

Sermon for September 13th, 2026
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

1 Kings 17:8-16

8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, **9** “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” **10** So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” **11** And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” **12** And she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” **13** And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. **14** For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.’” **15** And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. **16** The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

Psalm 146

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

2 I will praise the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

3 Put not your trust in princes,
in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.
4 When his breath departs, he returns to the earth;
on that very day his plans perish.

5 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD his God,
6 who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,
who keeps faith forever;

7 who executes justice for the oppressed,
who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets the prisoners free;

8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.

9 The LORD watches over the sojourners;
he upholds the widow and the fatherless,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

10 The LORD will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Galatians 6:1-10

1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit

of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. **2** Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. **3** For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. **4** But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. **5** For each will have to bear his own load. **6** Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. **7** Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. **8** For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. **9** And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. **10** So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Matthew 6:24-34

24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. **25** “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26** Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? **28** And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. **34** “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Our text for meditation this Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Gospel reading.

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

Introduction

In our reading for today, Jesus says that idolatry comes from anxiety. This is to say, our anxieties turn our needs or wants into false gods. It can start very innocently as a man begins worrying about money because the economy has gotten worse and groceries are more expensive. But then he starts fantasizing about what it would be like to be rich, and decides to apply his efforts more strongly in that direction; he increases his hours at work, starts investing in crypto coins, and buying stock options. Over time such a man's heart blackens as he seeks out money above all else, ignoring his wife and children, neglecting Church attendance, and refusing to give a dime to charity.¹ Before long, the man thinks nothing of Christ as he devotes his life to money.

All sorts of pagan false gods were invented from these same anxieties. Phoenician farmers made sacrifices to baal as a deity of storms so that their crops would grow. Lonely Roman men would pray feverishly to venus, “goddess” of love. Greek drunks and vine-dressers alike had religious rites devoted to dionysus the “god” of wine. Canaanite mothers regularly appealed to asherah the fertility “goddess” for help rearing their children. When our Savior says that one cannot worship God and money, He is locating the origin point of all idolatry: anxieties, worries, and obsessions.

¹ Unless of course he can write it off of his taxes.

Solving the Source of Idolatry

Jesus *knows* that we have these anxieties embedded deep within us. It has been this way since the beginning, that we are creatures who *want* and *need* things. Jesus affirms this by reminding us that God *knows* we need food, drink and clothing. How could He not know it? He *made* us this way. Humanity was created to worship the God who provides food, drink, fellowship, and more. When Adam was created, our Lord *showed* the man that he had an inborn need for companionship, and God showed him all the animals that wouldn't fill that need before Eve was brought into existence.² We aren't buddhists who think that desires are bad; but we understand that the needs and wants that are in our bodies and hearts are not the problem – fearing that we shall go without them is.

Jesus tells us that life is more than food and clothing. We may well add that life is more than money, companionship, and more. Whether we have every need filled or not is beside the point. Trusting God for it gives us the right mindset and motivation to live life according to the calling God gave us. For instance, food is a means to an end. Yes, it is essential to our survival, but more importantly a man should focus on how to help his neighbor obtain what *he* needs. Yes, eating good food can be enjoyable in and of itself, but have you considered the fellowship of eating good food with friends? Ah, then the act of eating was not the main thing, but the conversations, the laughter, the strengthened bonds of friendship and even those moments when we get to evangelize to our neighbors over dinner! These are all more important than whether we have enough bites to eat.

Anxiety happens when we take something that is a means to an end, fret over whether we shall obtain it, and forget the goodness of God. In so doing, we make our situation worse, because by forgetting that there is more to life than that one thing we are anxious over, we feel even *more* incomplete and disturbed. That is where obsessions over such uneasiness turns our hearts toward idolatry, because our heart cries out “if I could *just*.” If I could just have more money. If I could just have that companion I wanted. If I could just have justice against this particular enemy, or if I could just have one more beer. This can even extend to our personal feelings of unworthiness: if I could just be a better parent, if I could just be a better Christian, if I could just be recognized at work, and so forth.

Of course, these are not the only sources of anxiety. There are indeed people who have tragic chemical imbalances in their brains which leads them to feel anxious at all times. For such people, the impulse towards idolatry isn't on anything specific, for the afflicted person has this issue stemming from *internal* stimuli instead of the *external* pressures of life. But whether one's anxieties are born from fears or obsessions or a misfiring hormonal system, the answer to this problem requires the same thing. Both the fearful man and the nervous man, whatever treatment they might need, cannot go without a constant awareness of the goodness of God.

The Goodness of God

Our Savior invites us to presume upon the goodness of our Lord. His eternal benevolence, His *love*, is something we sadly forget. Oh we thank God for the food we have before each meal, I am sure. But have you considered that the clothes you are wearing right now are a gift from Him? The roof over your head, the food in your stomach, these are all given to you by Him every day. It doesn't stop there my friends, for He gives you every breath that you take. St. James says that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”³ Everything good in your life – the *truly* good, not the sins that feel good in the moment – everything good that you have and experience is proof of the veritable *flood* of care and love that our Lord has for you. If you are in a Godly relationship with someone, know that the time you have with them is a gift from our Lord. If you are a parent, know that the feeling of joy you received when seeing your child smile for the first time was a blessing from our Lord.

² Genesis 2:18-25

³ James 1:17

When our Savior points out the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, He points out that these creatures do not worry. The bird looks for its food every day without anxiety for the winter. The lily is beautifully dressed without worrying over its petals. Yet while these are fragile, small creatures, their faith in God is stronger than most Christians today. The bluebirds are aware of how much God loves them; the lilies, as far as a plant can be aware of anything, are aware only of God's care for them. How many of us do that? And if we did, would we have the same anxieties that we have today?

My friends, dwell on His compassion and His love for you. It is the love of a good Father who wants the absolute best for you in all things. When you fear there won't be enough money, pray for the Lord's provision and remember all the times He has provided for your needs. Thank Him for His gracious help at all times. When times are stressful and work deadlines are closing in, have you prayed for help and then *expected* it? Let our Lord take care of your needs my friend, for He will not leave you in want forever. And remember the reality of eternal salvation; you may hunger now, but there is no hunger in Paradise. You may feel great stresses now, but there is no stress in Heaven. Entrust your well-being to God, and I can promise you that you will not be left unsatisfied.

Seeking the Kingdom

But let us not get things mixed up. Jesus is *not* telling us to be lazy or entitled. The Christian who is free from anxieties is not free from them by just opening his mouth and expecting God to shove food in it. We must still labor to provide for our families, seek out godly marriages, save our money when we can, and go about business as usual without worrying. But God especially loves that *Pietist* who seeks the Kingdom and righteous living *first*. This begins with the righteousness of Christ. My friends, are you seeking the righteousness of God in the blood of Christ granted in Baptism? Have you reminded yourself that your sins are forgiven before thinking about the mistakes that you have made? Then it goes to the Godly response to the graces poured out on us. Before asking whether you have enough groceries for the month, ask whether you have honored your father and mother today. Before planning out the budget for the month, ask yourself whether you have studied the Scriptures and prayed today!

When our Savior says “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you,” He invites us to live a life that goes beyond food and clothing. Yes, trust that God will take care of all your needs, but trust that He will take care of your needs while you are busy sticking with the Gospel and loving your neighbor, keeping the Ten Commandments, helping those in need, repenting of your sins, providing for the Church's needs and thanking the Lord for all that He has done for you? My friends, if you do all of that before worrying over your needs, you will simply be too busy to be anxious, too busy to be sad even. If men and women lived in this way, when we would never hear about any crisis of depression or deaths of despair! The secret is, living in the present for God makes us immune to tomorrow, which can worry about itself.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.