

Pastor David Aanglada' Message Outline
"Don't Worry" Philippians 4:1-9
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 23
October 11th 2020
Grace Lutheran Church and School
Malverne, New York

1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the Gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.¹

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy Spirit of God shine your light upon this Word and into our hearts that we may be enlightened with fresh understanding. **Amen.**

During 1996 was the best and the worst of times in my life. I had met all the benchmarks assigned to my ministry work portfolio as Assistant to Bishop in the Metropolitan Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

However, shortly after receiving a positive evaluation of my work performance, my mother, Amalia Rexach-Anglada, took ill and was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She died several weeks after her diagnosis. My life was shattered. For the first time in my life, I felt a sense of emptiness and directionless. The energy of my soul was drained.

Several days after my mother's funeral service, I decided to return to work; while working in my office space, Bishop Steven Bowman came by and said, "tell me how you are doing?" After listening to my lament for a good 5 to 10 minutes, he started singing the following song:

"Don't worry about a thing, 'Cause every little thing gonna be alright.
Singing' "Don't worry about a thing, 'Cause every little thing gonna be alright!"
Rise up this morning', Smiled with the risin' sun,
Three little birds Pitch by my doorstep

Singin' sweet songs Of melodies pure and true,
Saying', ("This is my message to you")
Singing' "Don't worry 'bout a thing, 'Cause every little thing gonna be alright."
Singing' "Don't worry (don't worry) 'bout a thing,
'Cause every little thing gonna be alright!"²

The lyrics of this song bears a resemblance to the words of Saint Paul, utilizes as he addresses the Jesus group in Macedonia. Not to worry about a thing because everything in life will turn out to be alright at the end of the day. "Do not worry about anything."

The words do not worry about anything sounds simple, not too challenging; however, this may be the most difficult words to live by and keep. While St. Paul effortlessly writes these words, it had to be difficult for him.

Let us remember that he is under house arrest on death row. He is indeed a "dead man walking." He is scheduled to be executed for preaching a Gospel of liberation that sets captive free.

His body has been physically abused-he had been beaten. He has been stoned almost to the point of death. He has been a shipwreck. He has been accused of preaching the Gospel for self-gain. He has been falsely accused of being a traitor against his Jewish community.

Now he will be a martyr for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, his words to his beloved community are simple: "Rejoice." And just in case they misread his letter, he reaffirms his words, "again, I say, rejoice."

He finds a way during chaos in the world to rejoice in the Lord. Earlier in this letter, Paul says it clearly, I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the Spirit of Jesus Christ's help will result in my deliverance. Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. **"For me to live is Christ, Jesus and dying is gain."**

When Paul pen's this letter to the church, they were facing many challenges: internal conflict, persecution, families are being torn apart, and fear is reigning in the hearts of the believers; and Paul's words to them, while he is facing death, is a simple one: Don't' worry about a things. I would like to add a word or two to St. Paul's words: **Do not worry about a thing we are in good hands.**

Please, note that Paul does not say to the church in Philippi to rejoice in your family, friends, your employment, or the church. **He says, "rejoice in the Lord," and "don't worry!"**

Dear saints of God, I know we are living with many challenges today. We do not know how the future will turn out to be.

We are living with a deadly virus, that has killed 216,536 as of this past Friday, in the United States.

This virus is a matter of life and death.

I am aware that life has become difficult for all of us. I understand that life has changed. I recognize that many are worried about what will happen to our loved ones and frankly to us. Many find themselves trapped in their homes. Our sisters and brothers in Christ are afraid of leaving their residence for fear being contaminated with this deadly virus.

I hear the voices of children, teenagers, and seniors who pose the following question: why is this happening to us?

In the ancient world, significant disasters like; earthquakes, volcanos, fires, plus plagues were associated with an angry god. Many in the ancient echoed the following words: "when something bad happens to you, someone has it in for you or us." In Greece and Rome's old pagan world, the assumption was that you had not offered the right sacrifices to the gods.

Or you had not said the right prayers. Some also argued that you did something wrong or genuinely dreadful, which has caused bad things upon you or the land citizens.

Many also articulated the belief that everything is programmed to turn out the way it does. "You cannot change what happens in the world; learn to fit in, along with getting over it."

Many individuals would state "that random events that occurs in the world; human beings cannot overcome them. All we can do is, make yourself as comfortable as you can and enjoy the ride."

Still, many implied that this present life is just a shadow of reality. Bad things happen here, but we are destined for a different world. Nevertheless, we have a modern equivalent today!

Some want to tough it out and declare "If the bullet has your name on, it is, what it is." Some would say, "stuff happens, but we want to scramble for comfort, so settle down, self-isolated; this too will pass.

Some Christians-opt for saying "death is not the worst that can happen. We are heading somewhere else anyway." Nevertheless, this approach ignores the plight of hurting people in our world.

So, the question for us is what we can do when life has become so complicated and challenging. When we are confronted with a rapid spread of the coronavirus or COVID-19, it causes us to have a knee-jerk reaction causing our hearts to faint.

One of my observations is that when people are going through a difficult time, they start blaming others for their problem; in this case, we blame everyone for the present virus we are facing. We get

into the blaming game.

Other embrace Christian conspiracy theories, pastors and church leader begin to pontificate that they know by divine revelation what is wrong with the world and that God is trying to say through it all. Moreover, they say that this is the sign of the end. For other Christians, this is an opportunity to say, "this is a moment, or an opportunity God is sending to us; to repent. Its heaven or hell!

And others preach that when bad things happen to us and the world, it must be God and that God is finished with humanity.

I am aware that it is easy to say stop worrying so much, let go and start living. My good friends to forget, our present situation is not an adequate response or a direction we should head too. We live in a real-world it is not a pseudo world. Life does have its challenges and difficulties. I am confident in the Good News of a loving Jesus Christ.

I rather live in the confidence of Jesus Christ than to hear negative bad news from religious fanatics who have not embraced God's eternal love, grace, and accompaniment.

I am so amazed at how little worried Paul was during his life's journey. He was not anxious, nor did he become an uneasy presence with the words he penned in his letters to the gathered saints of God in Philippi.

Today, I would like to suggest that we embrace the words St. Paul, "**Don't Worry About Anything**" amid a world with a global pandemic. God with us, God is for us, God stands in solidarity with us. When life becomes complicated, confusing, and makes no sense to you.

When you cannot see the light at the end of a dark tunnel, remember, do not worry about a thing because everything is going to be alright. We are in good hands. We are in the hands of God. God loves you; God is for you; God wants the best for you. Amen.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Called apart to serve God alone, we are ready to focus on what is good and true. We are ready to serve God and God's world. We are ready to love, as we have been loved. We are blessed indeed!

¹ New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America

² Three Little Birds, Bob Marley, and the Wailers in 1976