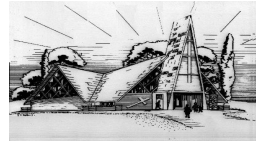




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon - Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 14C)

**Fear not, little flock, for it is your
Father's good pleasure to give you the
kingdom.**



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 12,49-53:

- **ESV 22** And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.
- **23** For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.
- **24** Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!
- **25** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?
- **26** If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?
- **27** Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
- **28** But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!
- **29** And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried.
- **30** For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them.
- **31** Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.
- **32** "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
- **33** Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.
- **34** For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

• **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts so that all anxiety is driven out and the desire for Your Kingdom is nurtured! Amen.*

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

• Are you such a person, a person who is anxious about many things, about your health, if you are going to survive this month, money-wise? Are you maybe a person who is worried about what is going on with the world? Are you maybe concerned about the fact that there is so much deception and fraud going on in popular Christianity? Are you stressing about the fact that Christian congregations in the West are getting smaller and smaller? Do you maybe think in light of the onslaught of the world-media today, how we will ever survive with our relatively small numbers?

• Are you maybe ashamed of yourself as you hear these words of Your Lord and Saviour, because you know 'I shouldn't stress so much, but I do. I don't have that strong faith many people are boasting about. They might have it, but that's not me.'

• If that's you, please listen to the voice of the Lord as He speaks through His servant to you, today. Please take note that in this passage Jesus addresses His very own disciples, not His enemies, His disciples! And Jesus calls them *“O you of little faith”*. Jesus' disciples! As always Jesus nails it. He calls a spade a spade. Those who have little faith, He addresses as such! Now you may have acknowledged the fact that your faith is weak because you are anxious about many things. You battle not to stress. In other words when the pressure is on, your trust in God tends to dwindle away. It just seems to vanish.

• Nevertheless, those of little faith are still Jesus' disciples! The first comfort is this, you and I, we might be one of those of little faith, but nevertheless we remain Jesus' disciples. Let no-one take that away from you although your faith might be weak.

• Now Jesus speaks to us and says *“I say to you”*. Let us remember who speaks here. The One who was baptised to die for all our weaknesses and sins, here still, on His Way to the Cross. The One who has all authority in heaven and on earth speaks to you in this very moment and says: *“Do not be anxious.”* He speaks as Your Shepherd to you. And He gives a reason. Its not about unreasonable trust. He does not say, 'do not be anxious and stop thinking'. To the contrary, Jesus says consider the following: *“do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.”* Don't have a too high a view of food. Life involves more than food. Eating and drinking alone do not keep you alive! Your life is in God's hands. The Father knows that you need to eat and drink.

• Jesus then gives an example of creation [24]: *“Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!”*

• Think this through, study this carefully, look at the ravens- well what an example-

Jesus reminds us of a scavenger bird. Not many consider them of much worth, but God looks after them. He feeds even them! What an insight. Jesus opens our eyes so that we realise what is going on in nature around us. God feeds the ravens. They survive. We know from science that they have their place in the Ecosystem, a system designed and kept in place by God, although man seriously damages it! Still they survive.

- How much more will God the Father, your Father in Heaven not look after you!
- In any case, says Jesus, what does being anxious help you. Can you add a single hour to your lifespan by being anxious? By the way that is a small thing adding an hour to your lifespan, according to Jesus. But you, who are anxious, can you add a single hour to your lifespan?
- If every hour of your life depends on God, why worry so much about the rest. It doesn't make sense!
- The same goes for the clothing. There consider the Lilies, how they grow: they don't work nor spin. But, Jesus evaluates the beauty of these Lilies as even more glorious than the clothing of king Solomon. Where do they get their clothes from? God clothes them. How long do they last- one day- yet God looks after them. How much more will He not do it with you, of little faith?
- Don't work for and run after food and clothing! That is what the pagans are doing, always have done. It is foolish and futile.
- Your Father knows that you need these things. He is looking after your body. Don't spend all your time and energy on these things! Rather seek, or desire His Kingdom and these things will be given to you! There we have a promise. Divine Service first, then go into the week and work. Devotions in the morning first and then begin your service in the community.
- God the Father will take care of your body! He will give you enough to eat and clothing to put on. Don't get all sidelined and hooked up in worries over things which God has promised to provide.
- What is true for your personal life is all the more true for the Body of Christ, the congregation, the little flock. In an intensely pastoral command Jesus speaks as shepherd to His sheep when He says: *"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*
- Here the pastoral mercy of the Lord goes out to you His little flock, to you of

little faith, not of no faith, but of little faith. This reminds us of the heading of Jesus' sermon on the mount: *"Blessed are the poor in Spirit."* It is the Father's pleasant desire to give His kingdom to you! How much more are you not worth than the ravens and the Lilies! You are His little flock. You have received the Holy Spirit as guarantee that you participate in His Kingdom. Therefore don't be afraid for the world. Don't stress about what is going to happen with the finances of the church. Its the Father's Kingdom!

• What Jesus does with us, as He speaks with us, is, He drives out our anxiety by revealing to us the mercy and Love of God the Father towards the members of His little flock. He enlightens our mind so that we realise how animals and plants are cared for by God. All the more will He certainly care for His little flock.

• It is truly good news, because our Heavenly Father promised to give His kingdom and He has made us participants, shareholders of His kingdom in Baptism. Today we are gathered in His kingdom, and we realise it by faith and He gives us the right attitude towards our earthly possessions. We may use them for the benefit of others. They are not what we treasure above all.

• What we came to treasure is the unfailing heavenly treasure that does not grow old or falls apart: Christ, who gave Himself for us is our treasure. Through Christ God looks after us. He gives us an eternal Spirit and we will receive a newly clothed body on the Last Day.

• These are treasures no thief can destroy, no devil can touch. Our Father has much more goodness in stock than we can imagine, for those of little faith! Truly astonishing!

• Thank You Lord, we don't deserve it, but thank You for coming to us today and driving out unnecessary anxieties, and please help us to help others using the good gifts You have given to us. **Amen.**

• *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. **Amen.** (^{ESV} Eph 3,20-21)*