

# *What IS Security?*

A St. Andrew's Sermon  
Delivered by  
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Scripture Reading: Psalm 77:1-13; Romans 8:38-39; Matthew 5: 14-16  
(*The Inclusive Bible*)

For the first several years Don and I were married, security for me was going home to my mother and dad. Within seconds of arriving at their house I was able to completely relax. --- But of course, that changed – until it was Don and I who brought comfort and security to my mother and dad.

What is it that can allow us to relax and be ourselves completely? What allows us to be nurturing joy instead of nurturing fear? Security these days smacks of money. Perhaps you have noticed over the last couple of years - that kind of security is becoming more and more illusive.

Or perhaps it is physical health and mental abilities that foster that sense of security. Well, it is only a matter of time. This security will crumble piece by piece or in one fell swoop and we will no longer be able to manage on our own.

Relationships are often the cornerstone of our security, and those who are fortunate will be able to keep those relationships for long periods of time. But for many, comfort and security are NOT present in the family, and friends walk a narrow line between legitimacy and game playing.

So when the Psalmist says:

I lay sweating and nothing could cool me  
Nothing could comfort me  
*Gloom overcame my spirit*  
You kept my eyes open all night

We can feel chaos, the stress, the longing for relief

Have any of you heard of Al Capp's comic strip, *Lil Abner*? There was Lil Abner, Daisy Mae, Mammy Yokum, and a character with an unpronounceable last name. I called him Joe Biffle spik. But according to Wikipedia it's pronounced Joe (raspberry sound) Everywhere Joe went there was a dark cloud with raindrops. **Disaster** preceded him, people **avoided** him, and **disappointment was his constant companion**. He was sort of like Pig Pen in *Charlie Brown*. Everyone avoided Joe Btfspk because he brought with him bad luck.

Now, if you are like me, (perhaps we were programmed by the church to feel guilty) about getting depressed or angry or frustrated -- We have it so good and so many people have it so bad. Why are we griping??? So if we aren't feeling bad enough about feeling down, we can feel **guilty** about feeling down.

Back to Psalm 77: God, will you reject us forever?

Will your promise remain unfulfilled generation after generation?

It somehow has the flavor of desperation – where is there any security? (Why bother? I'm sure we are all skilled at avoidance techniques. You have yours, I have mine –

I found a page in *Harper's Bazaar* while I was at the Dr.'s office. (I so wanted to have something to pull out of my pocket like Jim does during his sermons) It's on a page titled "Health News" – 10 easy ways to beat stress. It says: We need more magnesium (picture of broccoli). Herbs can help: rhodiola and something called cordyceps. Another column has tips to fall asleep and stay asleep: how to set the sleep clock, advice on holding on to our dream thoughts and don't let other thoughts come in. Also some other tablets to take a bath with scented oils - - -

I'm sure this is good advice, but I promise you, when I'm in a "state" these remedies won't help – not much. I'll bet you think I'm going to say something about

God now – after all there were two more rather upbeat scriptures read. I'll get to that but...

If you were here last week – Jim spoke on the Beatitudes. They are the blessed verses:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven  
Blessed are those who mourn, they shall be comforted  
Blessed are the meek, they will inherit the earth  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Jesus' list does NOT sound like a list of people who would feel secure – perhaps just the opposite. What is this “blessedness” he’s talking about then?

I believe Jesus (the counter-cultural one) was and is trying to separate us from the expectations of our culture and even from our physical and mental bodies and teach us to rest in something else.

There is a tale from the Taoist tradition that you have probably heard before but it is good to hear everyday. I read it to the children last week.

Here’s how the story goes:

*There is a hardworking farmer.  
One day his horse runs away.  
The neighbors come to visit and say, how sorry they are for his bad luck.  
The farmer says: Maybe it’s bad luck and maybe it isn’t.*

*The next morning the horse returns bringing two wild horses with it.  
The neighbors say, Such good luck!  
The farmer says, Maybe*

*The next day the farmer’s son is breaking one of the wild horses, is  
thrown and breaks his leg.  
The neighbors say: Such bad luck!  
The farmer says: Maybe*

*The day after that, officials come to draft young men into the army to  
fight a war.  
Seeing the broken leg, they pass over the farmer’s son.  
The neighbors say: Such good luck!  
The farmer says: Maybe*

The Beatitudes have a twist to them like the story of the farmer and his neighbors. Culture expects certain things to be blessings, but in the realm of God it can be quite different.

Jim referred to a translation of the Beatitudes by Jorge Lara-Braud, liberation theologian who called Austin home and passed away only a few months ago. He calls the blessings A bienaventuranza – a GOOD ADVENTURE. This is his translation:

“Good adventure to you whose hearts are genuinely with the poor:  
you are under God’s protective rule.  
Good adventure to you who are without power: the whole world  
shall be yours. Good adventure, good adventure, bienaventuranza.  
God is preparing a great reward for you. Don’t be surprised, prophets have always been and  
endangered species.”

How would you feel about being an endangered species? This lack of security, this fear that underlies our lives – the background noise of our lives CAN be quieted, and a different background “hum” can replace it. It is what Paul talks about when he says nothing can separate us from the love of God. It empowers those who put their lamp on the lamp stand.

I’m going to suggest some things that have worked for me; perhaps they will work for us at St. Andrew’s. And just like Jim – I’m going to connect it to the *Trinity*.

When we can spend even 2 minutes (or less) in the presence of the natural world we are ALWAYS rewarded. Even if the only piece of that we can experience is our own heart beat or breath- that- can be enough to re establish reality in the present (not the past or the future) It is a gift we observe so often in small children. *It’s the creator part.*

When we can spend a few moments actually listening to someone else—even if it is someone you DON'T know at all and **if** it is someone you know, you can and should ask them to listen a few moments to you. We build the love links between human and human. We don't have to solve ANYTHING. Just listen. *It's the Jesus part.*

When we allow ourselves space to be totally honest with ourselves even if we never get past groaning – *this connects us with the Spirit* – and eventually we will be able to finish the Psalm recalling the acts of long ago.

St. Andrew's is being called to the next level, to the bienaventuranza - the grand adventure. The only way for us to do this is to learn the security of the love of God lived out here in this community.

The song the choir will sing is familiar. "Nothing can trouble." When sung in Spanish the last line is Solo Dios basta. David found a translation that said, **God is everything**. When we sing it in English we say, **Only God fills us**. Solo Dios Basta – "Basta" is a word used for 'stop'. When I learned it we were sitting with our good friend in a restaurant and the waitress came to fill our tea glasses. She poured some in and Ruben said 'basta' – not Stop, but *it is enough*. God is enough.

Security --- it is enough to have a beautiful planet, people to listen to and talk to and pray with, to be open in the presence of the mystery. Resting in this kind of security empowers us to move beyond ourselves – maybe we will be lucky, maybe not – but it will be a grand adventure.

*Transcribed and edited by a member of the St. Andrew's Sermon Transcription Project.*

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yet our first allegiance is to Christ's gospel of universal love.*

*We are Christ-centered,  
yet we respect and learn from all religions of love.*

*We affirm the ancient symbols of our faith,  
yet we strive to speak a new language that includes all people and affirms  
the scientific discoveries of our day.*

*We hope to teach children the stories of the Bible without  
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*We strive to be a close nurturing community,  
yet we welcome all people into our midst.*

*We wish to live in inner peace,  
yet hear God's call to work for peace, and for universal  
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yet believe the journey should be fun.  
We celebrate life in many artistic forms.*



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