

The Gospel According to Peanuts: Safe and Secure

Matthew 6:25-34

Rev. Dr. Nancy S. Lynn

August 9, 2026

Of all the characters in Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* cartoon, perhaps the most complex is Linus van Pelt. While Charlie Brown and his long string of failures often take center stage, Linus is the strip's philosopher and theologian. He thinks big thoughts, quotes big books, speaks with big wisdom. Schulz once said, "Linus, my serious side, is the house intellectual, bright, well-informed, which I suppose might contribute to his feelings of insecurity."

And, of course, that is the flip side of Linus - his insecurity, which is most obviously expressed by the thumb in his mouth and his ever-present blue blanket. That blanket is almost a part of his body. It isn't just a piece of fabric; it's his fortress. It protects him from the bullying of his big sister Lucy, shields him from the anxieties of the playground, and acts as a physical barrier between his fragile inner world and the harsh realities of daily life.

Since he always has it on hand, Linus's blanket also becomes a useful tool for him. Among other things, his blanket becomes a slingshot, a whip, a bug zapper (Linus boasts that it is the fastest slingshot in the west), a cumberbund, a parachute, a hammock, and a grappling hook.

Unfortunately, his blanket seems to always be under threat. Snoopy steals it repeatedly as a prank. Lucy is embarrassed by it so is always taking it away, hiding it, locking it up, or threatening to burn it. Even Linus's grandmother takes the blanket away and hides it whenever she visits. In one comic strip, Charlie Brown finds Linus in the living room with blankets laid out on the floor around him. When Charlie Brown asks about them, Linus says he is putting out decoys.

When those blanket-snatchers succeed, Linus literally falls apart. He collapses on the floor, shaking and panting, deep rings appear under his eyes, and a circle of stars appears above his head. He will do close to anything to get his blanket back.

Part of what makes Linus so endearing with his blanket is that we are all familiar with having some kind of security object. Many of us had favorite blankets when we were small - I know I did. Others might have had a stuffed animal or a favorite toy. In reality, though, security objects aren't just a childhood thing. Adults also have particular objects that give them a sense of comfort, safety, and security. For today, I invited you to bring something you use in that way. So, I'd like to give you a couple of minutes to share what you brought with someone near you. If you didn't bring something, perhaps you can share about a security object you had in your childhood.

Of course, security objects can be literal objects that we carry around with us (I wonder how many people mentioned their phone), but they can also be more figurative or metaphorical. For example, for some of us, our security blanket is our retirement savings. For others, it's a meticulous need for control, a perfectionistic work ethic, an addiction. Maybe it is our career or reputation, our politics or education. Whatever we instinctively reach for when we are afraid—that is our blanket. We wrap these things tightly around our shoulders and whisper to ourselves, *"As long as I have this, I am safe. As long as I hold onto this, the world can't hurt me."*

In our scripture reading for today, Jesus addresses this need we have to feel safe and secure. He recognizes our tendency to fear for ourselves and our loved ones, and so says, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life..." I imagine the listeners in his day had the same reaction we do, "Oh yeah, right, Jesus. Don't worry. Ha." After all, he is speaking to peasants living under Roman occupation. Most of Jesus' hearers earned just enough to survive. Many were day laborers who only received wages if someone hired them that morning. Fishermen depended upon weather and the catch. Farmers depended upon rain. Taxes imposed by Rome and local rulers left many families burdened with debt. Hunger was never far away.

So, for them, Jesus' words are astonishing. He does not deny all the reasons they might be anxious. To start, he helps them to see that what we turn to for security reflects what we fear.

Martin Luther understood this perhaps better than anyone. When explaining the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me", Luther teaches that whatever we trust above all else has become our god. He says that whatever our hearts cling to and rely upon is, in practice, our god. That is an uncomfortable thought. Because our idols are rarely statues. More often they are good gifts that become ultimate things. Money is a gift. Family is a gift. Health is a gift. Work is a gift. The problem begins when the gift becomes our source of security instead of the Giver. That is Linus' problem. And it is ours.

Jesus seeks to reinforce the goodness of God. So he points to birds flying overhead. He points to wildflowers blooming across the Galilean hillsides. Every person listening could see these illustrations with their own eyes. Creation itself became His sermon illustration. Notice what Jesus says. The birds are fed. The flowers are clothed. Neither worries because both live assured of God's generosity.

Jesus finally says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Notice He does not say, "Seek only the kingdom." Christians still work. We save responsibly. We care for our families. We plan wisely. But those things no longer occupy first place. The kingdom comes first. Everything else finds its proper place beneath it. That is what faith does. Faith does not eliminate responsibility. Faith reorders love. When Jesus says, "Seek first the kingdom of God," He is inviting us into an entirely new way of living. Wesley described the Christian life as growing in holiness of heart and life. Holiness is not withdrawing from the world or pretending life is easy. Holiness is learning to love God with our whole heart and to love our neighbors with that same generous love.

Anxiety naturally turns us inward. Love turns us outward. When fear dominates us, our first question becomes, "Will I have enough?" When God's kingdom shapes us, our first question becomes, "How can I love God and serve my neighbor today?"

Perfect love, Wesley often preached, gradually drives out fear—not because life becomes safer, but because the heart becomes more fully surrendered to God.

The turning point of Linus's life happens during *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. As we said last week, Charlie Brown stands on a stage, overwhelmed by commercialism and anxiety, and screams into the void: "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?!" Linus

walks to the center of the stage, and as he begins to recite the Gospel of Luke, something miraculous happens. He gets to the part where the angel says, *"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy,"* and right at the words *"Fear not,"* his fingers loosen. The blue blanket slips from his hand and falls uselessly to the wooden floor. For the first time in his life, he stands completely unprotected, completely vulnerable—and completely at peace.

The practical theologian Henri Nouwen understood exactly what happened on that stage. In his deeply personal writing, Nouwen captured the essence of why Linus could finally let go:

"Real freedom is not the absence of boundaries, but the presence of a secure attachment that allows us to explore, fail, and love without fear."

Linus didn't drop his blanket because he suddenly became tough or self-sufficient. He dropped it because he realized he was caught up in a bigger story. He realized that the arrival of Jesus meant he was securely attached to a God who held the universe together. For one brief moment, he reminds everyone that peace comes because God has acted in Christ. When you know you are radically loved and securely held by the Creator of the cosmos, the fake fortresses we build for ourselves lose their power. The Gospel whispers *"Fear not"* to our deepest anxieties. And it is only when we have the courage to let our false blankets fall to the floor that our hands are finally empty and free to receive the true, unshakeable security of Christ.

Perhaps that is what Jesus is inviting us to do today. Not simply to throw away our blankets. Not simply to stop worrying. But to discover a greater security in this time of great insecurity. Every act of trust is itself the work of grace. Every prayer whispered in fear is evidence that the Holy Spirit is already at work. Every step toward the kingdom is made possible because Christ first came toward us. The birds still fly. The lilies still bloom. God still knows. Christ still reigns. The Spirit is still transforming hearts. And so, little by little, we discover that we no longer need to clutch the blanket quite so tightly. Not because life has become predictable. But because the love of God has become more real than our fears.

Our security has never depended on the strength of our grip. It has always depended on the faithfulness of the God who holds us, transforms us, and sends us into the world to love as Christ has loved us.

May it be so. Amen.