

“A Matter of Trust”

I don't know how you felt as you came to St. Andrew's this morning. Sometimes we feel like we're on top of the world and everything is going our way, but then sometimes, we don't come to church feeling that way at all.

Did you come here this morning carrying some kinds of a heavy burden?

- Maybe you're really worried about something.
- Maybe there is a problem in your life that just doesn't seem to go away.
- Maybe you feel guilty because of some sins you may have committed.
- Maybe you're concerned about finances.
- Maybe you're frustrated because you're trying to get something accomplished and you just can't seem to get it done.

Whatever the reason, here we are. And I think St. Paul's words are directed at all of us who carry heavy burdens.

We need to realize that as St. Paul writes these words to the Philippians (and of course to us) he is not sitting isolated in some ivory tower. You see, not all the pieces of his life are in place either. He's in prison and facing trial. He may soon be executed. But in these verses, Paul writes a formula for developing peace within. Let's turn to page 1827 of your Pew Bibles so that we can look at Philippians 4:6. He says, "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God.*" In other words, "Don't worry. Let God handle it."

Someone has observed that worry is the Christian's most popular problem because it is one that we don't even try to disguise. Worry is so common in our lives that we're not even particularly ashamed of it. When we come to church we mouth all the right words, "Crown Him with many crowns. He's Lord of Lords and King of Kings. He is Emanuel. God is with us." But then we leave church and some of us forget that He's even with us at all. We forget He's Lord and King. We take all the burdens that we brought with us and put them right back on our shoulders once again. And then we begin to worry more and more. It becomes a vicious cycle.

In Ephesians 3:16 Paul writes of his prayer, "*that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.*" Paul is saying that even while we're wasting away on the outside, if we are Christians, we're being strengthened and changed on the inside. I have often said, even here in the pulpit, that everyone is welcome here at St. Andrew's – but there are 2 things we must do: first, check your sexuality at the door – don't flaunt it. Secondly, be ready for what God is going to do in your life. He has done some magnificent wonders in each of our lives. And to that we give Him glory. We are all sinners and we are blessed by His transformation.

In Matthew 6, Jesus talks specifically about worry. My father used to call me a "worry wart."

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You see I have what he would call a “poker face” - you can read me like a book! Now I know you’ve heard these words before, but please listen to them one more time. Listen to how complete they are, and listen to them as though you were standing face to face with Jesus and He is looking right into your eyes as He speaks these words. *"Do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?... Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"* Jesus goes on to say: *"And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these."* *"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*

Someone has said that “worry is assuming responsibility that God never intended us to have.” God wants to carry the burdens for us. We just need to turn our worries over to Him. It is a matter of trust! All things are possible with God! 1 Peter 5:7 says *"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."*

Finally, Paul mentions peace with God. How many times have you heard me as I step to the front at the end of our service, before I give the blessing about the PEACE of God which surpasses all understanding? Well Paul speaks of this and adds this a little further down the page in verse 8: *"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."*

Do you remember what the risen Jesus’s first words were when He appeared in the Upper Room to His disciples? *"Peace be with you!"* Shalom! It is a greeting and it is also a “goodbye” like ciao, but it is also invoking a special quality – peace.

Paul is saying, "Here are eight filters. Everything you hear and everything you see needs to pass through them. The 8 filters are:

- whatever is true,
- whatever is noble,
- whatever is right,
- whatever is pure,
- whatever is lovely
- whatever is admirable,
- excellent
- or praiseworthy.

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And if it doesn't make it through these eight filters then it shouldn't be in your mind and in your heart.

There is so much garbage in this world. You know, the old saying "garbage in, garbage out" is true. So think about it. Can the movies you see, and the TV programs you watch, and the music you listen to pass through these eight filters? Paul says, "Put everything through these eight filters. If it's not true, then don't welcome it. If it's not noble or honorable, if it's not right, or pure or lovely or admirable or excellent or praiseworthy, don't let it find a home in your heart. And if you'll just use these "filters" you will most certainly have the peace of God."

Jesus said in John 16:33, "*These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*"

Do you remember the words that Jesus first spoke to His disciples following His resurrection? Remember the shalom? The disciples were in the upper room, and they were fearful for their own lives. Their leader, Jesus, was dead, and their future was very uncertain. They were absolutely terrified! Just then Jesus appeared through locked doors and He spoke to them. Do you remember what He said? Famous author Max Lucado puts it this way: "*The betrayed sought His betrayers. And what did He say to them? Not, 'what a bunch of flops you are.' Not, 'I told you so.' And there was no 'Where were you when I really needed you,' speech.*" "*No, His first words were just one simple phrase, 'Peace be with you.'*" The very thing that they didn't have was the very thing that Jesus offered to them - peace. And Jesus still offers that to us today."

Do you have it? Did you come into God's house this morning with it? Or did you find yourself carrying burdens that were too heavy to carry? And are you going to leave here still carrying those burdens? Or are you going to turn them over to Jesus?

In just a little while will come a very important part of our service called the absolution. We come before God and we give Him our sins. I would ask you at that time to also give Him your burdens; give Him your troubles; let Him take them from you. He does not want your shoulders caved in – He wants you to stand upright - proud that you are a member of His family. Scripture says that to us!

Here are some certainties that I am sure of:

- I know One who died on a cross for your sins.
- And I know One who shed His precious blood so that you can have everlasting life. Not in some mansion tucked away, but resting in His arms, with Him constantly.
- And I know that He is available to you this morning,
- and that He wants you to give Him your troubles and cares - as your Lord and Savior.

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It indeed is a matter of trust – in confessing your faith in Him, and giving yourself and your troubles to. As I walk down the center aisle, as I do every Sunday, immediately following the absolution, reading the “Comfortable Words” after the Absolution – I want you to pay close attention to these words that Jesus spoke: “*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” (Matthew 11:28) Don’t hold on to your troubles – Jesus wants you to be happy as you prepare for this coming Christmas. Don’t let the enemy steal your joy! Joy comes from Christ, pain comes from the other guy! – He wants you to be able to celebrate His birthday freely. It is a matter of trust.