

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity  
Matthew 6:24-35  
September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017

A brand new pastor, right out of the seminary, and very young... (and handsome, I might add) is riding shotgun with an old, getting close to retirement, short, skinny, sort of a curmudgeon of a pastor in his Cadillac (whose last name starts with a "K"). They are talking to pass the time but the young pastor is also seeking guidance and direction for one life's difficult matters. I guess you could say this was the first time the young assistant pastor had asked the "well-seasoned" Sr. pastor for guidance. The young pastor has a matter he was worried about... a concern pertaining to life not unlike anything you yourself have experienced. The older pastor says to the young pastor, "*Do you remember what Jesus says about worry in Matthew chapter six? He says, do not worry about your life. He says worry cannot add one single hour to your life. He says do not worry about your clothes, what you will eat and what you will drink. Instead, 'seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.'*"

Sage advice from an experienced pastor to a young, start-up. And so much more than good advice... but God's promise. That's what makes these words better than advice. They are promise. Jesus says "*Seek first the kingdom of God... and all that you worry about for this life, will be given to you.*" Jesus doesn't "recommend" something to you in this text, rather, He tells you that from the first will come the second... as a promise! Oh, if only we could truly trust that promise.

Why don't we trust God's promises? I know we do for some things. I bet if I asked each of you individually do you trust that God died for the sins of the world, you would say, "Yes, that is what makes me a Christian." I would say, "Yes, you are right." I bet if I asked you, do you believe that Jesus died for your sins, all of them... even the terrible ones you don't think He could ever forgive." Most of you would say, "Yes I believe that. Jesus died for all sins including my most terrible sins." Yet, I also know there are some of you who might still doubt God could cleans you of all your really bad sins... because, pastor, you don't know my really bad ones. If you did, you would understand why I get "worried" that I'm not forgiven for those. So our trust in these matters that seem to defy logic... like how could He forgive my big sins... starts to lean us away from total trust on the Word of God.

And then, what about the big matters of our world today. Where is your promise of... seek first the kingdom... and all these things will be added unto us when we take a good hard look at our world today? Take a look at St. Louis and all the unrest with more violent protests. Take a look at what North Korea is doing by taunting the U.S. and the other nations of the world by sending long-range missiles through the sky. Take a look at the destruction of war in the Middle East, in Africa, and other places. Take a look at the devastation caused by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, as well as that earthquake in Mexico. So God is telling us not to worry when everything I see around me causes me to do just that. To be honest, when we look at the world around us, our own lives even, taking to heart that if I seek first God's kingdom, then all these things that I worry about not having for this life, will be given to me, becomes a pretty difficult task. God, you do understand my hang-up, right? You do see how I not might exactly believe you will take care of me if I put you first when everything around me is going so wrong, don't you? You are asking too much.

And here is God saying what you need to hear... don't worry. Don't be anxious. And when we are worried about what God promises to take care of, and I know it's so easy to be, it is borne out of a sinful heart. And now, we see ever-more-clearly how infested with sin we actually are. We might not think of worry as sin. But it is... worry is a lack of trust that God promises to

take care of you and your life. So, He has a word for you... "Seek first the kingdom. Seek Him first. Trust Him. Live for Him. Righteousness does not come through seeking the world. It only comes by seeking the kingdom.

And now, let's understand what "seeking the kingdom" means. It means to trust the promises of God. It means to have faith that God will do what He says He will do. It means that the kingdom we live for, God's kingdom, is more important than the kingdom of this world. It means that God's kingdom reigns by coming to you and doing all that He promises to do... and give you all that He promises to give.

We have trust issues. All of us do. This is the spark that begins the fires of worry in our heart and in our minds. It's no wonder we have trust issues because those we trust in this world have not been found to be trustworthy. Maybe they sinned against you, lied to you, cheated on you. Maybe they totally destroyed your confidence in them by convincing you they can be trusted when really they can't. Much of the time our issues of trust for others are borne out of what we know of ourselves. We have lied and cheated. If I know I can't be trusted how can someone else be trusted? This sets a horrible tone in our relationships. This causes marriages to struggle and families to disengage from one another... seeking other things that are not healthy to trust. And this world of mistrust we live in then spills over to our trust in God. He doesn't seem trustworthy either. We have been burned before. Why put my trust in God when all around me there is hunger and homelessness. So, God, if you are trustworthy, why aren't you doing anything about that? And the excuses abound from our lips and our hearts.

The problem is, God does not work according to our will or our faulty perceptions. Rather, God knows best and works according to His own will. He knows best, even when we think we know. We might think, how could any kind of suffering be good? Well for that answer let's go to the cross.

If there was no suffering on that cross 2000 years ago there would be no salvation. In fact, salvation has been ushered into your life through suffering. Our suffering is a consequence of a fallen world, fallen people... our sins. And, Jesus' suffering is a result of the same... this fallen world, fallen people and our sin. I will tell you, beloved in the Lord, and I know it defies logic, I know it is counter intuitive, but suffering is the path to salvation.

You do not suffer for your life in heaven. No, you suffer because you are fallen and even because you are a Christian. You can expect it... one way or the other. And it's not fair why some people suffer more than others. And, I know that sometimes we think our suffering is worse than others, but I promise you, if those "others" are human, they suffer too. And no matter what our sufferings happen to be, God is still in charge of our going out and our coming in from this time forth and even forevermore.

So, do what the old, curmudgeon of a pastor told me driving down the road in his Cadillac... "*Seek first the Kingdom...*" Do what Jesus says... "*and all these things will be given unto you.*" His kingdom first, no matter what. His kingdom first, lest we worry ourselves to death. His kingdom first, as we put all our trust in Him. His kingdom... then all these things will be added. All that we need He provides. His kingdom IS first because He comes to us first and gives sinners everything needed... hope, strength, protection, LIFE! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.