

“What, me worry?” Matthew 6:24-34 Trinity 15 2023

Last month I was at a shut-in member’s home. We got to talking about family – they showed me pictures of their children and I showed them pictures of mine. They responded, "Those are some nice kids you have. I'm an empty nester - my kids are all grown up. I wouldn't want to be raising kids in this world today - this world is a scary place." They then followed that with "Keep your kids in school, because this world is a scary place." We moved on from there to other topics, and I had a very happy visit.

But there was something they said that I wasn't sure about. Is this world a scary place? Yes. The sins of violence and greed and immorality dominate our world and make it "scary." What about, "I wouldn't want to be raising kids in this world today?" I've heard people say that before, and it doesn't surprise me. But what I wasn't sure about was when they said, "Keep your kids in school, because this world is a scary place." Now what does that mean? I agree that staying in school is good. Dropping out of grade school or high school is a bad idea. But I don't think they meant that. "Keep your kids in school, because the world is scary."

Will school prepare my kids for all the violence and greed and immorality they will someday face? Math and science and reading and social studies - will that help my kids when they must process the

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sudden death of a loved one, or cancer in their own bodies? Stay in school because of that?

And so, as I was driving home, I was thinking to myself that I didn't agree with what they said. I know they were just trying to be friendly and didn't intend for me to think so deeply about what was said. But there is a way to fix what they said. Instead of "Keep your kids in school, because it's a scary world," I would say, "Keep your kids in God's Word, because it's a scary world." If you're a parent, what do you want for your child someday? Don't you want your child to grow up and have a sense of security and self-esteem? Don't you want your child to know that he or she is loved, and to be able to love someone else? Don't you want your child to be content and happy? But how will that happen, in this scary world? I don't think the secret is to keep your kids in school. The key is to: "Keep your kids in God's Word."

Today we're going to look at a section of the Bible where Jesus speaks to people who live in a scary world, and they are worried. We're going to apply this passage to Christian education, something that Lutherans were traditionally very good at.

How do we know that the people Jesus was speaking to worried people? Because of the way Jesus talked to them. "Do not worry," Jesus said in verse 25. "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his

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life?" Jesus asked in verse 27. "Why do you worry?" verse 28. "Do not worry," verse 31. "Do not worry about tomorrow," verse 34. Jesus was talking to people who believed that they lived in a scary world. And what made it scary was that they weren't sure where their next meal was going to come from, or how they would be able to afford buying the clothes they needed. These people had forgotten that there was a God in heaven who loved them and promised that he would take care of their physical needs. "O you of little faith," Jesus said to them. And because of their lack of faith in their Heavenly Father, they were consumed with worry.

Instead of spending all your time and energy and money on getting food and clothing, Jesus told them, "Your heavenly Father knows that you need (these things). But (instead), seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." There is a whole other world out there - God's kingdom of mercy and grace - use your time and energy and money first for that, Jesus told them. And righteousness - what is right and good and admirable - the world has its own definition of righteousness. But God's definition of what is right and good - use your time and energy and money first for that. And as you do, trust that your Heavenly Father will take care of you and give you the food and clothes you need. That's how you deal

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with this scary world, Jesus was told the people. Focus first on God, and trust him, and you will be blessed.

Are you guilty of the sin of worrying? Perhaps you can't sleep because you're worrying about money. As a parent, you're worried about your kids - their health, their friends, the things they say, the choices they make. What's going to happen to them? Do you worry? Do you sometimes forget that God in heaven loves you and your children, and that he promises to bless you? "O you of little faith," Jesus says to us.

And when we do worry, we focus our time and energy and money on everything but God. We depend on ourselves, we neglect his Word, we put forth all kinds of effort and never pray, and we waste our lives on worry. God is the last thing on our minds, and everything else is first.

God forgives us for all of this. We have a God who loves us with a love that we can't even begin to understand. Even though we don't seek him first, he seeks us first. Just ponder for a moment the love of God - He seeks us in the waters of baptism, where he gives a second life, a new spiritual life, and there in baptism he brings us into his kingdom. He seeks us in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, where he gives us his real body and blood and tells us that he really forgives us and that we really belong to him. God seeks us in his Word, where he teaches us

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about the cross of his Son. There on that cross didn't seek anything for himself. Instead, he was thinking of you, as he died on that cross for you and took your sins away, and gave you his righteousness.

Of all the things for God to be thinking about - you were first, and that is a miracle that we will never fully understand. He loved you and chose you first before he even made the world. That's why we trust him to take care of our earthly lives. That's why we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and trust that all the other things of life will be given to us as well.

This is why we parents are called to prepare our students for the scary world that they are about to enter. We must encourage our children to seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness. That means time spent in God's Word. The emphasis must be on Jesus Christ! There is nothing in the world more important than knowing that God loves you, and forgives your sins in Jesus Christ. There is nothing that prepares you better for living in our scary world than knowing that.

Someone I've been counselling bumped up against the scary world a couple months ago - he's the same age as me, and has training and a career in computers like I did. He and his wife have a couple toddlers, and they had a baby. And one morning, they woke up, and the

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baby was dead. She died overnight for no reason. It's a scary world out there. And what helped him wasn't his knowledge of computers or his knowledge of math or science or history. What helped him was his faith in God's love and wisdom. What helped him was trusting in Jesus Christ who died and rose for him and for his baby daughter who unexpectedly went to heaven early.

He said that this changed his priorities. "Nothing is more important than for my kids to know Jesus and go to heaven," he said. "I want my kids to go to heaven - that's my number one job as a parent," he said to me. So, what's your number one job? Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things of life will be given to you as well as per God's will and timing. May the confidence in the saving actions of Christ Jesus allow you to live in this world without worry. Amen.