

Dear Friends in Christ, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen!

Whether you know it or not you are one of the luckiest people to ever live. Oh I know it doesn't always feel like it but in so many ways this is the best time in the history of the world to be alive. Think about it this way. We're living longer than ever before. Despite what we see on TV we are safer than ever despite terrorism, famine and ebola. Throughout much of human history 15% of the people who died each year either died in war or were murdered. Now only 6-8 per 100,000 worldwide die of violence.

We're eating better than ever. The poor are less poor, though the numbers are still too high--global inequality is going down. We're running things better too. In 1900 there were only 11 democracies in the world now there are 90 and it's growing. In this country specifically, think of things like medication, antibiotics, transportation, the access technology gives you to information. In so many ways it is the most incredible time in human history to be alive.

So if that's the case and it is when you take the 30,000 foot view then why since 1990 have prescriptions for anxiety and depression increased 400%? Why are record numbers of incoming college freshman reporting all-time lows in mental health? Why are so many people just feeling "unsettled" about their lives even when they're not clinically depressed or anxious and don't need medication? According to researchers the United States is the most anxious nation in the world—Yeah we're number one, we're number one!!!

Christians aren't exempt from being anxious about things. We are taught that with Jesus there is peace right "The peace that passes all human understanding", we're taught not to worry and as it says in our Scripture for today **"Be anxious about nothing"**. And yet when we don't

have peace and when we're anxious we question what's wrong with us and it's easy to think, well the Bible doesn't really know what it's talking about or maybe it does but something is wrong with me. Well over the next few weeks we're going to be taking a look at Scripture and see what they might have to teach us and we'll be us an acronym from Max Lucado's book "Anxious for Nothing: finding calm in a chaotic world". I want to invite you to go out and get the book you can get it of course from Amazon.

If you find yourself needing some calm in your life at times I'm going to invite you to make calm your personal acronym. **C** is for celebrate—**A** is for ask---**L** is for leave--- and **M** is for meditate C.A.L.M. We'll focus on one of those letters each of the next four weeks.

Philippians 4:4 **"Rejoice in The Lord always and again I will say, rejoice!"** Easy for Paul to say right, I mean after all he IS the Apostle Paul. But he knew what it meant to be anxious: time in jail, 39 lashes five different times and beaten with rods 3 times. He was once left for dead, imprisoned, deserted by friends and coworkers and he endured shipwrecks, storms and starvation and still his letter to the Ephesians bears not one word of fear or complaint. Instead he Celebrates and lifts his thanks to God and wants us to do the same. **"Rejoice in the Lord Always"** and as he said in Ephesians **"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with Thanksgiving..."** WOW!

Here's the deal with these verses and the C in CALM for celebrate. It's not about a feeling. It's not "rejoice when you feel like it", or "rejoice when things are going well for you". This is about a call to a way of life, a call to a core value. This is a call to stabilize your life with a sturdy belief system that begins with there is a God, that God is somehow in control even though we might not feel it and that God is good. It's like a tent. It is supported by the poles in

the same way whether you recognize it or not your life is supported by your belief system. That's why it's so important to know what you really believe. To know what your true core values are.

Lucado in the book has a section about how psychologists studied the impact of combat on soldiers during WW2. Obviously it's a complicated subject and we've learned a lot about PTSD since WW2. But in a nutshell they learned that actual or perceived control over a situation creates calm and a lack of actual or perceived control gives birth to fear.

That's why sometimes the most stressed out people are the control freaks and yet the control or perceived control is often an imposter. You can accumulate lots of money and still lose it in a recession. You can be a vegetarian or vegan and still get cancer. You could move to a cabin in the Montana wilderness and still have insomnia. The world is an uncertain place. Control of the world is not ours to take.

God's Word has a better idea. You can't run the world. Each of us can and should and get to do our part to make the world a better place. And we can rejoice in the Lord because we can entrust the world and our life to God who is sovereign. See what you believe really does matter. Even with all that Paul went through he still believed and trusted in the steady hand of God--**Do you?**

It's about recognizing and trusting in the sovereignty of God in an uncertain world and especially when our life becomes uncertain. It's about stabilizing our soul with the goodness of God because at some point the job might be gone, someone you love will die, your health will diminish, the economy will take a nosedive and then to what will you turn—anxiousness, fear and worry or the sovereignty and goodness of God?

Oh but Pastor don't be so negative about all of the stuff we face, let's focus on the positive. Well let me just say that for an awful lot of people living in the best time in the history of the world to live, more self-help books than ever, life coaches, yoga, exercise, diets, incredible technology--for most people it's not working. And if it is---it doesn't work for long as we move onto the next thing to help us deal with worry and being anxious. None of those are inherently bad, it's just that they aren't a long-term solution. We ask them to do something they can't do. We've created all of these ways to deal with the pressure of living and frankly their not working so well.

And this isn't just for the person who deals with chronic anxiety for whom medication is an important thing, it's for all of us because we all face times when the pressure of life and the stuff of real life that's not Positive and can't be overcome with PMA (Positive mental Attitude). That's why understanding, trusting and celebrating the sovereignty of God is so important and such an important part of a healthy belief system.

I love the story Lucado tells to try to put things in perspective. Imagine you're 13 years old and your mom is a well-respected orthopaedic surgeon. People come from all over so your mother can exchange their bad hips, knees and shoulders for good ones. At thirteen years old it's a little hard for you to comprehend right because you're---well thirteen. But at thirteen you're fully capable of falling down the stairs and spraining your ankle.

You've got your first school dance coming up and there's no time to be wearing a boot or using crutches. Into the room walks your mom, she takes off your shoes and you groan at the tennis ball sized lump. Adolescent anxiety kicks in. "I'll never walk again", "No one can help me", "No one knows what to do". And your mom says "Do you know what I do?"

Actually you don't you just know she goes to work each day and helps people. And that people call her doctor. She says "It's time that you learn". You hope in the car together and go to her office at the hospital. Where you find a bunch of diplomas on the wall, a bunch of awards with words like distinguished and honorable. You then get to go see a knee replacement surgery and during the surgery one of the surgical nurses leans over and says "You know your mom is the best at this don't you".

As you head home you see her in a different light. You come to understand that if she can do orthopedic surgery she can treat a sprained ankle so you ask "You think I'll be okay for the dance?" She says "Yes you'll be fine". This time you believe her. Your anxiety decreases as your understanding of your mother increases.

We get anxious and we worry, sometimes with good reason and sometimes for no reason at all. It doesn't all just magically disappear, that's why Jesus says in John 14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me." He doesn't say "don't worry your heart will never be troubled or anxious, you'll never have any worries". He reminds us that when the anxiousness and worry come---to trust in God and him. And the way we do that is by celebrating--that's the C of our acronym for the series C.A.L.M. We celebrate that God is sovereign that God is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And when the worry and anxiousness comes, we continually remind ourselves of that until we put God first.

Let us pray...

