

9.20.2020 Trinity 15 (Matthew 6:24-34)

The Gospel according to St. Matthew speaks of Jesus, at the beginning of His earthly ministry, sitting down on a mountain to teach His disciples. As you know, we refer to this portion of Matthew's Gospel as the Sermon on the Mount, and in the ten short verses we read from that sermon this morning, six times Jesus used the word anxious. He said to His disciples, "*Be not anxious for your life... which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life... why are you anxious about clothing... Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, What shall we wear... Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.*"

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus told His disciples not to be anxious. He told them over and over again not to be afraid of what this day or the next may bring, and in the three years that they spent with Him, He showed them that in His presence they had no reason to fear, for He healed the sick, raised the dead, and calmed the raging sea with the words, "*Peace, be still*" (Mark 4:39). The One who could calm the wind and the waves could certainly calm any storm in their lives.

Jesus told His disciples, showed His disciples, and then shortly before His crucifixion and death, gave to His disciples the gift of peace. His own peace. The peace of God which passes all understanding. Jesus said to them, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you: not as the world gives, give I to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27).

The gift that Jesus gave to His first disciples is the gift He gives to every disciple: Peace; and His word is clear, the peace He gives is not *as the world gives*. The surpassing peace of God is not found in what this world has to offer, in homes, cars, careers, or possessions. His peace is not found in some thing that you can lose, but instead, in Someone who has promised: "*I will never leave you or forsake you... I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" (Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20).

Our only source of peace, our only hope for peace, both in this life and the next is Christ alone, yet we are constantly tempted to search for peace apart

from Him, and that fact seems especially true in this country, where even in the most difficult times we are so blessed, that it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that peace is found in good health, or a good job, or a comfortable home surrounded by our possessions with a full stomach and money in the bank.

Don't get me wrong, those are all good things, but we can't let them become our source of peace, because none of those things last forever. People get sick. We lose jobs, homes, possessions, and money, and if we've been fooled into believing that any created thing will provide us with true peace, then when the rain comes and destroys that house we've built upon the sand, we'll be left anxious, afraid, and in great distress when we are most in need of peace.

This is not God's will for us, but fear, worry, and anxiety will always have a place in our lives if we believe that peace is found apart from Christ. This is why Jesus said, "*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other...*" (Matthew 6:24). In that statement, our Lord communicates the truth that you can either trust the world to provide everything you need, or you can trust God to provide for your every need, but you can't have it both ways. You have to make a choice. It's either the dollars in your bank account, or the cattle He owns *on a thousand hills* (Psalm 50:10). It's your house of sticks, or His heavenly kingdom (Psalm 103:19). It's your good works, or the infinite sacrifice of His only-begotten Son (John 3:16).

Choose wisely, because no man can serve two masters. "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness...*" (Matthew 6:33). Place your faith in Him, and only Him. Put your life where it belongs, in His hands, and you will experience the peace of God that passes all understanding. Fear, worry, and anxiety all lose their power when our Savior Christ is our only source of peace, for He not only formed each one of us in our mother's womb, He perfectly and painfully declared His infinite and unfailing love for us on the Cross. It is on the Cross that we see the depth of God's love for us. It is through the Cross of Christ that we find peace.