

**The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, August 11, 2019**

Pastor Peter Gregory, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Westminister, Massachusetts

**Fed, Clothed, and Given the Kingdom!**[Luke 12:22–34](#)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Eph 1:2*


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In our Gospel reading from Luke chapter 12, Jesus said, “FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK, FOR IT’S YOUR FATHER’S GOOD PLEASURE TO GIVE YOU THE KINGDOM” (v 32).

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The rich fool in last week’s parable had it all! He had enough grain to start a massive building project *and* to ensure a very comfortable retirement. His motto was “RELAX, EAT, DRINK, BE MERRY” (Lk 12:19), *hakuna matata*, and that’s exactly how he lived for the rest of his life. The kicker, of course, is that his life didn’t last very long. That same night His soul was demanded from him.

## 3.

But the disciples, how different! They’d LEFT EVERYTHING to FOLLOW Jesus (Lk 5:11; see Mt 19:27; Mk 10:28). They’d left their homes, their communities, their jobs. When Jesus called them, some just dropped their fishing nets on the spot. Later they were SENT OUT with nothing: no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, and only one outfit (Lk 9:3). Still, there’s one way in which the rich fool with his many treasures and the poor disciples without any treasure are similar. They’re both distracted, even consumed, by the things of this life.

The rich fool with his greed and covetousness made idols of his grain and his goods, but so did the disciples with their worry and fretting about food and clothing. Their nothing—just like the rich fool’s everything—was their god. Even feet that follow Jesus can carry minds and hearts that wander. Yes, it’s sin always to want more. It’s equally sin to be afraid of never having enough. That’s what worry and anxiety does. Worry knows that it can’t be secure with what it already has. It recognizes that the future is utterly unknown and uncertain and therefore unsafe. Tomorrow comes with no guarantees—not of food or clothing or work or health—even if you’ve got all your i’s dotted and your t’s crossed. That’s simply how this fallen world is. So the question isn’t, “How do I secure my future?”—because you can’t. Instead, confronted with the uncertainty of tomorrow, the question is: “In whom or what will you trust?” Will you

take refuge in the God who made you and loves you or in your own worry and anxiety? Will you live by faith?

Your worry says that God either can't or won't take care of you. It says that He's unreliable or untrustworthy. Jesus Christ is the end of such worry. In Him, God has come near to you. In Him, God inserts Himself and His word right into the middle of your anxious, worrisome, distracted life. God removes it and takes it away. This is the word of Jesus to you, dear disciple: "DON'T BE ANXIOUS ABOUT YOUR LIFE, WHAT YOU WILL EAT, NOR ABOUT YOUR BODY, WHAT YOU WILL PUT ON" (v 22). These words contain a promise. In saying "DON'T BE ANXIOUS," Jesus promises to care for you with His life and His body. Can it get any better than for God Himself to tell you that there's no reason to worry? Is there any greater security than to know that your life and your body are in His strong, scarred hands?

## 2.

Don't be anxious, your Lord says, "FOR LIFE IS MORE THAN FOOD, AND THE BODY MORE THAN CLOTHING" (vv 22–23). Food supports life, but it can't create life. Clothes cover the body, but they can't make a body. What you eat and what you put on are simply things God provides to support the body and life that He created. They're the lesser things; your life and your body are the greater gifts of God. You are created by God in His own image. You are the result of His promise and blessing to Adam and Eve to BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY (Gen 1:28). Now if God has made you—and even made you in His own image—will He fail to supply what you need for your body and life? Which artist, having created a masterpiece, neglects and abandons it or lets it fall into ruin? Doesn't He instead pay attention to the tiniest detail so that nothing escapes His eye or His care? You, then, are God's masterpiece. You are those whom He loves and cares for. Not even the tiniest detail of your life escapes His eye.

Or consider this: of all God's creatures, you are the most valuable. Yet you must tip your cap to the birds. Though THEY NEITHER SOW NOR REAP and HAVE NEITHER STOREHOUSE NOR BARN (v 24), neither pantry nor fridge, they receive their food without worry. You ought to call the little wren your coach and say to it: "Dear teacher, you have me beat. You sleep all night in your little nest without any worry. In the morning you arise, are filled with joy and good cheer, sit on a tree and sing, praise and thank God. Then you go in search of food and find it. Yet I—who have far greater reason to do this—am overcome by worry." So also honor the flowers of the field and say to them, "Thank you, little flowers, you who are eaten by the cows and stamped by their feet. You have neither needle nor thread, yet you are magnificently dressed and are more beautiful even than King Solomon in his glory. But I—even though I am the crown of creation—am consumed by my appearance." Since you are greater than the

birds and the flowers, don't you think God will care for you as well? And what good does your worrying do?

Pay close attention to what Jesus says. He doesn't say that you have no needs. You do have needs. You need food and drink and clothing and shelter. He doesn't say that you should act like material things don't matter (they do matter!). We are material beings. He doesn't say that you can live without these things. But the point is that you can't live without God who gives them. YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN—the one who made you and all creatures—KNOWS THAT YOU NEED THEM (v 30). Trust Him. This doesn't mean you should stop working. Work is His gift. So work hard, but don't worry. Labor, sweat, and serve your neighbor by your work, but leave the care of it to your heavenly Father. The world works for itself, to get what it wants and needs, but Christians work for their neighbors, because their heavenly Father takes care of them. So cast your heart and your cares, your worries and your anxieties, on God's back, for God has a strong neck and strong shoulders. He can easily carry the load.

1.

And this is how God takes care of you. He has taken the load of your worry on Himself. He suffered and endured in His body what you most fear. Jesus fasted and went without food. He hungered and thirsted, even to death. He was stripped, mocked, and beaten, His clothes taken off His back. The prophet Isaiah described Him like this: WITH NO FORM OR MAJESTY THAT WE SHOULD LOOK AT HIM, NO BEAUTY THAT WE SHOULD DESIRE HIM . . . AS ONE FROM WHOM MEN HIDE THEIR FACES (Isa 53:2–3). Your worst fears—even death and separation from God the Father—have been realized on the cross. But they didn't happen to you. They happened to your Lord.

O little flock, He did this so that you might have far more than earthly food and clothing. Jesus the Son brings you the Father's good pleasure; He sets before you the kingdom of heaven. You have desired and worried about the lesser things, about bread for your table and a shirt for your back, but here is Jesus with even greater gifts. Though you worry and are distracted, He's faithful and steadfast. He gives you what He Himself earned. You want clothes? He clothes you with His righteousness, a garment that never rips, stains, or wears out. You're already dressed for heaven by Holy Baptism. You want food? He feeds you with the bread of heaven, the forgiveness of sins in His own body and blood. You've got a meal that never spoils or rots. It nourishes and strengthens to life everlasting. The risen Jesus gives Himself and His life to you. He rescues you from your worry. So seek the kingdom He won for you. Put on your baptism daily. Eat from this table. Hear and trust His word.

*“FEAR NOT,” JESUS SAYS,  
“FOR IN ME THE HEAVENLY FATHER FEEDS YOU, CLOTHES YOU,  
AND GIVES YOU HIS KINGDOM.”*

So bring your worry and your nothing to this Jesus, for He gladly and willingly takes it. Your cares and anxieties will never be too great for Him. And find your future tied to His death and resurrection, made certain by what He did. For you are clothed in Christ and fed with Christ and secure in Christ forever. And that’s far better than even what the birds and the lilies have!

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The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

*Phil 4:7*

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*Revised from a sermon preached for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, August 8, 2010,  
at St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana.*