

Some of us have come into worship today feeling some excitement and anxiety. Earlier in worship we offered our blessings upon two young women who are heading off to college. I remember when I headed off to college. For me it was a mixture of excitement and anxiety. If they are both honest with themselves I would guess that they feel a mixture of excitement and anxiety as well.

Some of us are about to begin a new school year. We have some teachers and school administrators here today. Some of these teachers are beginning in new schools and new grades. All of these teachers are beginning with a new set of students. The new school year is a time of great excitement and anxiety.

We have students here today who may be ignoring the reality that a new school year is fast approaching. Like their teachers they are approaching this new school year with excitement and anxiety.

Others of us may be facing new jobs or changes in our living situation and we find ourselves facing a mixture of excitement or maybe dread combined with anxiety. If you have come into worship today feeling some anxiety then you may hear some words from this text that we are about to read which speaks to your situation.

The text we are about to read is slightly different from what is printed in the bulletin.

### **Read Luke 12:22-34**

Jesus says, "Do not worry about your life." Let me tell you a story about a group of 8 friends when they literally feared for their life and how they handled it. These 8 friends lived in Washington, DC and they came together at a townhome to celebrate a new job that one of them was starting.

These 8 friends were sitting around a table out back drinking wine and enjoying the warm summer night. It was about 10:00 at night. Michael was there with his wife and 14 year old daughter. It had been a very fun evening of celebration and laughter. But then between him and his wife and child appeared the long barrel of a handgun.

The gun was attached to a hand of a man who then raised the gun first toward the man's friend and then toward his wife. The man then nervously yelled to the 8 friends, "give me your f---ing money. Give me your f---ing money or I am going to f---ing shoot you all."

The 8 friends looked at each other's faces and realized there was a problem with this man's demands. None of the 8 had any money on them. You can just imagine the sheer terror that they must have been feeling at this time. So one of the 8 people decided that they would try to talk to the man. "What would your mother think?" one of the friends asked, trying to play the mother card. "I don't have a mother. Now give me your f---ing money."

The situation became more and more tense. Obviously these 8 friends feared for their lives. With their life hanging in the balance this was clearly the most anxious of times.

Then one of the friends said something which changed the entire evening. She asked the man, "Why don't you have a glass of wine with us?" The man's face changed. And amazingly the man said, "OK. I think I will." One of the friends got a glass and filled it with the wine. The man sipped on the wine and then he shared, "this is good wine." "Have more," the friends offered. And he did.

Because nothing makes better sense than to give a man with a loaded gun a few glasses of alcohol. "Have some cheese," they then shared. He ate some cheese. Then the man said, "I think I've come to the wrong place." He put away his gun and then he asked this group of 8 friends a question. "Can I get a hug?" One of the 8 friends gave him a hug. And then the man asked, "Can we have a group hug?" The 8 friends then surrounded the man and gave him a group hug.

The man then shared that it was time for him to leave and asked them if it would be OK for him to take the glass of wine with him. They, of course, said, "Yes." The man departed and the friends remained for what seemed like hours but was not nearly that long. As they left through the gate into the street they all saw it. There beside the sidewalk was a neatly placed and empty wine glass.

Scientists who study human behavior describe this as "non-complimentarily behavior." Complimentarily behavior is when people mirror one another in their behavior. If one person is anxious then the other person reflects anxiety. If one person is calm the other person reflects calm.

Non-complementary behavior is when one person acts in such a way to shake up the interaction. In this situation when the robber was anxious the people at the party exhibited non-anxious behavior. And by being non-anxious in the midst of all of this anxiety then the situation was changed.

We know that not every robber with a gun is going to act like this man. Dylann Roof was in the news this week. Dylann Roof is the young man who went to the Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston last year and sat through a Bible study with people who showed him tremendous hospitality and non-anxiety. After sitting through the study he pulled out his gun and shot the 9 people dead. But even in this situation the family members responded with grace rooted in their lack of anxiety about the future.

Jesus says in our reading today to not be anxious. Don't worry about what you will eat. Don't worry about what you will wear. God will take care of you. So what are you anxious about?

Have events happened that are making you anxious about tomorrow? Are you anxious about having enough money to live your lifestyle? Are you anxious about school? Are you anxious about your family? Are you anxious about your marriage? Are you anxious about other relationships? Remember these words from Jesus when he says, "Do not be anxious about your life."

I recently read words from a consultant who works with businesses and churches and he begins by asking people, “What would you do, dare to do, or attempt to do if it did not matter if you failed?” (repeat)

After our reading today Jesus tells his hearers that they need to be ready for the future. But he doesn't tell them to be anxious about the future. Instead, he tells them to trust that God has the future covered.

Jesus also tells them this.

### **Read Luke 12:32-35**

I have discovered that when I head into the future feeling alone that I tend to be anxious. But when I feel surrounded by the love and care and support of a community then that anxiety is much less or non-existent. My prayer for this community of faith is that we surround one another with care and support and encouragement.

That we encourage one another to take some risks in life and trust God. To not look for the excuses but to instead look for the possibilities.

Jesus says to not be anxious. I pray that we hear these words being spoken to us.

Jesus says, “Do not be anxious about your life.” AMEN.

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-Spiegel, Alix, "She Offered the Robber a Glass of Wine and that Flipped the Script,  
<http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/07/15/485843453/it-was-a-mellow-summer-dinner-party-then-the-gunman-appeared>

-Lose, David, <http://www.davidlose.net/2016/08/pentecost-12-c-what-would-you-do/>