

Trinity 15 - 09/09/2018

Text: Matthew 6:24-34

Note: This Sunday was also Sunday School Rally Day

If we look at the back of the dollar bill, we see the slogan "In God We Trust" printed there. The history of this phrase on our United States currency is drawn out and complicated. It hasn't always been there; in fact, the phrase was first added on a two-cent coin in 1864.

The motivations for adding the phrase don't have much to do with Christ's teaching in our Gospel reading. I bring the phrase up, however, because it is a very good reminder to us. **"You cannot serve God and money,"** Jesus says. **"No one can serve two masters."**

Now we nod along to this: of course nobody can serve two masters. Fact is, though, that in our modern life we have gotten very much used to serving two masters, or more. It's hard for us to place ourselves within this picture that Jesus is painting. We must place ourselves in the world of Jesus, during His three years of teaching. In Israel and Palestine, especially as a slave or servant, you could not serve two masters. If you tried, you could be sure that one of those masters would demand too much of you, and you could not meet the obligations owed to the other. It's not unlike attempting to work two full-time jobs; it's nigh impossible, one of the employers is not going to get good, full work from you. **"No one can serve two masters."**

Again, notice what Jesus is saying here. He's not saying it's hard to serve two masters. He's not saying that most people can't do it, but you might be that special one who can pull it off. No, Jesus teaches us that it's *impossible* to serve two masters. If you

serve money, you will hate God. You will despise Him and all of His good gifts like His Word and Sacraments. You will care little for His good and gracious will for you and for the good works that He has prepared for you to do.

Worry is related to this. That's why Jesus says, **"Therefore..."** and teaches us why we ought not to be anxious. Why do we worry? Deep down, it's because in our weakness we don't think God will truly take care of us and provide for us. We truly believe that God is absent. Now this is a great temptation: how many times does someone get sick or undergo a great personal struggle or tragedy and lose faith, walk away from God? And the flipside is a great temptation, too: how many times do we believe that we'll be truly taken care of, truly happy, truly content and satisfied, if we just had that Nintendo Switch, or \$100,000 in the bank, or if we just made a six-figure income.

We have a 1st Commandment problem. Jesus is teaching us about the 1st Commandment today, about having a God. Now it's worth reviewing the 1st Commandment at this point. Pull out your Lutheran Service Book, turn to page 321, and let's do the old confirmation examination routine here. I'll ask you What is the First Commandment? and What does this mean?, and you all will respond together out loud. The Small Catechism contains for us the teachings of the Christian Faith, and we can never delve too deeply into those teachings; we can never study the Small Catechism too much. In these Scriptural teachings is found eternal life in Christ.

So let's devote ourselves to this: What is the 1st Commandment? *"You shall have no other gods."* What does this mean? *"We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things."*

What does it look like to fear, love, and trust in something other than God? To worry; to serve money, or power; to trust in man or in princes for all good instead of taking refuge in the Lord.

Luther puts it this way (and bear with me, this is an extended quote, but it is well worth hearing Dr. Luther preach this to us): *"Many a person thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and possessions. He trusts in them and boasts about them with such firmness and assurance as to care for no one. Such a person has a god by the name of "Mammon" (i.e. money and possessions), on which he sets all his heart. This is the most common idol on earth. He who has money and possessions feels secure and is joyful and undismayed as though he were sitting in the midst of Paradise. On the other hand, he who has no money doubts and is despondent, as though he knew of no God. For very few people can be found who are of good cheer and who neither mourn nor complain if they lack Mammon. This care and desire for money sticks and clings to our nature, right up to the grave.*

"So, too, whoever trusts and boasts that he has great skill, prudence, power, favor, friendship, and honor also has a god. But it is not the true and only God. This truth reappears when you notice how arrogant, secure, and proud people are because of such possessions, and how despondent they are when the possessions no longer exist or are withdrawn. Therefore, I repeat that the chief explanation of this point is that to "have a god" is to have something in which the heart entirely trusts."

But, you think, I really do need money to care for my family, to pay for my medicine, to have my house, to even once in a while get some time off and away for rest and refreshment. Yes, of course you do. It is not the money, or the stuff, or your abilities which are the problem here. It is your serving them; It is your worry that perhaps tomorrow they will not be there, or there will not be enough of them. This is when our hearts begin to be devoted to serving Mammon and not God; when our love gets directed towards ourselves and not toward our neighbor.

"Therefore," Jesus says...And when there's a "therefore", we know that whatever follows is building upon or delving further into what was just taught. **"Therefore I tell**

you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on."

You have no need to worry. You are made in the image of God, you are the pinnacle of His creation. Only after you were made did God say that creation was **"very good."**

You have no need to worry. Jesus has taught you to pray "give us this day our daily bread," with the confidence that Your Father in heaven will give to you all that you need to support this body and life. Jesus says, **"And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you...If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"**

You have no need to worry. You are worth far more than the birds, and God provides all that they need. The grass is clothed in splendor by God, but it is merely alive today and tomorrow thrown into the oven. Yet God has made you to live forever with Him. Food, drink, clothing, shelter, even far less essential things like books, ice cream, chocolate: **"Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."** Or at least He knows that even some of them, while eternally silly, are nevertheless wonderful and delightful gifts in this world. **"All these things will be added to you."**

You have no need to worry. Take heart. Have courage. **"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."** Come to Divine Service and be fed with the bread and wine of Christ's body and blood. Come to Sunday School and Scripture Study for dessert. Serve your neighbor. Fill your homes with the Word of God and prayer. Play baseball and soccer and softball and hockey, but not in place of coming to Church. Mow your lawns and sit on your decks. Enjoy your swimming pools. Feast on fried chicken in a bit. Rejoice in one another's company.

You have no need to worry. Christ is alive. Death is conquered and dead. Satan's head is crushed. You are baptized and are heirs of God's eternal kingdom.

You have no need to worry.

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