13th Sunday after Trinity
Series on Anxiety
Bessemer - 1959
W. Henrietta - 1960
Rolling Meadows - 1962

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

Romans 8: 31,32 If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

ECONOMIC ANXIETY

Millions of Americans are constantly harassed by economic strain. This is true of those who have a sizable income as well as those whose income is very meager. Advertizers in our day have done their work so well and have employed psychology so skillfully that people are almost ashamed to admit that they don't possess the latest gadget, the latest convenience, the latest luxury. As a result, we are constantly overextending ourselves, pledging ourselves to the hilt with future payments. Then, along comes unemployment, a sudden illness, an unexpected reverse - and we find ourselves standing on the brink of a financial precipice, and we know what it is to experience economic anxiety. Somehow we imagine that the more we have and possess, the happier we will be. We feel that finally when by much sweat and struggle we have climbed the ladder of material success, we will then have real security. Security - blessed word! Always it seems just around the corner - with the next investment, the next raise in salary, the next insurance policy, the next benefit in the pension system. Security - that is what we all want! That is what we work our hearts out for! But it always seems to elude us. When will we learn that true security is not a matter of material possessions, but of the heart and spirit? When will we really learn that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesses? When will we learn the divine truth that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?

St Paul was living at a time when material civilization had made great progress. Greek culture combined with the administrative and building genius of the Romans had made tremendous strides in making life easier and more comfortable. Yet life was anything but secure. Civilization was tottering and crumbling, as ours is. In spite of it Paul had found true security, but not in material things. All about him he saw trials and tribulations, famine and want, peril and persecution, but he was forever talking about joy and peace - not as something to be

hoped for, but as something that he had in abundance already. Writing to the Roman Christians in the uneasy capital of the world, we waved before them the banner of his own unshaken security. On it were these words: If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Modern man has many special blessings and privileges, but he seems to be unable to get away from a restless, feverish, anxious, insecure way of living. International unrest, industrial discontent, business competition, social ambition, seem to sweep almost everyone of us into its turbulent stream, until the dream of security has all the earmarks of a nightmare. What makes the rushing and scrambling of the modern world for security so pathetic is the fact that it seems to be to no end or purpose. We are tremendously busy, but what worthwhile result comes of it? We scramble for things that soon lose their fascination and then turn to scrambling for others that are just as transitory. We slave to get more money so that we can use it to get still more money. But where does it all lead? The rich man is just as anxious about losing his money and investing it properly as the poor man is in knowing where his next meal is coming from. It is said that Huxley was once on his way to a meeting of the British Association in Dublin but arrived late at the station. Hurriedly he jumped into a carriage and ordered the coachman: Drive fast! Away went the cab, jolting over the streets. At length Huxley enquired of the driver: Do you know where you are going? He answered with a grin: No, I don't know where we are going, but I'm driving very fast. That's a pretty good picture of modern man. He's living fast - no doubt about that - but he gives you a strange blank look when you ask him where he is going.

Just where are we going? The daily headlines continue to sweep away modern man's material securities and he continues to search, not too confidently, for something to which he can anchor his life to give it new meaning. He has begun to search quite earnestly also in the realm of religion. Here and there he has found security and has learned to sing with the psalmist: My heart is fixed, O God,

my heart is fixed. But for the most part his search has been half-hearted. He is unwilling to let go altogether of his gods of money, power, popularity, and fun. With only half an ear does he listen to Christ's directive: Put God first, give Him priority. He may nod his assent to the words of Christ, Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you, but all the while he knows that such total submission to God is out of the question. He must look out for himself first. God must take what is left over. And in so doing he loses the very thing for which he is striving - security.

The late actor Eugene Pallette was often called a worry-wart. He was obsessed with the fear that the world would soon blow up. This was before the time of atomic and hydrogen bombs, satellites and guided missiles. Today he would have much company. He sought security in a 3500 acre tract of land deep in a canyon in northeast Oregon. Sixty miles from the nearest paved road he built himself a fortress. He stocked it with food and weapons and equipment. It is said that eventually he had two tons of canned goods stored away and a cold-storage plant that held more meat than the coolers in most butcher shops. Then he died. What good did his fortress do him? Christ told a story about a man like that. When he had finally built his barns to huge proportions and filled them to overflowing, he was ready to enjoy his security. Then his name appeared in the news report, but not as the man who had finally found security. It was in the obituary. Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall these things be? There is no lasting security in anything the world has to offer.

Someone has said that our society is full of people who have never grown up. Reluctantly letting go of their mother's apron string, for she offered some security in childhood, they have now desperately grasped the coat-tails of Uncle Sam. But there is no absolute security there either. No combination of nations, no government, no race, no union, no class, no organization can in itself offer you real and lasting security or relieve you from economic anxiety.

Boynton Merrill tells about a college girl, greatly troubled, who came to

him in her anxiety. For some months he counseled with her without too much success. But one day she sent him a letter that showed his work had not been in vain. She wrote: I see now that God does not save me on the outside. It is this way: when you are safe on the inside, you are safe on every side. She was on the threshhold of the only security that cannot be shaken. That brings us back to the confidence of Paul: If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

The greatest, most thrilling, most comforting fact in all the world is the fact that God loves you. He loves YOU! He says so many times in the Bible. God proved His love for you. His own Son, for Him the most precious possession, He did not spare, but gave Him up on Calvary's Cross - for you. God did not want you to scramble through a world of uncertainty and insecurity, without a lasting purpose and permanent goal. Such love neither you nor anyone else deserved. But God's love is genuine. It did not ask, Do they deserve it? It knew that we needed the sacrifice of Christ Himself before we could again be loving children of God. Christ Himself stated it best when He said: God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

What more can a man ask for? If God is for us, who is against us? If God's love for us is so great, can't we depend on it that He will also give us all things with Him, all the things we really need to live triumphantly here and gloriously forever hereafter? It may be that we will experience great tribulation for our own eternal well-being - that we remain humble and dependant on God - dependant on Christ our Savior - hunger, famine, persecution, economic need. But one thing is for sure - God loves us. He loves us so much that He did not spare His Son! And we can be certain that He will give us all things that we need for time and eternity. Christ lived securely during His turbulent years. He did not shrink from earthly danger and hardship. He gloried in it; He took command of it;

He marched through it with a high and lofty joy.

What lies ahead of us in this restless world no man knows. But this I do know, if we go through the unknown days with the banner of our faith in Christ held high and making full use of His help in solving our problems, we will know exactly what Isaiah meant when he said: Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose heart is stayed on Thee. It is my sincere prayer - as your Pastor - that Christ will keep His living arms about you now and forever.

Amen.