

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Last Sunday After Trinity, November 23, 2025

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 18, 72:1, 457, 518:1-5, 30:1.

Lessons: Proverbs 16:3-9, 1 Peter 3:8-17, Matthew 6:25-34.

Sermon Text: Philippians 4:6.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Right now, in November of 2025, there seems to be a lot of anxiety in the world. Anxiety can be a very personal thing or it can very widespread. If we listen to some people, they are telling us that we have much to be anxious about, to worry about, to be concerned about.

Of course, we could look at any time in history, and even in our own lives, when we could find a lot to be anxious about, to worry about. In one generation it might have been war. In another generation it might have been widespread disease. In another generation it might have been fear of atomic bombs destroying us, in a time called "the cold war." In another generation it might have been how to pay the bills or even how to find enough food. So people could always find something to be anxious about and to worry about. Perhaps you even have some other things you are personally anxious about.

But God says

"DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING"

- 1. Do not worry about anything.**
- 2. Instead, pray.**

As the apostle Paul draws this letter to the Philippians to a close, he emphasizes ***"Do not be anxious about anything."*** God is telling you here do not be anxious about, do not worry, do not have anxiety, do not be concerned about anything. Fear not!

He has just told us ***"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."*** (Philippians 4:4-6, NIV84)

Paul and the believers to whom he wrote knew that the Lord is near – that he is coming soon. For any individual that could be at any moment, if the Lord chooses to take any of us out of this world through death. At the end of the church year and the beginning of a new church year, we are especially reminded of the fact that the day of the Lord – judgement day – is coming soon. It is near. Be ready!

But the Lord is near in several ways. He is as close as a prayer and as close as our Bible. In prayer we can talk to our God at any time. In the Bible God talks to us at any time we read or hear it.

The nearness of Christ's return should also be an encouragement for us. The early Christians were deeply conscious of the fact that each passing day brought them closer to Christ's return. Historians tell us that they frequently greeted each other with the word "maranatha", which is translated "come, Lord Jesus." This is a Greek word which duplicated the Aramaic or Hebrew word meaning "come, Lord."

Almost 2000 years have passed since Paul wrote "the end is near." But by God's way of reckoning, the coming of Christ is still near. God tells us through the Apostle Peter: ***"Do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with***

a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” (2 Peter 3:8–10, NIV84)

For individual believers Christ’s taking them from this life to eternity could come at any time. So could Christ’s return in glory. If we understand that, we shall want to live with the same spirit of rejoicing in which the early believers lived, and not be anxious about anything. God is in control of all things.

Being alert to the Lord’s return will also help believers put into practice the words ***“Do not be anxious about anything.”***

What the apostle Paul discourages here is to worry and be anxious about those things over which we have no control. We human beings are a worrying people. We worry about all sorts of things. We worry about food and clothing and shelter, about what the future will bring, and about many other things. But worry is a sin. It shows a lack of trust in God. Do not be anxious and worried, Paul tells us. In childlike trust, leave everything in the Lord’s loving hands.

The Lord does not forbid us to make plans or to think ahead. He wants us to be guided by Scripture and to use common sense and planning to meet the many challenges and problems he sets before us in life, but in all our working and planning and thinking ahead, we Christians dare never forget that the outcome depends completely on the Lord’s will and on his blessing.

Remember that we should not worry about things because the Lord is near you, watching over you, guarding and keeping you safe.

Now we don’t want to do anything to risk our lives, anything foolish. But you can count on the fact that God is watching over you.

With childlike trust we should commend ourselves and our concerns to the Lord in prayer. The Lord knows our needs without our praying about them, but he lovingly invites and encourages us to bring them all to him in prayer. Into what more capable hands could we place them? And he actually promises that he will be moved by our prayers. It’s our loss if we don’t pray. “Oh what peace we often forfeit, Oh what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer!”

Meanwhile, while we are still on this sinful earth, there will be no lack of trouble, tribulation, sorrow and suffering for the sake of Jesus and his Word. This is to be expected, for Peter writes: ***“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”*** (1 Peter 2:21, NIV84) Jesus also said: ***“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*** (Matthew 16:24, NIV84) Here on this earth, whatever cross the Lord lays upon us as his believing children, we should willingly bear. Whatever suffering or persecution may be involved in bearing witness to the truth of God’s Word and spreading the Gospel, every believer should willingly bear. This is just the way it was for the apostles, as Paul says: ***“For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. We are fools for Christ...”*** (1 Corinthians 4:9–10, NIV84) We should not expect to have it better than Christ or his apostles did, but rather with Paul we should want to take part in ***“the fellowship of sharing in (Christ’s) sufferings.”*** (Philippians 3:10, NIV84) Remember that it is said about all who are finally delivered by Christ on the Last Day: ***“These are they who have come out of the great tribulation...”*** (Revelation 7:14, NIV84)

But throughout it all, God is with us. ***“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”*** Instead of worrying and being anxious we should pray, and pray in every situation – whatever happens. When difficulties: thoughts, actions, troubles come on you: Pray. And just think of all the things you are praying for in the simple prayer we call The Lord’s Prayer!

While we may think first of prayer as asking God for something, we must realize that every prayer should be made with thanksgiving. Paul exhorted Timothy ***“first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”*** (1 Timothy 2:1–4, NIV84)

We are to ***“pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints”*** (Ephesians 6:18, NIV84) as Paul writes to the Ephesians.

Not only are we asking things of God, but we are also thanking him. Thankfulness for past blessings is an essential part of bringing new petitions to God.

Scripture is filled with examples of giving thanks to God. We are told in Ephesians: ***“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (Ephesians 5:19–20, NIV84) And we read in Colossians: ***“whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*** (Colossians 3:17, NIV84)

Our prayers should not only be requests for ourselves. If they are, we are praying selfishly. The prayers of Christians should also include thanksgiving. Paul began every one of his epistles with outpourings of thanksgiving to God and throughout his writings he continually emphasized the importance of giving thanks. One writer said that prayer without thanksgiving is like a bird without wings. It has trouble rising upward.

We aren’t just thankful to God one day a year, as the world has set aside a day of Thanksgiving. We are thankful to God every hour of every day, no matter how difficult this life becomes. ***“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*** (Romans 8:28, NIV84) Who knows what things God will call upon you to do to serve his purposes? No matter how old we might be, God has work for us to do here on earth as long as we have life.

Paul urges the Philippians – and us – to rejoice in the Lord. So don’t be upset about anything, don’t be anxious, but rejoice! This joy doesn’t depend on good circumstances or happy feelings. It comes from the heart that belongs to Christ and is united in his love and purpose.

And especially we have no need to worry about our eternal salvation. Jesus Christ has earned it for us and it is ours by believing it!

The very next words after our text are words which for years have been used at the end of sermons. ***“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*** (Philippians 4:7, NIV84)

We have peace with God knowing our sins are forgiven through the work of Jesus Christ. That is a greater peace than any kind of peace we can find on earth, than any kind of peace men can imagine or offer or come up with.

This is a peace which will guard and protect our lives, keeping our hearts and minds safe because of what Jesus did for us.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Amen.