

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity  
Matthew 6:24-34

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

What is the remedy for sin?

It seems like a simple question, doesn't it? It's certainly not "trying harder." It's certainly not medicine. It's certainly not counseling. So, what is it? I know that you know.

The only remedy for sin is the forgiveness of sins found only in Jesus. The work of Jesus on the cross must come to you in Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Holy Supper.

I'm not a counselor. I don't do clinical counseling. But I still want you to come to me. It's my job to apply the Word of God to your situation, whatever it may be. It's an easy description, but it's so hard to do. Those of you who have raised children know what I mean.

Anxiety is the sin that Jesus identifies in our Gospel reading today. We must do a little work to understand what Jesus is talking about.

Can you imagine a world where there's no banks and no refrigerators?

Can you imagine a world where there's no minimum wage or government assistance?

Can you imagine a world with no sports or tv's?

Can you imagine a world where all your personal possessions would fit into a purse or backpack?

If you can imagine that, then you can have an idea of why people in Jesus's day worried about food and clothing. The worry over food and clothing is really the worry over Mammon, or money. That's why the "therefore" is there in verse 25. Jesus says you cannot serve God and Mammon, and then He 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?" (v 25) Anxiety over money is a worry you can relate to. You can worry about money whether you have a lot or whether you have little. If you have a lot, you worry about what happens to your money. And if you have little money, you worry about how to get more.

Worry and anxiety are really the same thing. You don't just have anxiety over money, but over your personal safety or illness. It's amazing the amount of things we can have anxiety over.

Now there is such a thing as clinical generalized, or even specific, for that matter, anxiety. This is caused by bad brain chemistry. Last week I said that illness is sin manifesting itself out in your flesh. Death is the judgment against sin and it manifests in all manner of illnesses. Clinical anxiety is sin manifesting itself out in your brain chemistry. Medicine, which is a good daily bread gift of God, is helpful, but it doesn't solve the problem.

Medicine can help in the short term, but it doesn't solve the problem.

Physical activity can help in the short term. After all, God created us as physical creatures. He gave us a soul and a body. Our body is meant to move. Physical movement through work and exercise is good for your body. Physical activity helps but isn't the solution.

Good nutrition helps. Again, God created us as physical creatures. Good nutrition fuels the body and allows the body to function well, but, again, good nutrition isn't the solution.

Jesus on the cross is the only solution to sin. This (holding up crucifix) is the only solution to sin. This solution applies to all men and women and children. Jesus paid for every single sin by every single person who has ever lived, who lives now, and who will ever live. It is applied only to the elect. That is, it's applied only to Christians. It is applied to Christians through the means that Christ has instituted. You know what they are: Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Holy Supper. Through faith in Jesus, you receive the mercy He promises in these Sacraments.

Today I would like to focus on Holy Baptism. Baptism is a one time event and a daily event. It is a one time event in the sense that the Word of God combined with water is applied to you only once. Subsequent so-called baptisms which some Christians insist upon are not baptisms. You just get wet. I just finished Gail Picado's book about her father, "No One's Son." It was fun to get to know her father. One of the things I learned is that her father was buried with his baptismal certificate clutched in his hands. What a wonderful picture of how important Holy Baptism is to our eternal life! As Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

But Holy Baptism is also a daily event. As our catechism asks:

What does such baptizing with water indicate?

In other words, what impact does Holy Baptism have on your life.

Our catechism responds:

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

In the daily prayers section of the catechism, it says “In the morning when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say: ‘In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.’” That is, when you get up, make the sign of the cross and remember your baptism. It starts your day focused on God’s mercy *for you*.  
What does this have to do with anxiety?

Where does your anxiety focus your attention?

It focuses you on the false god of Mammon.

When you focus on your true God, Jesus Christ, you know that you are taken care of by God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sanctifier.

“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? 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?” (vv. 26, 28-30)

Jesus identifies the sin of anxiety as a lack of faith.

The only solution for sin is the Word & Sacraments of God. The only solution for lack of faith is the exact same thing. Your faith is strengthened with the Word and Sacraments.

The Word teaches you who God is and what He has done for you. Holy Baptism touches you personally and teaches you that you are God's dear child and that you inherit all His promises. Absolution rings in your ears to teach you that you are indeed forgiven for all your sin. The Lord's Supper gives you your Lord's very own body and blood and teaches you to trust in Him. These all work together to strengthen your faith.

Your faith is in a person, Jesus Christ. Your relationship with Him is just like your earthly relationships. They are filled with highs and lows and joy and sorrow. They can be broken. Jesus, however, never breaks His relationship with you. If it's broken, it's broken because of your sin or indifference.

That's why the Word of God in all its forms and prayer are so important. God speaks to you through His Word and you respond in prayer and hymns. Hymns are really nothing else than sung prayer.

Prayer is not two way communication like we have with people around us. Heathens separate prayer and the Word. Christians keep them together. You pray and God responds in His Word. God teaches us in His Word and you respond in prayer and thanksgiving.

Sources of anxiety will be around you until you leave this world. Jesus says, "in the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Jesus overcame the world with His perfect life and perfect sacrifice for your sin. He gives that victory to you in His Word & Sacraments.

When you get up and when you go to bed, make the sign of the cross and remember your baptism where Christ claims you as His own and gives to you the gift of eternal life. Receive the absolution and the Lord's Supper often. Hear the Word, read the Word, meditate upon the Word, pray the Word daily so that your faith clings to Jesus.

I'll leave you with a prayer that I pray with people who are near death in the Commendation of the Dying. It reminds us of what we strive for and who gives us the victory. I prayed it with Jan Mansell over the phone yesterday.

Dear Christian, go in peace. May God the Father, who created you, may God the Son, who redeemed and saved you with His blood, may God the Holy Spirit, who sanctified you in the water of Holy Baptism, receive you into the company of saints and angels to await the resurrection and live in the light of His glory forevermore. Amen.

In Jesus' name. Amen.