



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 16th, 2012

Be not anxious for your life.

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
And of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

We all have our fears and worries, our troubles and concerns. And we can, quite literally worry ourselves sick about them. What are we anxious about? What are our anxieties? Simply put, they are our cares, the things that occupy our thoughts. The 1549 Book of Common Prayer uses the phrase “be not careful for your life.” The 1662 Prayer Book has, “take no thought for your life” to express how our thoughts are taken captive and occupied by various concerns. The 1928 American Prayer Book, perhaps influenced by modern psychiatry, adopted “be not anxious.”

Our anxieties are the cares which choke and oppress us, the thoughts which besiege us and

give us great anguish of soul, Angst. The cause of our anxiety is that we are often *too careful*, *too full of cares*, about the wrong things and/or in the wrong way. Jesus would have us see the world and its cares in a new way. What is this new way? Is it simply to repeat “Be not careful,” “Take no thought,” “Be not anxious” as a healing mantra which fills and numbs the troubled mind leaving no room for anxious thoughts. Is Jesus saying, in effect, “Don’t worry. Be happy!” Is the antidote for being “full of cares” simply to be morally and emotionally careless? No.

Yet we do have our cares and worries, our anxieties. Like Martha of Bethany we are

“careful and troubled about many things.”

Stress is our contemporary word for anxiety and points to a shift in understanding. It is not what we are anxious about so much how well we cope with such things. Still, we have many things about which to be troubled and full of care.

The real cure for this stress is a new way of looking at the world: “Behold the fowls of the air.” “Consider the lilies of the field.” We are to see in the birds and the flowers *the care of the heavenly Father for every living thing* and especially his care for us. We are to see in the natural world the Father’s glory as what today’s collect calls, “perpetual mercy” or Divine Providence. This awareness should lead us to “Seek first the Kingdom of God.” The awareness of God’s providence is the answer to our anxieties. It reminds us that God’s care and purpose for us and all creation overrides our immediate concerns and cares. In our anxiousness, we forget that this is God’s world. We find our palace in God’s world and not the other way around.

The world is not simply there for us and our purposes. It is not something for us to exploit. This leads to ultimate meaninglessness.

We are to take delight In God’s creation as we rejoice in his love. We are to contemplate the Father’s glory in the simple beings of God’s individual creatures, including ourselves.

“O ye of little faith,” Jesus says. And faith is the issue. It is all about how we see the world. Do we know that we live in God’s world or do we see God as a construct of our worlds?

“Behold.” “Consider.” and above all “Seek.” These words of Perception and Will, speak about us as spiritual beings who can see God’s purpose in the world, and, ultimately will see the world in God.

Amen.