Okay, first Sunday back from Vacation I’m entitled to at least one bad joke. Why don’t mummies go on vacation? Answer: Because they’re afraid to unwind!!! Some real truth in that! It is great to be back from vacation! Like many of you, we were on Pandemic version 5 of our vacation plan. We divided our time away into three short segments.

First segment, son Hudson and I did our 3rd annual bike journey, biking about 130 miles from upper Maryland down through West Virginia, into Washington DC and ending in Virginia. Each year we extend that trip a bit in hopes we will eventually do the Pittsburgh to Mt. Vernon route using the Great Alleghany Trail to the C and O and finishing with the Mt. Vernon Bike Trail. The second segment was a date weekend with just Libby up at Sugar Mountain, North Carolina, lots of hiking, sunrises and amazing sunsets! Finally, with the whole family we went to a beach house and enjoyed each other.

I’m also excited to say I finished a draft of a book I want to write on the Bible and what it reveals about the heartbeat of God. And I read a couple of books, including one with my son Hudson, called: All the Light we Cannot See by Anthony Doerr, all about the human side of the nightmare of World War 2.

I also read the manuscript of a brand new book by The Rev. David Roseberry, on Psalm 23, called When the Lord is my Shepherd. In that book, Roseberry quotes Philip Keller who describes four things necessary for sheep to have peace in their lives, four things necessary to restore their soul. Those four things stopped me in my tracks on vacation. So let me stop you in your tracks right now.

I wonder if today your soul needs restoring? Where in your life do you need supernatural peace and restoration? I can’t think of a time in my lifetime where there were so many robbers of peace out there all at one time. Let’s name them…

1. We are now going into our 6th month of the Covid pandemic, complete with a face mask battle, social distancing challenges, and the question we will talk about later in this service, when will we open back up?
2. We have a national fight going on all across America about schools and their re-opening, in person? Online? Everyone is talking about it. In fact later in this service you will hear from St. Michaelite public school teacher Cindy Hines.

3. Third, we’ve just been through a hurricane that brings with it its own set of PTSD issues for many of us.

4. Even an Earthquake for parts of our state

5. We have parts of our country still battling violent racial riots

6. And finally, a presidential election coming up that has people from every political stripe on edge.

If there ever was a time to have a sermon on how we “restore” our soul today is it!

And Jesus is so good. He basically answers the question on peace in Luke 12. Luke Chapter 12, is long, 59 verses, but with one four word focus: Jesus Is In Control. In this powerful chapter, Jesus is saying:

1. I’m in control over Evil
2. I’m in control over money
3. I’m in control over Worry
4. I’m in control over the future

Today I’m just taking a small section of that, the 10 middle verses about Jesus in control over worry. Jesus mentions the word worry nearly half a dozen times. What is it? Worry can best be defined as:

W.illingly
O.verthinking
R.egressive thoughts
R.esulting into
Y.ou, sinking into fear.

Jesus says don’t worry. Don’t overthink your temporary life, don’t do it! This is what I love about the Bible! When the big waves hit, the Bible steers into them, not away from them. The worry Jesus is speaking about here is the kind of worry that just creeps in, uninvited, stealing into our life and needling us. Worry itself isn’t a sin, we can’t control worry anymore than we can control a bird dropping on our heads. But it is a sin to take a rent check from worry, in other words, it’s a sin to allow it residence up there in our mind. Worry needs our permission to hang out.

This is why Jesus gives us the gift of Luke 12, to say let me be King over your worry, over the things that rob and steal your soul. Don’t overthink your life, don’t overthink what you will eat next, and don’t overthink your body and what you’re going to wear. Life is more than this! All that is the wrapping paper of life, don’t worry about it! Now you might think Jesus would move on to talk about the end times, or heaven or some larger concept of faith, but no, he moves into show and tell. A show and tell of birds and flowers.

He begins with that foul bird we know to be the raven. Consider the ravens, Jesus says, they don’t sow or reap and have no barn, yet God feeds them! Why Ravens? You have to know this about ravens. Ravens were and are the lowest rank of living creatures. They are the least of the bird world. They are the Cleveland Indians of Baseball. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers of Football. I mean the pits! I mean the Ravens are so low, they are even mentioned in Leviticus! Moses in Leviticus Chapter 11 writes, These are the birds you are to detest and not eat because they are detestable! Don’t eat the vulture, the red kite or any kind of black kite, in fact don’t eat any kind of Raven! They are the Rodney Dangerfields of the bird world. The Raven world gets no earthly respect, which is why Jesus says: Even you, Raven, you matter! You have no barns, you are the least, you have no
hunting season named after you, but you matter. You are fed by the living God—who created you! Stop here for a moment, isn’t that refreshing! Jesus is saying to you right now, if I care this much for the Raven, consider how much more I care for you! Who of you by overthinking things can add a single hour to your life! I’ve got this.

Jesus then puts the Raven down and picks up a Lilly. Lillies represent the height of beauty and fashion from the flower world. Lillies makes the majesty of King Solomon look like duckweed. Yet that Lilly doesn’t do anything to earn its beauty, in fact just like the grass, it’s here today and gone tomorrow and is eventually thrown into the fire. Like the Raven, how much more will Jesus take care of us by clothing us! By feeding us, by giving us water. Our need is known to him. Your desire for a spouse, your desire for children, your desire to pay the rent and provide food…your need is known to God, live as if you really believed that. You see, our attitudes to such worries are critical because we who belong to Jesus must respond differently from the world when it comes to worry. Jesus said be different from the Pagans who don’t know me. The world should worry, not the Christian.

Right now you are saying great, how do I not worry? Jesus loves us so much he gives us a solution to worry. Jesus says, seek the kingdom first, meaning Make me King of those areas of your life that you are over-thinking. When you do, you begin living His King-Dom. And then he adds, “Fear not little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the King-dom.” I hope when you read this and hear this it makes you love Jesus all over again. Jesus cares about the mundane worries of your heart as well as the most serious worries of your mind. He understands you, in fact, in that final verse he basically says we are so much like sheep…fear not my flock. So, because Jesus refers to us as sheep, I want us to refer back to one line in Psalm 23.

He the Shepherd, leads me beside the still waters and restores my soul.

So, in the spirit of Luke 12 and Psalm 23, three ways to make Jesus King over our anxieties. Now, these three ways come from Philip Keller on his book on Psalm 23. He gives four, I’m taking the three. It is so amazing how similar and skittish we are, just like sheep. So understanding what gives them peace, helps us understand what it takes for us to have peace under the Kingship of Jesus.

First, the unworried sheep has experienced freedom from fear. We’ve often said fear stands for false evidence appearing real. Overcoming fear when they finally come into the safety of the shepherd. Our first path to defeating worry is to seek the Kingdom of God by making Jesus King over our fear. Praying: Jesus take my fear and crush it, reject it.

Secondly, the unworried sheep has experienced freedom from friction with other sheep, in other words they aren’t in conflict with another member of the flock. Therefore, our second path to defeating worry is to proclaim Jesus as King of the relationship’s in our life. Making him king of any reconciliation needed in our lives. Carrying baggage with others, carrying unforgiveness destabilizes every aspect of our life, leading us to a place of worry and anxiety. Making Jesus King over all our relationships, asking Him to help us reconcile, make amends so that as we look over the landscape of our lives, we see no friction with other sheep.

Third, the unworried sheep have experienced freedom from the foibles, foibles meaning the everyday aggravations from flies and bugs that infiltrate their eyes, ears and deep wool. For us, it means to make Jesus King over the mundane elements of our lives. So often we lean on Jesus only for the big things instead of asking Jesus into the little things, that aren’t so little in our lives. Jesus would you lead me over whether or not I should send my children to school. Would you lead me over those other even smaller things that drive me crazy! Lord don’t allow those things to rob my peace!

Sheep Reveals how to defeat worry
Receiving peace by making:

- Jesus king over my fear
- King over my Relationships
- King over the minute details of my life

Don’t be afraid little flock—fear not. And this is where the Holy Spirit comes in. Satan is the inventor, the marketer and the distributor of worry. And therefore, it takes Holy Spirit discipline to stop, and realize what you are up against and cast it out. In my life I often forget this step and act as if all that overthinking is necessary instead of saying wait a minute, this is not of Jesus, Lord I’m casting out that worry and making you King as I seek Your Kingdom. Satan you have no place in my heart or mind. But my friends, let me turn this around and say that Jesus didn’t give us this teaching over worry just for us, but for us to learn these precepts to then give them away..

- Who in your life needs to make Jesus King over their Fear?
- Who in your life is muddled in a sea of toxic relationships and needs to make Jesus king over such relationships?
- Who in your life is muddled in a sea of endless chaos and needs the order that only Jesus can bring?

My friends, the best way to UNWIND is to allow Jesus to be made King over every aspect of your life. Which means we must obey what He commands, which will sometimes mean, we have to disobey ourselves, our own desires, our continued falling into worry. We have to disobey our ourselves often to obey the King.

Case in point and finally today, let me take you to the last day of our vacation. Just a one-day Kayak adventure on the Edisto River off Martins Landing. Son Christian and I went out in two kayaks to paddle that most beautiful section of the Edisto River, truly one of the most beautiful stretches of that black river. We kayaked around a bend in the river and decided to beach the kayaks for lunch. We sat in the kayaks with our lunches when all of a sudden we hear faint thunder. Thinking it would pass we kayak up the river and that’s when all heaven and hell seemed to break loose! Thunder, lightning and so we paddled like mad up river into a grove of gorgeous cypress trees, and just held up underneath their amazing arms of strength. We tried to do anything but talk about the lightning coming down all around us. I admit to you fear was winning in my heart and mind. But I felt God saying disobey the fear, and call on me. It was in that moment I had to pray Jesus be King over my fear...be King over my fear, you are in control...even now, even now. For 60 minutes we were under the refuge of these cypress angels and Jesus prevailed.

Through the Holy Spirit, exterminating worry…
Jesus be king over our fear
Jesus be king over our relationships
Jesus be king over the abundance of details in our lives.

Let us pray.
O God of Grace and God of Glory, on thy people pour thy power..Grant us your peace, for the living of these days.