

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Anxiety ~ it's something that we all struggle with from time to time. The root of anxiety means "to cause pain by squeezing, to constrict." When we are anxious different things happen to us. We may not sleep, our muscles in our shoulders and our backs tense up, and we may not be able to breath as easily during times of transition and change.

Anxiety makes it difficult for us to imagine the future. When we worry, we may even try to find solutions to problems that we can't control.

In today's gospel lesson, the disciples, specifically Peter, James, John, and Andrew were a little anxious. Jesus tells of the destruction of the temple ~ the center of religious life.

The disciples couldn't imagine a life without the temple. They were nervous and worried. They asked Jesus when this would be, and what would be the sign?

The disciples were worried about the when and a sign of the destruction of the temple.

They wanted to have some sort of control over the situation that Jesus was speaking about.

Jesus' response to Peter, James, John, and Andrew probably wasn't the one that they were looking for. He answers their questions by telling them to be careful because many will come in his name and lead them astray. And then he talks about wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, and kingdom against kingdom. I don't know how the disciples felt, I can only imagine. If I was the one asking these questions of Jesus, I don't

think that my anxiety would've been helped, especially when Jesus ends his statement with "This is but the beginning of the birth pangs."

Great anxiety among the disciples occurred when hearing about the future. Already in Jesus' day, there were false prophets claiming the end of the world had arrived, just as we have some today that claim the end is near and use this text from Mark to support their argument. This text from Mark is also known as the little apocalypse.

During this conversation with Jesus, the disciples learned that they were not living in the end times...events were just beginning. No one knows when the end is going to come – just like no one knows when a baby will be born. Medical technology helps with an approximate due date, but ultimately the baby comes when he or she is ready.

Anxiety...what are the things that we worry about? Do we worry about the end of the world? Probably not so much...I think the most anxiety that I felt from others concerning the end of the world during my lifetime was December 31st, 1999 when we jumped into the year 2000. There were so many predictions of bad things happening along with the end of the world. I remember John having to go to workshops in the IT department where he worked in preparation for year 2000.

What do we worry about? We worry about our families. We worry about our careers, our financial situations, our relationships, and countless other situations in life. When we worry, do we just worry or do we do things?

In my exegetical work for today's sermon I was reminded by Brian Stoeffregen's exegetical notes on apocalyptic texts, like the gospel for today, have a theme within them even though they might raise anxiety. He suggests that theme is "everything will be alright."

Following these eight verses in Mark, Jesus tells the disciples that the Holy Spirit will speak for them when they are brought to trial. He also gives the disciples hope when he describes the coming of the Son of Man.

Everything will be alright. When we are anxious, God is with us. We are not alone. When things happen, we are anxious and we worry.

If a child falls down and scrapes their knee we tell them that everything will be alright. When someone is sick we tell them that everything will be alright, sometimes even in those circumstances when we know that things may not be alright in our way of thinking.

In these situations with the words everything will be alright there is also an action. We clean up the child's knee and put a band-aid on it as we are telling them that everything will be alright.

Stoeffregen also gives these examples of everything will be alright:

Will there be life on this planet in another hundred or thousand years? Everything will be alright, says the one who created the planet.

How can I make ends meet, when more bills are coming in than income?

Everything will be alright, is God's promise.

I'm having surgery tomorrow and I'm scared. Everything will be alright.

My brother was just sent to a war zone. Everything will be alright.

My mother just died. Everything will be alright.

Anxiety chokes us sometimes where it's difficult for us to look to the future ~ to look for our hope that we have in the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Even in times of death, we know that everything will be alright because of the promises that God has made with us by handing his Son over to death and was raised from the dead three days later.

A caveat to everything will be alright is that we need to remember that it isn't always what our thought of everything will be alright but rather that everything will be alright because we are in God's hands throughout our entire lives.

I leave you with one of the greatest lessons that I learned from my father-in-law the night that he died. John's mom had called us in Baltimore to tell us that dad had had a rough day breathing and was very anxious. He had been in the nursing home for about a month and a half after complications arose with his Parkinson's disease. That day he began talking about dying. John and I left Baltimore and drove to Sunbury to see him. When we arrived I knew that dad didn't have long. He was very anxious. We talked with him and before we left he asked John and I to pray with him and we did. We gave him hugs and told him that we loved him. As I was hugging him he pulled me closer and asked me – Is everything going to be okay? My answer to him without hesitation was Dad, everything will be alright – God will be with you the whole time.

Everything will be alright – God is holding us in his hands.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.