

Grace and peace are yours from God our Father, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; Amen.

In 1934 Paramount Picture released the movie *Death Takes a Holiday*, which was well received by audiences and critics alike. The storyline of the movie was Death wanted to know why people feared him, so for three days, Death became human. Over that period of time Death learns about people, relationships, and yes, even love. The movie originally produced in 1934 with Frederic March, Evelyn Venable, and Guy Standing was remade in 1998 with Brad Pitt, Claire Forlani, and Anthony Hopkins and retitled; *Meet Joe Black*.

The movie has nothing to do with our Scripture texts, but the message of fear is universal when it comes to human life. The movie offers a suggestion of ‘taking a holiday (or vacation)’ from the fears, worries, and troubles of the world. The holy gospel warns us to not be caught off-guard or weighed-down with the worries of this life, lest the coming of the Lord comes upon us unexpectedly.

Where does our strength lie? My friends, we stand at the beginning of a new church year in the season of Advent. We reflect upon a time in the world when darkness was abounding, hope was flickering, and still; people held onto a promise of a coming Messiah with all their hearts. For generations the promise from God sustained, supported, and steadied the lives of the faithful who refused to be caught off guard. Their strength was in their God.

On the first Christmas night, around 2000 years ago, Christ came into the world; new hope was born, peace, love, and joy were abounding and heaven and earth rejoiced. We celebrate the coming of the Lord into our world as the fulfillment of the prophecies and promises of God who is the strength of a world where His kingdom is established. 2019 years later; where does our strength lie?

Do we look to the heavens for the coming of our Lord in the clouds or do we become overwhelmed at the destruction, decay, and defeat we see in our world? For that matter, where is the hope for our world today, the joy in tomorrow, and the peace we keep holding out for? My friends, its time for a holiday from worry; its time for a vacation from doubt and despair; it time for a return that focuses on the hope of the world to come for your very happiness, joy, and above all; peace.

The season of Advent is the celebration of the fulfillment of hope, the reality of God’s love for us coming into our world, and the unending joy and peace that remain ours forever. We are looking back on this event with the full faith and understanding that every promise proclaimed was fulfilled and death is not to be feared anymore, so why are we worried about anything less?

Our scripture texts recently have all encouraged us to find strength in the Lord to cast off our worries. On Thanksgiving Eve, we heard again the words to not worry about what to wear as Jesus reminded us of the lilies of the field. Even Solomon in all his glory was not adorned with beauty like this. God cares for us more than the plants of the field that are here today and gone tomorrow; God clothes us for eternity with so much more. Take a holiday from the worry of what you wear; it will be out of style in a few months anyway.

Where does your strength lie? Planning is important but not to the point of consumption. The Spirit of God is the One who guide our lives, collectively and individually, and the Spirit is fulfilling the will of God to bring all promises to reality. Hope is still alive and God provides us the power, strength, and endurance for the times this world challenges us with.

My dear friends in Christ, keep your chin up, literally! Look up; look heavenward and look for the hope of the world to come. Stay focused on the promise that Jesus will come again and cling to that hope like the faithful people of God 2000 years ago. When we look down, all we see is a world that attempts to tie us down, drag us down, and bring us down from the holy and proper place we have with our Lord and Saviour who has taken the worry out of life for us.

God has removed the fear of death from our lives and all the cares between today and eternity. Jesus shares that all our worries cannot add a single hour to our lives and yet, we still find it difficult to let go, take a holiday, or hand over the worries of life. For many of us, there is a sense of guilt that comes when we ‘let go of worry’ as it might appear we have lost compassion, love, or concern for that or whom we worry about.

I have news, good news for you my friends; as fellow workers in the Kingdom of God, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and witnesses to the Gospel, you will never lose the love, compassion, or concern for one another or any of God’s creatures in your heart. You see, your heart is the dwelling place of the very Spirit of God that sanctified you... that make you holy, presentable, and welcoming before Almighty God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The world will try to convince us otherwise, but the truth is that our hope, salvation, and future has been won and will never be taken away. Nothing will separate us from the love of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, whom we will all see coming in the clouds, because our heads will be lifted high. We will be holding the hands of our neighbors, friends, and strangers when the Lord comes, because as workers in the Kingdom, we will have taken their worries, burdens, and cares and allowed them to look heavenward with us.

The great and mighty day of the Lord is a day of hope for all human life and the Day of Judgment for every source, cause, and form of our every worry, concern, and care. Our cares and worries will come to an end and Jesus is telling us all; we can let go of them now because like the grasses of the field, they will burn up tomorrow. However, we will remain with our Lord as God’s Word endures forever.

Yesterday is over and cannot be changed; forgiveness is ensured so worry not. Tomorrow will take care of itself; worry not. Today has resources, provisions, blessings, and an abundance of workers with the Spirit of God to ‘sustain and tend’ all in any need; worry not.

Let your worries take a holiday and help a friend, neighbor, and even a stranger give their cares and burdens a holiday this Advent Season so together we can focus on God’s promises of hope, love, joy, and the peace that passes all understanding that keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!