

August 10, 2025

Ninth Sunday After Pentecost

“The Father’s Good Pleasure”

Hebrews 11:1-16

I myself, and I’m sure most if not all of you, struggle with Jesus’ words today. *“Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.”* I hope we’re on our way out of an inflationary period in our economy where I bet a bunch of us were getting a bit anxious about our grocery budgets and we think rightly so, so we’re a bit bewildered and feeling kind of guilty about what Jesus says.

Maybe we should feel guilty. Were any of us really going to starve? Even if the economy really tanked, the worst that would happen is that we might have to downsize and lose some of our toys and luxuries. In this country we are well taken care materially; we shouldn’t be anxious. And of course, if we don’t feel guilty enough about that, Jesus later calls upon disciples to *“Sell your possessions, and give to the needy.”* We don’t see that happening in our lives.

There really is absolutely no way to sugar-coat this: anxiety about possessions and even the future in general signals a lack of faith. We know this world is broken and this life comes with suffering, hardship, injustice, often want and ultimately death. But in the face of that we have the Christ who speaks these words, who has defeated all our enemies, death included, and has guaranteed perfect life everlasting with Him on the other side. Anxiety signals a lack of trust in that.

But Jesus knows this. “Do not be anxious” is not a commandment; it’s an exhortation toward more trust in His promises. And yes, this faithful trust then naturally results in less anxiousness and a desire to utilize your material blessing to the glory of God in service to needy others. But Christ knows perfect trust, perfect faith, is beyond us. *“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”* is not a command against anxiousness, it’s a revelation of the goodness of God and a call on broken sinners of struggling faith to strive to more fully receive and trust that goodness. It’s a caution against the temptation to place faith in the passing away things of the world and to instead believe in that which endures; the kingdom of God.

Remember, the divine Holy Spirit gives and sustains faith. You were dead in your trespasses. The faith you have this day is God’s workmanship upon you. On your side of things, it is hesitant, weak and stumbling. But on God’s side of the faith equation, it is Christ’s victory fully delivering on the promise of salvation. Have no fear, little flock.

Hebrews 11 is often called “The Heroes of the Faith” chapter. Let’s look at some of these “heroes”. Admittedly, the Bible doesn’t say much about the life of Abel or Enoch. But Noah, we know that after he trusted God, built the ark, endured the great flood, was back homesteading on solid ground and planted a vineyard, he got plastered on wine, somehow literally partying naked. If you don’t know what I’m talking about, check out the end of Genesis 9. The Bible doesn’t give details, but it hardly sounds like perfect faithfulness to the glory of God. Yet his faith is praised.

Abram was called by God, given the covenant promise of the land and great nationhood and that through Him all nations would be blessed. Then the next thing the Bible tells us he does is goes down to Egypt and out of fear of death passes his wife Sarai off as his sister...into the harem of the king there! Sounds like anxiousness to me; hardly steadfast faith in God’s protection. Yet ultimately his faith is praised.

Speaking of Sarah, she laughed at the suggestion of having a child in her old age, then lied to the Angel of the Lord about laughing. Yet her faith also is praised. Do you see a pattern here? Their faith was not great! The God who called them to faith is great! He worked through those broken vessels for their salvation and for His own glory in Christ Jesus!

And what was the outcome of their faith according to the world? *“These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.”* They died! And I bet they were a little anxious as death approached. This earthly life came to an end as it always was going to...but that’s okay, because their faith, flawed and anxious as it may have been, was not in this life but in God; in His promises. And God delivered, despite their anxiety and whatever their faith was lacking.

However, I do think it important to acknowledge the nature of their faith and where it was aimed. A lot of our prayers, and even the prayers of those in the Bible have to do with this earthly life. Nothing wrong with that. Jesus Himself teaches us to pray for our daily bread and deliverance from evil in this life. Praying for blessings and deliverance from earthly afflictions is right, good and proper so to do—praying not to die included.

The author of Hebrews makes clear though that these “heroes of the faith” *“acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.”* This is how we are to pray, and this is how we are to believe. Your wealth, your home, your family, everything you value of this world, is all wearing out and passing away, yet in Christ you are always headed to something better; something perfect. This is how Jesus can exhort us not to be anxious and to be generous with our possessions; none of it is going to last anyway!

It’s kind of a morbid thought to us because we love our life here and possessions too much, but Jesus is somewhat saying, “Don’t be anxious because it’s all going to crash and burn anyway!” But it is not morbid at all because it is the Father’s good pleasure to give us His kingdom, treasure in the heavens that does not fail forever! Trusting in the things of this life is like at the end of the movie after Thelma and Louise drive that convertible off the cliff, on the way down they start making plans for lunch. It’s silly and pointless.

Yet there is much more to it than that. Because of our Father’s grace in Christ, we strive not only to here live in faith, but to live to His glory by reflecting His love. Such living is giving your heart to Christ and this is what receives the treasure in heaven that does not fail. The Holy Spirit through the Gospel has enabled you to do this. Don’t resist Him because of love for the world. Embrace this blessed invitation!

So if you find yourself worrying about the material things of the world, getting anxious about food, clothes, wealth, etc., and then you feel guilty because of what Jesus says here; that’s a good thing. Feeling guilty leads a Christian to right repentance; turning in faith and trust to your Savior and begging His forgiveness. I think in the end, this is a big part of the invitation Jesus speaks here—to realize that your faith does not measure up because you are broken right along with the rest of the world, but in faith to receive the blessed gift of God’s forgiveness and the assurance therein that, unlike the world, His children, of which you are one, do not pass away.

Looking into the face of Christ with the eyes of faith, you see clearly that it has always been the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. So do not be anxious. Here today, in Christ, He does.

Amen.