

Scripture Reading: Genesis 42:

“Then [Joseph] returned to [his brothers] again, and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. 25 Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them. 26 So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there. 27 But as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack. 28 So he said to his brothers, “My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!” Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, “What is this that God has done to us?” 29 Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them, saying: 30 “The man who is lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. 31 But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies. 32 We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no more, and the youngest is with our father this day in the land of Canaan.’ 33 Then the man, the lord of the country, said to us, ‘By this I will know that you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, take food for the famine of your households, and be gone. 34 And bring your youngest brother to me; so I shall know that you are not spies, but that you are honest men. I will grant your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’” 35 Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man’s bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. 36 And Jacob their father said to them, “You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me.” 37 Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, “Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.” 38 But [Jacob] said, “My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.””

“Being Anxious for Everything”

So last week we considered the Grace of God, which should be a favorite subject for us all!

This morning will be a bit of a downer because we must now see the results of sin in this family: But we know that God is not finished with them, or us! In the end, we will see that even the wicked actions of these brothers will be worked out for the good of God’s people as the story of God’s plan of salvation continues to unfold. It is also a very appropriate that our break for the Easter season takes place here because we know that the darkest hours for Jesus and His disciples came just before the resurrection and His victory over sin and death.

➤ Now I am sure that you noticed that I used an attention-grabbing sermon title this morning!

And to make sure that we have no confusion I will ask the children right up front if any of them think I am going to teach people to worry?

My sermon title is a careful play on words pointing to an important verse we will end with this morning from the Epistle to the Philippians

4:6 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

➤ I stated the opposite to encourage us focus on this command!

This is a very difficult verse because there are simply far too many things in this world to worry about, right?

How do we learn to apply this truth in our lives? Well, often we learn the proper way to live by looking at bad examples to avoid and that is just what we find in our text this morning:

- **Jacob and his sons are worried about everything!**

Thus, we will be looking at them to learn what NOT to do in our lives! We often learn very important lessons from negative examples. Parents often point out examples of what children should not be doing. Business men often study the failures of others to avoid those same mistakes. Cultures should do the same! This is why a bit of wisdom from the British statesman Edmund Burke has been used and paraphrased so often, "Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it!"

Of course this applies to families and churches as well!

So before we look to our text let me begin with a simple definition: The Open Bible defines anxiety as "a disturbed state of mind produced by real or imaginary fears." I think we can all agree that worrying about imaginary fears is pretty foolish, but what we must wrestle with today is how we deal with real fears! And of course, IF we do not handle them well, it will lead to more & more imaginary fears in our lives as well.

- **Just as it is with a root of bitterness, it can be a very dangerous spiral that takes us to dark places.**

In past weeks we have seen how Joseph has begun to awaken the conscience of his brothers, which is very difficult on him personally as well. The brothers then return and give their father an honest account of the events, something new for them! Then we come to a very sad scene where all the bad habits and sins of the past come together to make this family pretty miserable...

35 "Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid."

- **There is that fear or worry: Is it real or imagined? In this case I think it is a mixture of both as we will see in a moment.**

36 "And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me."

The loss of Joseph was a big blow in the life of Jacob, both because it is always tragic to lose a child, but also because he had favored Rachel and her children. Thus he was not able to move past that event and it now caused an unhealthy attachment to the youngest son Benjamin. Now obviously the sons who sold Joseph into slavery and deceived their own father have carried this guilt for many years and that is why I think we see such a strong overreaction now from Reuben...

37 "Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my hands, & I will bring him back to you."

Telling Jacob that IF anything happens to his beloved Benjamin that he can kill two of his grandchildren does not seem like it would bring much comfort.

- **And I suspect it was so over-the-top that Jacob did not even respond to it directly but rather now shows how clearly he has been anxious for everything!**

38 But [Jacob] said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave."

Thus, we clearly have the negative example that I mentioned: We are to look at these events in Jacob's life and say to ourselves how do I avoid such things in my own?

Well, the best course is to avoid all the sin that leads to such situations, but we all know that to say we are or ever could be free from sin this side of glory would make us liars!

- Simple obedience can keep us out of many such situations, and thus Jacob teaches us about some things to avoid.

So the key question is how do we avoid being anxious when we have gotten ourselves into such messes be they large or small? I could say, just be anxious for nothing, but the Bible has much more to teach us than just that simple, albeit important summary of the topic.

Dr. Greg Bahnsen makes a very important point in his book, *By This Standard* that certainly applies here: When discussing the importance of God's Law Pastor Bahnsen shows how the New Testament often tells us things, like do the will of God or be pleasing to the Spirit or be loving to one another, or in this case be anxious for nothing without a great deal of detail about just what such actions should look like. Of course, just as Pastor Lusk taught us years ago with regard to the Book of Revelation, the details and much of the understanding is found in the Old Testament which the NT writers are assuming that we know well! [discuss the 2/3rds v. 1/3rd]

I will begin in the Old Testament with an important lesson about how we overcome those real & imagined fears by fully putting our trust in God... I am going to highlight a few of the principles we find in Psalm 37 and if you are one who is struggling with any of those real or imagined fears, it would be a good place to spend some time in study and meditation! It is given to us as a Psalm of David and begins with a similar statement that we saw from the Apostle Paul:

37 "Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity."

- Now of course the evildoers and workers of iniquity present very real fears & so David quickly tells us why we need not be anxious even in the face of real fears:

2 "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, & wither as the green herb."

Now since this was penned about 3,000 years ago and evildoers are still among us it is clearly taking the long view...

- And taking the long view is very important when it comes to quieting our fears!

This is obviously a major problem in the life a Jacob at this point, who has forgotten who He was and where God was taking his family because of various events that took place in the here and now.

King David had his moments as well and thus he is inspired to give some very practical advice to keep us on the right track & confident: 3 "Trust in Jehovah, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness."

If we study & meditate on this important Psalm we find that we are to not only 'trust in the Lord,' but to 4 Delight ourselves also in the Lord, 5 Commit our way to the Lord, 7 to Rest in the Lord, and to wait patiently for Him;

- It is very difficult to be afraid of real or imagined things in this world if we are doing what is commanded here!

The Apostle Paul says, 'be anxious for nothing' and King David says: "Do not fret—it only causes harm."

Now of course we quickly want to remind the Apostle that some of the things I am worried about are very important and also remind King David that I am only worrying about things that could do harm to myself or my family!

- But you see, BOTH of these men, writing under that inspiration of the Holy Spirit remind us that we are missing the BIG picture!

Paul clearly points us to prayer and supplication rather than worry and King David goes on in this Psalm to clearly show that the evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth.” And keeping our focus on the Lord and the big picture allows us to declare honestly with King David: 10 “For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. 11 But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

- That is clearly where history is going and these wise men are reminding us that God does not need us to worry about even the smallest details!
- Yes, God uses means and we as the Church are the instrument that the Spirit of God uses to fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus, but our job is to obey, not to worry!

I will commend the rest of this Psalm for you further study and meditation where King David drives home these points over and over again, including verses 18 & 19 where I suspect he had this very account of Jacob we are studying in mind: “Jehovah knows the days of the upright, And their inheritance shall be forever. 19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.”

So we have examples to learn from like our text this morning and a good deal of instruction to be found in the OT: But the New Testament is by no means silent on this important topic and as I did with Grace last week, allow me to close with a quick survey about how to handle our various worries!

First and foremost, we are to trust the Spirit of God as He carries out His work: Mark 13: “9 “But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. 10 And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11 But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.”

- Of course, IF we are to trust him in this way when it comes to the major events like giving speeches or being martyred, what do you think we should do in the little things?

Our trust in the Lord reminds us not to trust in other things and in our materialistic world there is perhaps no greater danger than trusting in riches:

Luke 12:13 “Then one from the crowd said to [Jesus], “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” 14 But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” 15 And He said to them, “Take heed & beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ 18 So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ 20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ 21 “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Truly this man was worried about the wrong things and it cost him dearly in the end...

- Yes, we do find many, many things to worry about and the more things that we have the more we seem to worry, forgetting that all which we have is a gift from God!
- And, we certainly do not have as much control over those gifts as we like to think we do.

In Luke 12, Jesus also stresses this lesson upon His disciples: “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. 23 Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them.

Of how much more value are you than the birds? 25 And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 26 If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? 29 “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. 30 For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. 31 But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. 32 “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.

➤ 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Romans chapter 8 is of course a place that we should often turn to for such comfort which is why we use it so often in our worship.... You can add this to your Romans homework on Grace!

And speaking of Grace, it is the Apostle Peter who clearly links these two subjects together in I Peter: 5:5 “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders.

Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

And this should not surprise us because the more we understand about the Grace of God, the more all of those fears, real or imagined, will fade into the background of our lives!

And that is why the Apostle Paul can state the command so boldly in the passage from Philippians that we began with this morning, and do so right in the midst of some major strife he had heard about in their young church:

4:1 “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. 2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

And so the bottom line is that IF we want to be those who know the peace that surpasses understanding we must be those who rejoice rather than fear...

Those who trust rather than worry!

Communion Meditation: Matthew 11

“25 At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. 26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.””