



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Living Hope."
(Easter, 2026)
"Hope and Anxiety." Text(s): Various.

□ **Day #1—Monday, April 27^h. Read: Psalm 23.1-3. –Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

Last week, we studied Psalm 23 as we examined the experiences of discouragement. This week, we will again explore this profound text in God's Word as we reflect on anxiety and worry.

In one of the most recognized and comforting texts in the Bible, Psalm 23 describes the care and hope we receive because the *Lord is our Shepherd (v.1)*. For many, Psalm 23 is the most beloved Psalm in the Bible because it tells us what God is really like. It is a "picture" of God. God want you to know what He is like and how much He really loves you and how much you matter to Him. The more you understand these truths about God, the easier it is to trust Him rather than let anxiety and worry consume our lives.

Like all human emotions, there are positive purposes for anxiety. For example, we may feel anxious or concerned about a project at work or a test in school. This can lead us to prepare, study, and take action to deal with our anxiety. Likewise, we may be anxious about a potentially dangerous situation that can lead us to stay away from what we know is not safe. However, most of the anxiety we experience today is detrimental to our soul and spiritual and emotional well-being.

Anxiety, and its "cousin," "worry," is an emotion and experience that is common in our lives. We get anxious/worried about many things: Finances, jobs, relationships, marriage, kids, and health, just to name a few. As we discussed on Sunday, *Anxiety comes with life*—but it does not have to *run our lives!* Additionally, there are other realities about anxiety/worry...

It is Unhelpful. Anxiety/worry never accomplishes anything; it never solves anything. It is stewing without doing. It is like racing your car engine with the brakes on—you create a lot of smoke and noise but you do not go anywhere. Worry has never solved a problem. Anxiety cannot change the past and worry cannot control the future. It only makes us miserable today. It is unhelpful, it does not work.

It is Unreasonable. Anxiety/worry can exaggerate our problems and makes mountains out of proverbial molehills. The more we review something when we are worried about it, the bigger it gets. To worry about something we cannot change is useless. To worry about something you can change is a waste of time—change it!

It is Unhealthy. Anxiety/worry takes a toll on the body. When we worry, we get ulcers, backaches, headaches, insomnia. Plants and animals do not worry, only humans. We get anxious and worry but—and here is the truth—we were not made to worry. It makes us unhappy and unhealthy. The Germanic root for our word "anxiety" and "worry," means "to strangle" or "to choke." That is exactly what anxiety does—it strangles the life out of us. We have to *learn* to be anxious. We have to practice worry and we tend to be good at it. The good news is that if worry is learned it can also be unlearned. In addition, we can practice not worrying!

Consider/Reflect: What are your anxieties/worries? Pray about them this week, asking God, our Shepherd, to guide us and lead us away from our anxieties/worries, teaching us how to deal with them through this series.

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, April 28th. Read: Psalm 23.4-6. —Examine: The Text and its**

Psalm 23.2 describes the blessings that comes when God is our Shepherd: Spiritual nourishment. As a shepherd leads his sheep to fresh grass for food and rest, so does God lead and provide for His people as they follow Him as Lord and Shepherd. God does this through His church, through His Word, Sacraments, and our church community.

One who follows the Lord does not lack any spiritual nourishment. Under-shepherds [pastors] (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2) are expected to feed the flock (Ezek. 34:1–10; John 21:15–17) as well. Food for the soul is the Word of God (Heb. 5:12–14; 1 Peter 2:2)...A second blessing that comes from the Lord's leading is spiritual restoration. As a shepherd leads his sheep to placid waters for rest and cleansing, so the Lord restores or refreshes the soul. Here the spiritual lesson is clear: the Lord provides forgiveness and peace for those who follow Him.¹

Our anxieties can make us feel as if we are all alone, lost, and confused about what will happen to us or someone we care about. Spiritual fatigue is a real consequence of incessant worry, stress, and anxiety. All of these emotions are interrelated and work together to make us feel literally sick and tired all of the time. What this text reminds us of is that, if God is our Shepherd and Lord, then God will walk with us step by step, provide for our every need (*v. 1*), and bring His people to a place of refreshment and strength (*v. 2*).

These verses major on experiences of plenty (*green pastures*), peace (*waters*, lit. 'of every sort of rest') and renewal (*restores my soul...*). The principle behind our experiences is that he chooses *paths of righteousness* for us, paths that are 'right with him', making sense to him. In this he acts *for his name's sake*, in accordance with his revealed character.²

Consider/Reflect: "The provisions of God in this life are a small foretaste of what awaits believers...So the greatest expression of the goodness and mercy of God awaits us in heaven. The people of God will then be with the Lord who cared for them every step of the way. And they will never be separated from him."³

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, April 29th. Read: Matthew 6.25-30. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

In verse 25, the Greek word for anxious is μεριμνάω (*merimnaō*), which literally means, "To care about," with the sense of this care causing distraction—*excessive care*. The passage begins with Jesus saying, "Therefore," which implies all that has been said before. Jesus has been teaching about the life of discipleship and placing one's ultimate trust in God. Jesus makes clear that those who are anxious and worried about earthly matters, those who give *excessive care* (*merimnaō*) to other things more than God, are really demonstrating that they have little faith in God's providential care. As Jesus would often do through His teachings, He uses common, everyday elements in the world to illustrate God's *care-full* attention.

Jesus twice uses a standard type of Jewish argument traditionally called *qal wahomer*: "how much more?" (6:26, 30). If God cares for birds and for perishable flowers, how much more for people in his image and for his own beloved children...Jesus declares that God can provide for his children adequately even if they *lack* clothing (cf. also 5:40)! He appeals to the splendor of the fields, whose vegetation is nevertheless used as fuel for baking bread...were not people, to whom God gave such use of his creation, more valuable to him than these flowers?... Health matters more than wealth, as the body matters more than clothing. In the end, Jesus teaches here, wealth does not matter, but God's blessing does, and he will provide it.⁴

All the works of God are invested with beauty to the eye of faith; that beauty impressively proclaims the tenderness of divine love...if God takes pleasure in bestowing beauty on a mere flower, He will not fail to supply those with the necessities of life, who occupy a far higher grade in creation, inasmuch as they have rational and immortal souls, which are capable of exercising faith. The expression, *O ye of little faith* (found also in 8:26; 14:31; 16:8 = *distrustful*), reminds them of the capacity given to them, and not to birds and flowers, to exercise faith, and gently rebukes them for not anxiously seeking a higher degree of spiritual life.⁵

Consider/Reflect: "Throughout the whole of this discourse, Christ reproves that excessive anxiety, with which men torment themselves, about food and clothing, and, at the same time, applies a remedy for curing this disease. When he forbids them to be

1 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

2 D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham (Eds.). *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

3 R. Ellsworth. *Opening up Psalms* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006).

4 C.S. Keener. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2009).

5 C.F. Schaeffer. *Annotations on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*. (New York: The Christian Literature Co, 1895).

anxious, this is not to be taken literally, as if he intended to take away from his people all care...But immoderate care is condemned for two reasons: either because in so doing men tease and vex themselves to no purpose, by carrying their anxiety farther than is proper or than their calling demands... Though the children of God are not free from toil and anxiety, yet, properly speaking, we do not say that they are anxious about life: because, through their reliance on the providence of God, they enjoy calm repose.”⁶

□ **Day #4--Thursday, April 30th. Read: Matthew 6.30-34.— Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Our text from Matthew 6 is a part of Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount,” covering chapters 5-7. In this incredible sermon, Jesus is instructing His followers about life in the Kingdom of God and how to live with Kingdom values and truths in the present age. Beginning at *Matthew 6.19*, and continuing through *v.34*, Jesus connects the themes of wealth and anxiety/worry. Jesus contrasts transient, earthly wealth with permanent, heavenly treasures. As Craig Blomberg rightly notes, “If our priorities correctly reside with the latter, God through His people will take care of the former. The implementation of 6:33 presupposes Christian communities who look after the needy in their own midst as well as throughout the world.”⁷ Commentators have made the point that this teaching here reflects Jesus’ directions on how to pray *vis a vi* the Lord’s Prayer.

The ties with the Lord’s Prayer continue here (with the reference to evil and the focus on today), and these probably provide the key for linking v. 34 with the preceding materials. In connection with the Lord’s Prayer, the promise of God’s provision which emerges in vv. 25–34 and climaxes with the promise of v. 34b is a promise about the needs of the present. But a good deal of human anxiety involves worrying about ‘tomorrow’ (the future)... We already know that we are not to worry about our basic needs of today; now we are specifically challenged not to worry about our needs of tomorrow... If God looks after today, that will be enough. God does not abstractly guarantee the future; he deals with the needs of each today. This is the one-day-at-a-time perspective of the Lord’s Prayer which keeps so firmly in focus the immediacy of receiving from the hand of God.⁸

Commenting on Matthew 6.25-34, Don Hagner summarizes:

This passage, like the preceding one, stresses the importance of undistracted, absolute discipleship. The key to avoiding anxiety is to make the kingdom one’s priority (v 33). The disciples have a “heavenly Father” who knows of their ongoing needs and who will supply them. If he takes care of his creation, he will surely take care of those who participate in his kingdom. The passage does not mean, however, that food, drink, clothing, and other such necessities will come to the disciple automatically without work or foresight. It addresses only the problem of anxiety about these things. The answer to this anxiety and all such debilitating anxiety is to be found in an absolute allegiance to the kingdom and the righteousness that is the natural expression of that kingdom... Indeed, anxiety and worry need not govern the disciple who has known the grace of the kingdom.⁹

Consider/Reflect: “If Jesus’ words are taken literally, it seems as if He encourages irresponsibility and laziness. And is it true that all birds are adequately fed and all flowers are beautiful? As with Jesus’ parables, we need to look for His central teaching here: seek God’s salvation, and then entrust your daily life to His loving care. We do this by faithfully making use of the Word and Sacraments, through which the Spirit leads us to repent of our sins and to trust Jesus for forgiveness... Convinced of our salvation, we commit our daily lives into the caring hands of our heavenly Father. [Pray]: Good Shepherd, because You laid down Your life for me, grant that I may trust You to provide my daily needs. Amen.”¹⁰

□ **Day #5— Friday, May 1st. Read: Philippians 4.4-9.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

When studying Philippians, I think it is important to remember where Paul is writing from: A Roman prison! The themes of rejoicing, joy, and assurance, so evident throughout this letter, are not some “Pollyannaish,” possibility-thinking nonsense! They are grounded in the truth of God’s promises, sovereignty, and peace! Paul knew that no situation is beyond the Lord’s help. Similar to Jesus, Paul assures, even commands, the believer to be “anxious for nothing!” For both Jesus and Paul, our hope and peace is found in our relationship with our Heavenly Father who hears our prayers and provides for our needs!

Jesus spoke about anxiety in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:25–34), where he stated the most common causes of anxiety. They are: physical attributes (v. 27); clothing (v. 28); food and drink (v. 31); and the future (v. 34). Even in contemporary life with its complexities, the same simple concerns cause anxiety. Prayer cures anxiety. Here three words

6 John Calvin and W. Pringle. *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010).

7 C. Blomberg. *Matthew. Holman concise Bible Commentary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998).

8 J. Nolland. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans, 2005).

9 D.A. Hagner. *Matthew* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993).

10 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

describe prayer. Each contributes to a proper understanding of the comprehensive nature of the prayer life. The point, however, is that prayer relieves the problem of anxiety. The center of the verse is the significant part: Prayer is to be offered “with thanksgiving.” The attitude of gratitude accompanies all true approaches to the Father.¹¹

Paul uses an interesting word about what God will do for the believer’s heart—guard it! The Greek word, φρουρέω (*phroureō*), is defined as, “To (a) sentry, guard.” It can be used to describe an actual *sentry* or what a sentry does—*guard, protect*. It is a “military term, implying that peace stands on duty to keep out anything that brings care and anxiety. For these reasons, prayerful people are peaceful people.”¹²

Anxiety is to have no place in the lives of Christians because *in everything* there can be *prayer*, prayer in its various forms and modes, *petition, requests*, but above all *thanksgiving*. This is because praise is always due to God and because faith is quickened when we remember in thankfulness what God has done for us in the past. There is an echo here of the teaching of Jesus (Mt. 6:25–34; 7:7–11)...When prayer replaces worry, *the peace of God, which transcends all understanding* comes in, and that peace acts as a sentry guarding the Christian’s mind and emotions from being over-whelmed by the sudden onrush of fear, anxiety or temptation. This reality Christians should prove in their daily lives.¹³

Consider/Reflect: “When life makes no sense, God’s peace sustains and directs us. The peace of God...will guard...Peace, not readiness or zeal, acts like a guardian angel for our mental health. This peace resides in Jesus, our refuge...As Paul concludes this Letter, he uses imperative language to urge the reader to adopt practices of living that are in harmony with the Creator’s will...[Pray]: Blessed be the Lord God, who has not left us to suffer in our own folly, but has called and enlightened us to live according to His mercy in Christ. Amen.”¹⁴

☐ **Day #6-Saturday, May 2nd. Read: Psalm 55.22-23; Psalm 23 (Again).—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

God promises to meet the *needs* of His people. Not our *greeds*—but needs! As we continue to consider what it means that the Lord is our Shepherd, think about what a shepherd does:

A shepherd *provides*. He provides food and shelter, the basic necessities for his sheep.

A shepherd *protects*. He defends against enemies and harm.

A shepherd *guides*. He leads sheep when they are confused and do not know which way to go.

A shepherd *corrects*. Any problem that comes along, he corrects it.

The amazing thing is this: God has promised to do these four things in your life if you will trust Him, if you will let Him be your Shepherd. This is clear in all of our texts for today. In Philippians 4:19 the Bible says: “My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” Again, what this text does not say is that God will meet all of your *greeds*. There is a difference between needs and wants. If God met all of our wants, we would be the biggest spoiled brat in the universe! God knows us better than we know ourselves and consequently, what we *truly* need. Faith is grounded in the character of God. Remember...

God says “I will...” He does not say, I might, I will think about it, possibly. He says I will. God *never breaks His promises!*

God says “I will meet all ...” What does “all” include? Doctor’s bills? Mortgage payments? Spiritual needs? Financial needs? Health needs? Relational needs? Yes! Everything! If God has promised to provide all of your needs, to protect you, to guide you when you are confused, and to correct the problems in your life, what does that leave left to worry/be anxious about? Nothing.

In the Bible, there are over 7,000 promises God puts on your life. When we trust and believe them, what is left to worry about?

Consider/Reflect: Worry is not only unhelpful, unreasonable, and unhealthy—it’s also unnecessary if Jesus Christ is your Shepherd. Any time we worry, we are acting like a functional atheist. In essence, it is believing that God is not going to keep His promises. It is believing the old saying, “If it’s to be, it’s up to me!” However, for God’s people (you), it is up to Him!

11 R.R. Melick. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991).

12 Ibid.

13 Carson, *et. al.*, *New Bible Commentary*.

14 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.