

Being at Ease

Rev. Ben Arcus

Luke 12. 22ff

It's been a while since we've had an interactive activity in Chapel.

Paper Dart Throwing Competition – One boy from each year group gets a dart. On the count of three, everyone throws their dart as far as they can. The longest throw gets a prize.

This is just an illustration of the main point I want to make today, which is that being at ease in life will actually help you to do better.

There are many sports where making too much effort will actually make your performance worse. Golf is the classic example. It's what makes it such a unique challenge. After you have a certain amount of skill, there is a certain amount of relaxing and letting go that is needed to play well. Once you start thinking too much and trying too hard, your golf swing gets worse and you are in for a bad game. But the same is true in every sport. There is a certain amount of skill and effort required to know the basics and do them well. But after that, there is a certain amount of letting go that is required in order to perform at your best.

Sports psychologists even have a word for this: flow. It is experienced by top athletes in every sport, and their description of it is always very similar.

Michael Jordan described it like this: *"When you get into the zone, you're not thinking about what's happening because everything is happening naturally. You don't think about the past shot or the next shot, you just live in the moment. You don't try to force things, you just let them happen. It's like everything slows down, and you see things before they happen."*

Tennis Star, Serena Williams said this about it: *"There are times when I feel like I'm so focused, I don't even know what the score is. I'm just hitting the ball, reacting, moving, and everything feels easy. It's like my mind and body are in perfect sync, and I know exactly where the ball is going before it even gets there."*

World Champion surfer, Kelly Slater described the feeling like this: *"When you're in the zone, you're not thinking about anything. You're just reacting, and everything feels effortless. The best waves I've ever surfed are the ones where I didn't even realize what I was doing until after it happened. It's like time slows down, and you feel connected to the wave, almost as if you and the ocean are one."*

Now, admittedly, these are world champions, and so you may think that this kind of experience is only for the elite. But in actual fact, the research says that up to 70% of people experience it in their lives.

But I think it is just one example of this deeper principle: that when we are at ease; when we have trust and faith that things will all be okay in the end, then we will be able to go through life in a more relaxed, happier state. And in that state, life flows much easier.

I have learned to trust this principle myself in many areas of my life. Even in writing these sermons – I let whatever comes to mind first become the topic, as long as it's reasonably appropriate, and I let my thoughts flow easily. The next point and next example I want to use often comes to mind as I reach each new paragraph. But this is also built on 17 years' worth of experience, research and practice in writing sermons.

Is it smart, though, to go through life so innocently, so optimistically, when we know bad things happen all the time? On what can we put our trust, our faith?

In today's reading, we hear Jesus' words, which are actually very similar to all spiritual teachers' words. He says: Don't be afraid, don't be anxious. Don't you know God wants to give you everything good. God is love, the nature of the universe, therefore is love, the meaning of your life, then, is also love. So let go, you are loved, you are safe. No matter what happens, you will be gathered back into his kingdom of love. Just have faith.