

## Luke 12:22-34

Backseat drivers are, simply put, annoying. They do not have the same perspective as the person in the driver's seat. And what's more, they are not in control of the vehicle. They act like they are. "Watch out for that car!" "There's a stop sign up ahead." "You're too close to the yellow line!" Backseat drivers believe that without their constant supervision they would all eventually end up in a wreck. But a good driver knows that the annoying backseat driver can actually lead to a wreck.

When it comes to God, we're backseat drivers. We do not have our hands on the controls of our life, but we like to think that we do. Our perspective from the backseat is very limited. God, in the driver's seat, sees all and knows all. And yet we tell Him on a regular basis that He's doing it all wrong. He's all over the road with our life! He's going to wreck our life for sure! As backseat drivers we are always second-guessing what God is doing. "Why did you let this illness come?" "Why did you let him lose his job?" "I think you made a wrong turn back there...this problem in my life is not going away."

In our text for today, Jesus plainly says that God is in control, that He knows what He's doing, and that we need to stop our anxious chatter and sit back and enjoy the ride. It's what the plants and animals do. If you buy a plant in the store and put it in the backseat, it's not going to be anxious about your driving all the way home. Nor will a pet when you take it to the vet. It may not like being in a moving vehicle, but it won't tell you how to drive. "*Consider the ravens,*" says Jesus, and "*Consider the lilies.*" God created them and He provides for them. And they do not get all worked up worrying that God may not be in control. And if God takes care of them, will He not take care of us?

When we brought our first baby home from the hospital, I recall driving with extra care. I did not drive wildly when all I had were boxes, groceries, or plants in the car. But when my own child was in the backseat, I was more cautious than ever. That's how God is with us. You are His dear children. "Look at the birds," says Jesus, "Look at the flowers." The way God provides for them should give us great comfort, for you are of much more value than they.

And yet we worry. Hardly a day goes by that we're not worrying about something...government, the weather, finances, our health, our family. We're in the backseat fretting over what may, or may not, be up ahead in the road, and we forget that God is in the driver's seat. He's in control, and He loves us. He will steer our life in the best direction even when it doesn't seem that way to us.

Today's text is all about the First Commandment. If God is truly our God, then we have no business worrying about anything. Worry does not flow from faith; it flows from unbelief. When I'm in the backseat worrying, it shows that either I do not trust the driver's abilities, or I do not believe that the driver has my best interest at heart.

Hebrews 11, which is our Epistle for today, was written for us Christians who are stuck in the backseat. The chapter is full of men and women of faith who, although it looked as if their lives were careening out of control, trusted God completely, and they were rewarded for their faith. They did not have fewer problems than we have. They dealt with troubles that we would call severe. They trusted God's promises even when every fiber of their being told them not to. They lived by faith not because they were without sin, but because they were seeking the kingdom of God and not the things of this world--the very thing Jesus calls us to do.

I am not speaking today to Christians who have given up. Otherwise you would not be here. I preach to Christians who struggle, just as I do. We struggle with what we seek. Our new man, created within us in Holy Baptism, seeks God's kingdom, but our weak and sinful flesh seeks the things of this world. Sitting in the backseat, our flesh tells us that we do not have room in our day for the Word of God, for devotions, meditation, and prayer. But the new man in us desires to be in the Word day after day.

Our flesh, weak as it is, does not trust God in the driver's seat. It tells us that we are the ones who have to look out for our own interests because God won't--so go out and work a job that prevents you from coming to church. But the new man in us trusts God in the driver's seat and knows that He will provide for all our needs, and therefore seeks His Word and Sacraments first believing, as Jesus says, that "*all these things will be added unto you.*" As Christians, we struggle because we're in the backseat and not in the driver's seat. So Jesus calls us to live by faith. "*Seek His kingdom first,*" He invites us. God will provide.

Now there is a great temptation for us in this text. We are tempted by the devil to think that if we seek God's kingdom first, then it is ours because we seek it. But Jesus sets us straight. "*Seek not the things of this world,*" He says, "*But seek His kingdom.*" Nonetheless, the kingdom is yours not because you seek it, but because God gives it to you. "*Fear not, little flock,*" He says, "*For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*"

All of God's richest blessings are yours not because you seek Him first, but because He freely gives you all things by His good pleasure. Our little daughter did not earn a safe ride home from the hospital in the backseat because she sought to be a good and obedient baby. She was given a safe ride home because she was our daughter. Each one of you is a precious child of the Heavenly Father. He does not wait to give you the kingdom after you have proved your worth, after you have shown Him that you seek Him first. He gives you the kingdom now through Water and Word, through Bread and Wine, through His promises coming into your ears.

As a member of His kingdom, He assures you through the words of the Gospel, that your sins are forgiven. He does not hold out forgiveness to you on condition that you seek it. He forgives you now because His Son sought the cross for you. Jesus did not seek the things of the world. Satan offered them to Him, but your Lord was seeking only you. He was seeking to suffer all that your sins have deserved. He was seeking to die your death. He was seeking to endure the punishment of hell in your place. And nothing could prevent Him. He accomplished what He set out to do. And so you, friend, are forgiven. And your Father, for Jesus' sake, gives you the kingdom.

Now don't think that Jesus is done seeking you. He knows how we struggle in the backseat of life. He knows our weaknesses. He knows how easily we seek the things of the world over the kingdom of the Father. So when you seek the kingdom by opening the pages of God's Word, it's Jesus seeking you through that very Word. When you listen to the words of the sermon, Jesus is seeking you. When you come up to Holy Communion weighed down with the burden of your sin, Jesus is here removing your burden because He is the one seeking you.

You are like a child, God's precious child, in the backseat. God will take care of you. He will steer your life in the best direction. There's no need to worry. There's no need to seek the world first. Seek His kingdom. Seek His Word and Sacraments. Seek His mercy, and Christ, and forgiveness. All these things are already yours. Your Father gives them to you because of Jesus. Amen.