these things will be added to you.

- So I again say the words I opened this message with.....
- "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

And this treasure that God gives you.....

- It does not grow old.
- It will not fail.
- No thief can take it and no moth destroy it.

You probably all have been following the flooding that has recently taken place.....

- Here in the St Louis area but even more so in the state of Kentucky.

I was watching a news cast on this the other day.

- There was a man being interviewed. Obviously he was now rescued and safe.
- When interviewed he said, the flood waters quickly approached his house and came up on he and his wife too quick to get to safety.
- What he and his wife ended up doing is going to the highest place and just sitting there.
- Surrounded by water that was rising and no escape for them. Not sure how it would end.

He said to make matters worse, his father lived about one mile down the road.

- And he had no idea of his condition. He had no idea if he was safe.
- And he did not have a cell phone for him to make contact with him.

The man concluded the interview by saying.....

- “The only thing I could do was trust in the Lord.”
- I think his statement was with regards to his periled situation and hopelessness on his own.

But that statement, and his very situation, rings very true for each of us, each day and provides a perfect metaphor for us today.

- We can truthfully and joyfully and confidently say those words.....
- “The only thing I can do is trust in the Lord.”
- And the good news is that is all we need and it can not be taken away from us.

If you are in some way a bit skeptical about all this.....

- I ask you to tell me how much your worrying helps.
- Our sinful nature always wants to still, somehow hang on to a piece of our control.

Dear Christian friends, as we bring this message to a close.....

- Look at the cover of your bulletin for today.
- “Fear not, little flock.”

We have a Good Shepherd.

- The Shepherd always goes before His flock and does not ask them to go anywhere that He Himself has not tread.
- Through the laying down and taking up of His life, we have promises forevermore.
- Thus we know that we have no reason to fear; but every reason to trust in Him.

Do you remember how our opening hymn for this service started?

- “Savior like a shepherd lead us. Much we need your tender care.”

I close this message with our Scripture for the week hanging outside the church office door.

- Proverbs 29:25.
- “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts the Lord shall be safe.”
- Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.