

10 August 2025
Pentecost 9

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“Not What You Have, But Whose You Are”

Text: Luke 12:22-34; Hebrews 11:1-16

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

Jesus' teaching today continues and builds on what He said last week with the Parable of the Rich Fool - the man who built new and bigger barns for himself and was set for life! But whose life, it turns out, *lasted only one more day* . . . He didn't know that he would die, as we don't know when we will die. **Therefore**, Jesus says. **Therefore**, don't get consumed with anxiety over stuff.

And notice the words Jesus uses in His teaching today, how they go along with the Parable that we heard last week . . .

Life is more than food, Jesus says. As compared to the man who had all the food he needed, but whose life ended that night.

Jesus says the ravens **neither sow nor reap** and **have neither storehouse nor barn**. As compared to the man who built new storehouses and barns that stored food he would never eat.

And then to cap it all off, Jesus says: **And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?** Not the man in the Parable! Who surely would have if he could have.

Therefore, Jesus says, **do not be anxious** about these things, **about your life** . . .

But easier said than done, right? Because telling me not to be anxious only makes me anxious! Should I be anxious? Now I'm focused on being anxious, and anxious about being anxious, and then anxious about being anxious about being anxious! And on and on it goes.

But you know who's not anxious, about their life, what they will eat or what they will wear? **Little children**. Because Mom and Dad take care of that. Food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home - children know who to go to for these things. Children play til they drop. Children have a glorious freedom because they know they'll be

carried to bed. They know the things they need will be taken care of.

So that's what Jesus says. He says ***don't be anxious***, but He doesn't *just* say that - He goes on to say why: because ***your Father knows what you need. Your Father.*** You are children of a *heavenly* Father. And if He clothes the lilies like that, and feeds the ravens like that, He will also take care of you like that. You who are of ***much more value than the birds!*** For to take care of you, your Father did something He didn't do for lilies and ravens - He gave His only-begotten Son to die on the cross! That's how much He values you. And if He would do that for you, all these other things are small potatoes. The glorious freedom of little children is a beautiful picture of how we can be with our heavenly Father.

Now I will grant you there's something of a difference here, in this comparison . . . for we're not the same as lilies and ravens - unlike them, we were created in the image of God and *participate with Him in His work*. And that was true even before sin came into the world. Adam was told to work the Garden and keep it. And it was good, pleasant, joyful work. But what sin did, when it came into the world, is make our pleasant and joyful work into burdensome toil. It created deadbeat dads and broken families, caused famines and droughts, and orphans. And with all that, anxiety. Those are sad realities in our fallen world, that we *should rightly* be concerned about. Concerned to not add sin to sin ourselves, and to help those caught in such sins. To recognize that and be concerned to help is not the anxious Jesus is talking about here - rather, ***that is doing what we've been given to do, and living our Christian vocation.*** For it is precisely because our Father knows our needs that He gives us people to provide for us - like earthly fathers and mothers. But not only them . . .

I was talking to a workman who was at my house this week about this - because he was working very hard to make money, but his supervisors, he said, were the ones getting bonuses and he wasn't. And he wasn't too happy about that! For him, work was all about *the money* . . . like the man in the Parable. But if that's all it is, then it is toil and trouble, unpleasant and unfair, and something to avoid. But it's not just that. ***Your work is not just for yourself, but providing what others need.*** Your work, your vocations, is your Father in heaven using you to provide for the needs of others. And them providing for you. Which may be food, or clothes, or homes, or spiritual care, or protection, or satellites. And if you think of your work like that, then whatever it is you do, is more than just making a buck - it has value and purpose and meaning and dignity. And it's important.

Or maybe think of it this way: if you're working just to make a buck, you're not really serving others (though that's a by-product), you're really serving your job. And then your work has become your god - it's all about the *money*. Which I think is also why

the lottery and gambling are now *everywhere*, and why retirement is now consider a life-goal. . . . (Which I strangely find myself being asked more and more - *are you thinking of retirement?*) There's a mindset in that question: That work is something we endure *only until we are able to stop*. But should we not rather see our work as something we *get* to do to serve our neighbor and provide for his needs?

I think this is also why people often are so surprised and flummoxed when someone wins the lottery but says they're going to keep working! It doesn't compute! Why? Why would you do that?

Well, to bring this back around to what Jesus is saying here about being anxious and tie this all together . . . this is what I'm trying to get at . . . think about this: **What if I gave you a choice** - would you rather have a **trust fund** loaded with all the money you'll need for the rest of your life, so you'll never have to work again; **OR** a father to take care of you? Even if you and your father have to work everyday and live paycheck to paycheck. Now, I know some of you are thinking: *both!* But that's not one of the options! You have to pick . . . and what you pick reveals your heart and mind. Be honest with yourself.

Your Father knows what you need. So seek his kingdom, Jesu says - which means: ***seek Him!*** - ***and*** everything else? ***These things will be added to you.***

It's a heart thing, according to Jesus. You have a Father who has shown you His heart, for He gave His only-begotten Son for you, to die your death, to take your curse, to give you life, to forgive your sins. To give you above and beyond what you ask or deserve. You have that. You have *Him*. A good and perfect Father, a loving and giving Father, who has and is taking care of you, so that you can live in that glorious freedom of being little, un-anxious, children of God. That's yours, now, as baptized children of God.

That we don't always live that way, of that we need to repent. And our Father again gives us what we need: *His forgiveness*. He knows what we need and He provides. Clothing, shoes, food, drink, house, home . . . And not just physically, but spiritually, too. For in **baptism** we are **clothed** with Christ and His righteousness. In the **Supper** we have the **food** and **drink** of Christ's Body and Blood. In the **Church** we have a **house** and **home** and brothers and sisters in Christ.

And so Jesus goes on to say: ***Fear not, little flock***, flock of little ones, ***for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom***. And He has. He already has. So turns out you do have both - a Father and a kingdom. For as I said at the end of the sermon last week, your brother Jesus has given you all that's His - His Father and His inheritance, His kingdom. So everything else you need? Don't be anxious. He's gonna

take care of that, too.

So we heard of folks in the Epistle today to help us with this - Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah - people for whom their Father provided. Even when they doubted Him and took matters in their own hands! Even when sin crashed their lives. This chapter in Hebrews is called *the great faith chapter*, describing how these people lived by faith. But maybe better it is a chronicle of God's faithfulness to them. Of His fatherly love and care, giving life to Abel after he was murdered, an ark to save Noah and his family, and giving Abraham the son He promised. The son from whom the Father's own Son, Jesus, would be born for the life of the world.

Like them, you have a Father who knows all your needs. You have a Father who is faithful and true, loving and good. You are His little children, to enjoy the lilies and the birds, your work and your life. He doesn't want you to be anxious. It doesn't help anyway, doesn't add to your life. Being anxious only takes away from it. Instead you can be like Him - like Father, like son - loving and giving. ***Sell your possessions, and give to the needy***, Jesus says. You won't lose anything. You can't out-give God. The only thing you'll lose *is your anxiety*, ***because your eyes will be focused not on what you have, (or don't have), but on whose you are: a child of your heavenly Father***. Seek that first, Jesus says, and your Father will see to the rest. So that you can live in that glorious freedom. So that, like little children, you can live until you drop. So that you can *rest*, until He carries you home, in His peace.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.