

“God’s Provision”

Luke 12:22-34

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What’s for dinner? A question we all hear or ask ourselves at the very least once a day. Well, today we can answer that question with Dan’s delicious tri-tip and some tasty sides, but what about the rest of the days? I’d venture a guess that all of you have at least one meal already planned for the coming week, although I’m sure there are some who prefer to “fly by the seat of their pants” and just wing it. But what happens when all that goes sideways? What if you begin your preparations only to find that the cupboards are bare and the fridge is empty? Anxiety and fear begin to set in as you wonder how you will get through the week. The monthly budget is already exhausted and there’s no hope of being able to get back on your feet.

Now you’re left with two options. Be anxious about tomorrow and how you will provide for your or your family’s needs, or trust in the Lord to provide your daily bread as He has promised to do. God’s provision for His people will never fail. That is the message of Christ in our Gospel lesson this morning. And it’s not just the physical needs of this body about which our Lord Jesus bids us not to worry. Anxiety and fear can set in even in the times when you have plenty. How long will it last? What if a flood comes and washes it all away? What if...? As those who bear the sinful flesh we are constantly consumed by the endless potential possibilities of the future. We plan for every possible outcome in which we could find ourselves and we try to live prepared for whatever comes next. But the sad reality is our plans are not God’s plans. To quote a favorite movie in our family, “When have any of our plans ever worked? We plan. We get there. All hell breaks loose.”

Jesus says in verse 22 of our text, “Do not be anxious about your life...” Well, we live in a fallen and sinful world. How could we possibly be comfortable in our situations and not fearing for what might happen next? Sin pervades and assaults our lives at every turn. Every time you feel like you get a leg up and are finally on the right path, there’s always something that comes along and derails your momentum. You almost have that debt paid off, and suddenly the car breaks down. You planned a great vacation with your family, and the morning you leave everyone wakes up sick. The evil one is crafty, and he knows just what he needs to do to get under your skin. Sometimes things don’t go your way, but he wants you to turn inward in those times and look to yourself for the answers to your troubles. What can you do to fix the problem, or what can you do to prevent it from happening again in the future.

The devil's plans and schemes manifest themselves in many ways in our lives. His goal is simple – turn you away from the peace and comfort of Jesus, from your God who provides for you even more than He does the birds of the air and the flowers of the ground. As those who still bear the sinful flesh, he knows all the right buttons to push, all the right things to twist and corrupt to make you squirm. Because that is what the adversary does. He corrupts and obscures the gifts God gives so that you would not see the source of those good things and focus on the horrible outcomes that have befallen you. The question he wants you to ask is not, “What great things has God given me today,” but, “Why has God done this to me?” Anxiety and fear dwell within us because of the sinful nature which we carry. That Old Adam loves to make you worry and doubt. He loves to shake you down to the point you just don't think you can take any more.

The answer to our worries and anxious questions is not hard to find, but as we continue to live in this fallen world, our minds can't easily accept it. Where or when will our next meal come? I don't think I could handle the rejection so should I even apply for that job? I don't think I would be a good or capable parent so should I even have kids? What if someone I love falls away from the faith? What if I lose someone I love? The answer to these and every question that your Old Adam is asking is that God's provision for you is certain and assured. Your next meal will come by His grace and according to His will. You should apply for that job because the Lord has provided for you a vocation to provide your daily bread. God will provide you the necessary strength to be a good parent, and by His grace your children will thrive according to His will. He has given you a mouth to proclaim His Word, and His Word is powerful and effective, so speak it to those whom you love and leave them in the hands of a merciful and just Father.

Grief at the loss of a loved one is something we all fear, and many of us have realized. This is one that the devil salivates to have the opportunity to exploit within God's people. Because in our sinful minds, death is final. For those who don't know the truth of Jesus Christ death truly is the end. And so, we shield ourselves and our loved ones from anything and everything thinking we are somehow going to prevent that reality of sin dwelling in the world. “The wages of sin is death,” Paul says in Romans 6:23. Death came into the world through sin, and it is something we all must succumb to, unless the Lord returns in glory before that time. But Paul doesn't end there. He's not a “negative Nancy” who just makes a blunt statement and leaves us hanging. Romans 6:23 ends with a message of hope and joy for those who are baptized into Christ Jesus. The Apostle writes, “...but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

There is no better example in the Scripture than Job for how to deal with the anxieties and fears of this life. Job lost everything – his home, his land, his sons, his

daughters, his livestock, his health. Satan used all of these calamities to try and force Job to reject his faith in the one true God and give in to his fears and anxieties. But the strength of Job's faith, His faith sustained by the Holy Spirit, was not so easily overcome. Following the loss of his estate and his family, Job proclaims in 1:21, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Oh, to have the faith of Job.

Many of us shut down in the face of anxiety. We just curl into a ball and place our trust in ourselves to solve our own fears, believing if we just prevent them from happening then we won't have to worry. The problem with that is you end up in an endless cycle. You have a fear and it takes its hold on you, so you attempt to prevent it from happening again, but then as you prepare to prevent it from happening all you think about is that fear. It is constantly on your mind, plaguing your conscience and making you look again to yourself to solve it. You incessantly create fear out of trying to solve fear. But this is not a necessary thing that we bring upon ourselves.

We need not fear the things of this life, for the Lord, your God, has called and redeemed you. He has given you the gift of faith in Him and by the blood of Jesus He has bought you back from the clutches of sin, death, and the devil. All of your anxieties and fears come to nothing at the foot of the cross. Because the cross is not the end for Jesus, and it is not the end for you. He is risen from the dead, so that you also will rise with Him when He calls you out of the grave on the day of judgment. Every fear you conjure up in your mind has already been assuaged on the hill of Calvary. No amount of anxiety can overcome that truth, and it is there that you find your hope and comfort in those times when you believe it just can't be overcome. Go to the cross to receive the benefit that is yours through faith.

And that is exactly what we do here this morning. We come forward in a few moments to receive that which the Lord Himself has promised brings forgiveness, life, and salvation – His very body and blood which He gave for us that we might have those blessed gifts that cure the ills of our mind, body, and soul. The medicine of immortality brings with it peace and comfort for the anxious mind, the fearful soul, and the doubting flesh. Here at this table, we can know with absolute certainty, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that our Lord Jesus Christ has taken every sin of worry and anxiety onto His own shoulders. He has died for each and every one of them, and has not only taken them away from us, but given us the means by which we continually receive the concrete assurance that they are no longer reigning over us. The devil has no power to corrupt here for the Son of God is bodily present here for you, to bring you the free gift of forgiveness that was won for you by His atonement.

We all struggle at times with how to provide for our needs in this life, or we question how God could possibly be present and working for our good in times of strife. Sometimes that struggle is light, while other times the weight of it is seemingly unbearable. Whether much or little, many or few, our anxieties and fears constantly work their way to the forefront of our minds. In those times of weakness and strife, we come before our Lord as humble children, begging for the comfort that only He can provide. Do as the Psalmist says in Psalm 55:22, “Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved.” We come confidently, knowing that He is the one above all things that can alleviate the worries of this sinful flesh, as Psalm 34:17 says, “When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.”

No amount of anxious yearning will resolve the fears that manifest in your life. No amount of preparation will assuage the “what ifs” that exist in your mind. Look not to the future and the potential outcomes of things unknown, but live as God’s baptized children who dwell under His loving care. Turn those “what ifs” into what’s done. And what’s done is the salvation of the whole world at the cross of Calvary. There, with His dying breath, our Lord and Savior proclaimed, “τετέλεσται!” It is finished! By His blood all is accomplished and fulfilled. He has made you righteous in the sight of the Father by declaring you righteous according to His bloody atonement, and that is God’s provision for His people. Yes, He cares for us in the needs of this life, and will always do so according to His will while we walk this earth. Do not be anxious, but look with longing eyes to the cross, knowing that your salvation is secure in Christ Jesus, who has taken those anxieties and fears to that tree to crucify them for you, that you might live in His eternal bliss, in the glory of His very face forever. Amen.