St Paul's Lutheran Church (Latimer, IA)
Trinity 15 – September 13, 2026
Matthew 6:24-34 – Do Not Be Anxious
Rev Peter Wagner

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

In the Sermon on the Mount, perhaps more beautifully and more clearly than anywhere else in Scripture, Jesus teaches about the kingdom of heaven.

He says that God's kingdom operates completely unlike the world. It's completely contrary to our human way of thinking. For in the kingdom of heaven, those who are greatly honored are not the rich and powerful, but the poor and lowly, the beaten and downtrodden, the ones who cling to God's promises by faith. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

And in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, what matters is not what we see about people, on the outside, but what God sees. God looks at the heart. "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Yes, we need a righteousness that surpasses any human, earthly righteousness. If we want to enter the kingdom of heaven, we need the righteousness of God himself, which only God can give. If we want to become citizens of his kingdom, then we must be clothed, through baptism, in his perfect righteousness, the righteousness which he won for us when he died on the cross.

That is how we become citizens of the kingdom. Only by faith in Christ.

So now, as citizens of the kingdom, as Christians called into the light, Jesus also invites us to pray. In the Sermon on the Mount, he teaches us to pray for the kingdom. He teaches the Lord's Prayer. We should pray, "Thy kingdom come," because we need it to come to us. "Thy kingdom come," really means, "Send us your Holy Spirit, heavenly Father. Give us your Holy Spirit, to create faith in our hearts, and establish us in your kingdom."

So you see, the Sermon on the Mount is all about the kingdom of heaven, a kingdom which may be very hidden and hard to see, but a kingdom which far exceeds all the kingdoms of this earth.

God's kingdom is the rock not cut by human hands, which destroys all the kingdoms of the earth. As the prophet Daniel foretold, "In those days the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever."

God the Holy Spirit is already building and establishing this kingdom every day in the church. The kingdom of God is within us, in the hearts of all believers. It's wherever Jesus the true King is believed and preached and worshipped.

Thanks be to God for bringing us into that kingdom!

But now, as citizens of God's kingdom, we also need to learn how to behave. For this kingdom operates in a way that is totally contrary to the nations and kingdoms of the world.

So today, in our Gospel reading from the Sermon on the Mount, just after he taught us how to pray, Jesus also teaches us how to live, as citizens of his kingdom, as Christians. We should live by faith. We should not be anxious like the world is anxious. Instead, we should always trust in him.

Jesus says, "Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Do not be anxious, but instead, focus your entire, undivided attention on the kingdom of God, and its King. Turn away from worldly distractions. Because God demands our full attention. He wants us to fear, love, and trust in him above all things.

When our attention is divided, that is idolatry. It's sin. When we're focused on earthly, daily problems, when we're anxious and preoccupied by earthly things, then our eyes are turning away from God, our King, who promises to provide everything we need.

Let me give you an example. As a parent, I often worry about my kids, about their health and their future. And there is such a thing as godly concern, a concern which takes action within my vocation for their well-being. That's not bad. That's not idolatry. That's simply doing what God wants us to do, in our vocations, to care for those he has entrusted to us.

But concern can become idolatry, if it slips into constant worry about things outside our control, things that we can do nothing about.

So for example, as a parent with a baby in the house, I'm always worried that she might put something in her mouth and start choking. And on the one hand, it's good to take steps to keep a close eye on her, and keep small objects out of her reach, out of godly concern for her safety.

But on the other hand, I shouldn't slip into sinful idolatry. I shouldn't let worrying about her choking turn into a constant paranoid fear.

It's a difficult line to walk. Caring for others and taking action to help them is good. That's actually how God normally cares for people. He uses each one of us in our vocations as his hands and his feet, his servants, to provide for the needs for the citizens of his kingdom. But we should always be careful not to slip into fearfulness, fearfulness that fails to commend all things into God's protecting hands.

In my case, my fears came true this past Friday afternoon, when little Mary was crawling around on the floor. She put something in her mouth and started choking. We were very worried, and we tried to help her. But nothing we tried seemed to help. Yet God was taking care of her, and after a few scary minutes she was fine. Actually, it was only when I finally remembered to pray, when I finally turned to God, that almost immediately, she swallowed whatever it was and started breathing normally again. Thanks be to God.

So now, on the one hand, I need to be more careful to keep a close eye on Mary in the future. But on the other hand, I also shouldn't slip into fearfulness and anxiety. We should always commend her into God's hands, because she belongs to him. That's what Jesus means when he says, "Do not be anxious."

Anxiety betrays where our allegiance really lies. Are you anxious about your life? About your loved ones? Or about making ends meet financially? Or are you worried about your relationships, what people think of you? Then today, Jesus gently rebukes you. He wants you to be his citizen, and his alone. He reminds you that all these things are taken care of, in the kingdom of heaven. Because your Father in heaven loves you, and he will always provide.

God will always provide whatever you need, because you are precious in his sight. If he redeemed you, to bring you into his kingdom, if the King poured out his own lifeblood for you, to make you his citizen, then you are truly precious in his sight.

That's exactly what Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer. After he told us to pray for the kingdom of heaven, "Thy kingdom come," next he told us to pray for our daily bread, "Give us this day our daily bread." He means that we should pray for everything we need to support this body and life: Food, drink, clothing, shoes – basic necessities like that. But also everything else. Money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and whatever else we might need.

We should pray for all these things, not because our Father in heaven does not know that we need them, not because he doesn't want to give them, but because he wants us to recognize how well he's already providing, so we might learn to trust in him.

Jesus tells us to pray for our daily bread, so that we might learn to recognize our blessings, and receive our daily bread with thanksgiving, and always trust him to provide.

Let's return to the Gospel reading. Jesus says, "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? 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?"

Yes, you are. You matter to God, and he always carries you through. So it's foolish to worry.

"And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, 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. 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?"

Oh you of little faith. That hits home. That's us. Our faith is very small. Our daily cares and worries betray how weak our faith still is. When we worry about things that belong to our daily bread, when we worry about the troubles we face every day, it shows that we're turning away from the kingdom of God, back to the earthly realm and its concerns. We need to turn our eyes back to God, the perfect Giver, and his kingdom, and the perfect righteousness that only comes by faith.

Our faith is very weak, and yet, Christ does not snuff out the smoldering wick. He gently fans our weak faith into flame, by his word, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

So do not worry about the future, what bad things might happen. That sort of worry does you no good. Anxiety like that is sinful. Instead, be a Christian. “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Seek the kingdom. Pray for the Holy Spirit. Cling to his Word. And always fix your eyes on the true King, and his righteousness.

Remember that God has already provided for all your eternal needs. He’s already clothed you in baptism with his own righteousness, and he feeds you with his true body and blood for your forgiveness. So if he’s given all the blessings of eternity, won’t he also provide for your daily needs?

Yes he will. Faith always trusts that he will.

That is how your King wants you to live in his kingdom, as a Christian: Without worry, putting all things into his hands, casting all your anxieties upon him, because he cares for you. Amen.