



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

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Sunday September 28, 2014 - Trinity 15

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

The passage selected for the Sermon is taken from the Epistle:

“O ye of little faith. Be not anxious, saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink, or whither shall we be clothed. For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Isn't it amazing how often the readings appointed for a season coincide with the events of world history. For example, our concern is split between the evil of ISIS with its murderous extension to our own lives and the outrageous murders of innocent young people here and in Virginia. These fears are answered tomorrow in the reading for St. Michael the Archangel, where the cosmic battle between good and evil is waged by angels and won in the person of Jesus Christ for St. Michael's forces. It would be easy to be overwhelmed by this barrage of tragedy, and yet the gospel for today closes with the reminder that “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

The Scriptures also speak to the insecurity of our personal lives. Those of us that are older are afraid we won't have enough for what should be golden years. We are concerned that our children are having difficulty establishing careers in an uncertain economy. We worry about our health, and the health of those we love. We worry about our mortality.

It is important and even honest to acknowledge that we are afraid. The times are frightening. But it is unhealthy, physically, emotionally and spiritually to be ruled by worry and anxiety. In fact, anxiety is a sin, a temptation to paralysis and self concern, when the response of a Christian must be courage, peace, and faith and charity.

The Circumcision marked the people of the Old Testament. St. Paul argues in today's Epistle that Christian's must be marked in a different way. What quality is it that our Lord wants us to project to the world in the face of trouble and worries and fear? How will the love of Jesus Christ be made manifest to the world? How will we be known as instruments of His Glory? The sign is, that in the face of the worst the world can do, we walk in peace, the peace that passes all understanding.

Yes, there are real dangers in the world, but, as St. Matthew reminds us, we should not be not anxious for our lives. To live with anxiety and fear will not add one cubit to our stature, or give us the smallest bit of protection. Our confidence and our

peace come from faith that God's will for us cannot be defeated. And God's will is for our good

Evil can and does attack and overwhelm all the foundations of earthly security. The economy can be shaken. Our jobs, our investments, our pensions, which we depend for safekeeping, can be washed away. And yet, what we need, will be provided if we will put our faith in God. Our "heavenly Father knows that we need all these things, but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

How do we reconcile that promise with uncertainty, illness and evil we see around us. Some of these bad things happen because we bring judgment on ourselves for the evil we do. But sometimes, like Job, the devil seeks to tempt us to despair, to overwhelm us with His power because he fears we are doing well and headed away from him to heaven. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This passage doesn't just refer to martyrs in the first century, it is comfort to everyone who faces the senseless death and violence despite striving mightily to be good Christians. We have to understand, whether we are confronted in these global crises, or face the ultimate questions in the quiet solitude of our golden age, the real terrorists are death and the devil. We face those terrors with faith, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit as we cross the awesome fearful threshold.

Should we be afraid to die? Not if we live each day by grace, filled by the love of God, which overflows us and spills out of us as love for our neighbor. Since the first sin, death has been the victorious crown upon the head of evil, but Our Lord, in a moment on the Cross, made our captivity to death captive to His Father's will. Death was transformed from a destination into the door to eternal life. "Therefore I say to you, be not anxious for your life."

But there is something that frightens us more than our own deaths, the passing of those we love, the fear of separation from those we hold most dear. Yet our God gave His only begotten Son to die for us upon the Cross, to pass through that same fearsome chasm, so separation from each other and from our

God would be forever bridged. Jesus gave us a preview of His promise when He raised Lazarus. He came forth from the tomb and was stripped of death's wrappings to be united with His Savior and his sisters. He came back from His own death to comfort those who love Him and vowed we would inhabit the mansions of heaven that He has prepared for us.

We can be confident, that we will be in the bosoms of our beloved who die in His grace when we get to Heaven ourselves. What greater reason could we have to live a godly life, than the assurance that we will be with those we love the most, forever, re-united in the love of Jesus Christ, our Savior!

The minutes, days, years and decades that we are apart from our beloved may seem unbearable to us on this earthly plane, but when we are re-united, the illusion of this time of loneliness will not even register as measurable against the eternal joy we will share as the Mystical Body of Christ, perfected in our own heavenly Resurrected bodies, and living in the City of God, in the unending Kingdom of His love.

What is it the world should see in the eyes and lives of Christians in the darkest hours? **Faith** in a God who is the author of good, and whose will for us is to share His life. **Hope**, that is not a wish, but the sure knowledge that evil has already been defeated by the Cross and will be swept away in the Second Coming. **Charity**, the love for God that spills over as love for each other, as lives of grace, lives that proclaim the sovereignty of God by the peace with which we face the world.

Peace be upon us, and mercy, and upon the Church of God. From henceforth let no man or demon trouble us, for we bear in our bodies the mark of Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us, there is no need to worry.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen