



**ST. STEPHEN'S
ANGLICAN CHURCH**
11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

**Thanksgiving Day
November 22, 2018**

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

The passage selected for the Sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

“Jesus said, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye should put on..” (St. Matthew 6:25)

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

In this modern and busy world, it becomes more and more difficult to be truly thankful. The holiday that was conceived as a prayerful day of rest from work has become for many just another day of worry. This anxiety that permeates our culture is one of the most insidious and effective inventions of the devil. We are blessed with more of everything than any other nation in any place or at any other time, and yet, we still worry about not having enough.

Our security is tenuous. Many of us are a paycheck away from financial disaster. We worry about how we can afford to care for our parents or our spouse as they age. We even worry about the capability of this system to care for us when we will need help. We worry about the pressure on our children. The media, their peers, and any number of predators threaten them in a way we cannot remember being threatened ourselves when we were their age. We worry that what little we have set aside as our security and protection will be stolen, eroded or

overwhelmed by the invisible forces that rule our lives with terror and injustice.

That author of all lies, the devil, is whispering in our ear that our worry is prudence, that our anxiety is self preservation, and that we have to build our walls of personal protection and security ever thicker and more impenetrable to insulate us from our neighbors. If we don't worry and watch out for ourselves, who will do it for us?

But St. Matthew stands by our shoulder whispers in our other ear that our Lord has issued command against facing the world in fear. “Jesus says, Be not anxious”. After all, “which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?” The Holy Spirit, speaking through the Psalms adds, “we should not put our trust in man.” There is no such thing as works Righteousness and there is no such thing as Worry Righteousness either.

It is clear that anxiety is not the godly response to these real dangers and problems that we face. So, we have to determine what the right response should be. Fortunately, we have been blessed with a handbook that gives us the answers, the Bible. Psalm 50 guides us toward the answer:

“Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows to the most highest,

And call upon me in the time of trouble, so will I hear thee, and thou

Shalt praise me.

It may seem a strange and incongruous response to face the woes of this world with an attitude of

Thanksgiving, but in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us we should be glad when we are reviled and persecuted, for we shall share in the reward of the prophets. By nature, we shrivel in worry for those ills that might befall us, but Jesus did not give in to that temptation. In the contrast to our paralyzing fears about the uncertainty in our lives, Our Lord courageously faced His certain destiny.

Just hours before he would be betrayed, imprisoned, judged unjustly, tortured, and even crucified, and killed, He gathered his family and friends in an upper room and shared a meal with them. He took bread, and then He gave thanks. He blessed the bread, making it His very Body, and shared it, giving it to his disciples, and commanding them to do the same. Similarly, He took wine, and first he gave thanks, then He blessed it, made it his very Blood, and shared it.

St John tells us that He prayed for us at that supper, not only for those Apostles and disciples that were with Him, but for each of us that would come to believe in Him through them. What an incredible promise. What an incredible reality. As we are directed in the prayer book in Morning and Evening Prayer, we should thank our Lord for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life.

“Be not anxious”, but instead let us come to His banquet table, the Eucharistic altar, and give him our anxiety, and our fears, and our worries. But this time, do not take them back with you from the rail. Leave them at the altar in thanksgiving and faith, and do not let the devil torment you with them ever again. He will bless your offering if you leave it, and He will return what you give with His grace.

Those fears you brought to the rail will be returned to you as faith and courage.

“Be not anxious what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink.” He has prepared a heavenly banquet for us and He shares it with us on earth at the altar rail. Eat of his Body, and drink of His Blood, which is given to you to preserve your bodies and souls unto everlasting life.

“Be not anxious what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body”. The merciful and gracious Lord has made a place for us to share in His Resurrection, both in body in soul, so that we can be with Our Lord in His glory. A life of faith and gratitude to God, facing the trouble of the world not in fear, but with love, is the witness that He makes of our lives for the whole world.

“Be not anxious what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye should put on.” Our heavenly Father knows we have need of such things, and He will provide for us. But, He has also given us something more. He has clothed us with the very nature of His beloved Son, so that we can be made perfect, made one in Christ as Christ is one with the Father, so that we can share in the love that Father has for His Son.

America celebrates thanksgiving today. Christianity celebrates Thanksgiving everywhere and every time that the Eucharist is offered up.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is meet and right so to do.

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