

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

Last Sunday Jesus answered the covetous man with the Parable of the Rich Fool, and He explained at the end, “*So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God*” (Luke 12:21).

But Jesus isn’t done. He uses that question as an opportunity to teach His disciples; and so, He turns to them in our Gospel lesson for today, and He continues His discourse on what this means: “What does it mean to be rich toward God?”

I submit, too often, God’s people “major in the minors.” We complain about annoyances as if they are disasters. Minor inconveniences becomes major catastrophes. We don’t keep the “big picture” in mind—that is, the “God-sized” picture.

To be sure, we live in a fallen world, and sin’s corruption affects our lives. Our “daily bread” needs may not be filled as bountifully as we might want. Food and clothing issues weigh on us. But let us admit it: most of us are not living in “gloom, despair, and agony ... deep dark depression, [or] excessive misery” as the “Hee Haw” jingle went. Certainly, relative to what the disciples and people of Jesus’ day experienced, we are living as royalty. Therefore, Jesus’ exhortation “*not [to] be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on*” surely applies to us in spades. And yet we do worry; we are anxious. And the fact that we have weak flesh and can’t help it is no excuse. It is contrary to Jesus’ express will and command. Repent! And keep the big picture in mind.

For Jesus teaches the disciples in the Gospel lesson, first, that God loves His creation. He takes care of the birds of the air and the lilies in the field; He clothes the grass. And, you ... the pinnacle of the creation ... He loves most. “*Of HOW MUCH MORE value are you than the birds!*” Jesus says. “*If God so clothes the grass ... HOW MUCH MORE will he clothe you.*”

And so He takes care of you, of your daily bread needs, because He loves His creation. To be sure, He wants our prayer, but He supplies these First Article gifts not because of our prayer; rather even without our prayer. He does it as we confess, “out of Fatherly Divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in [us]” (Small Catechism, Explanation to the First Article), because He loves us. And I’m not talking about just for believers. He does it for all people, even all evil people. As Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, “*he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*” (Matt. 5:45).

Second, Jesus teaches His disciples that their worries and fears, every anxious thought, is caused by a sinful lack of faith. Why do we worry and fear? Because

we, like the disciples, are people “*of little faith!*” Because we’ve been told that faith is contrary to “common sense,” like in the Christmas classic “Miracle on 34th Street. Remember? “Faith is believing when common sense tells you not to.”

But no, that’s wrong. Faith is not at odds with common sense, but faith does cling to “*things not seen*” and “*things hoped for.*” As St. Paul also said, “*hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience*” (Rom. 8:24-25). Indeed, says the writer to the Hebrews in chapter 10, we “*hold fast the confession of our hope ... [because] he who promised is faithful*” (Heb. 10:23). Isn’t that common sense? To trust the One who has shown Himself to be faithful? Of course, it is. You trusted your parents, teachers, pastors growing up, not some stranger. You trusted them because they showed themselves to be trustworthy ... faithful. How much more so, then, with God.

And so, the writer to the Hebrews goes on to chronicle Old Testament heroes of the faith: Abel, who by “*faith ... was commended as righteous,*” even though he ended up murdered by his brother; and Enoch, who by “*faith ... was taken up*” into heaven, who “*was commended as having pleased God*” by his faith, for “*without faith it is impossible to please him*”; and Noah, who by “*faith*” did as he was commanded and built an Ark, though it seemed as pure folly. And he was called “*an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith*”; and Abraham, who by “*faith*” went to live in a foreign land, and later with Sarah received the promise of a son, though that, too, seemed like so much foolishness, for they were both as good as dead. Yet, Abraham “*believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*”

May we also be commended for our faith, for we know of God’s faithfulness not only to these saints of old, but also to us. Therefore in the weakness of our sinful anxieties, let us pray as faithful ones, like in this collect: “Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us” (LSB, p. 311). Or let us pray like the father whose son was afflicted with an unclean spirit: “*Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief!*” (Mark 9:24), that our faith may be strengthened, and we, too, by grace, for Christ’s sake, may be accounted righteous before Him.

Third, Jesus reminds His disciples once again of the big picture. The Father is good to give us our daily bread now, for He knows our need, and supplies them; but He is not just interested in this temporal life. He is interested in the things that endure to eternal life, in the kingdom, in the true riches of God. He is interested in

the treasures that are not the things that can be stolen away by a thief or destroyed by a moth. God desires to save you eternally — that is good news, a treasure! It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom—more good news, more treasure! Indeed, the Father sent His own Son to the death of a cross that He might deliver to you the kingdom. As St. Paul says, "*the Father ... has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*" (Col 1:12-14). What a treasure!

And this kingdom treasure we receive through faith. The Father desires our salvation. Christ earned our redemption. Through the Word and Sacraments, that is, the instruments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, "*the heavenly Father give[s] the Holy Spirit*" (Luke 11:13) to work faith in us, a faith that looks to Jesus Christ alone and clings to His cross alone, that the kingdom may indeed be ours.

Jesus concludes this lesson, telling the disciples again not to be worried about the daily bread issues. "*Instead, He said, "seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you."* When Jesus taught this lesson in the Sermon on the Mount, He said it this way: "*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*" (Matt. 6:33).

It's a fitting conclusion. Dear brothers and sisters, let's stop majoring in the minors. Let's major in the majors. Let's keep the big picture in mind. That is, let's seek first God's kingdom, and trust that He, who loves us most, will supply our every other need. He promises it. God grant us the faith to trust His promises; and God grant us as the Church to act as Christ's body in the world effecting these promises: for the sake of Jesus.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.