

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, A ✕ D 2009

Matthew 6:24-34 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. ²⁵ "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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

In the name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 This is not a money sermon. In case the quip from Jesus in the Gospel reading, on the week's Congregation at Prayer, and on the marquee outside gave you cause for alarm that this week's sermon might broach that topic you most hate hearing in sermons—whether because it pricks your conscience and makes you squirm or because it exposes your idolatry and makes you nervous—rest easy. No, this is not a money sermon, not merely about money. Mammon, which Jesus warns you about isn't limited to your wallet and your bank account. Mammon is a false god, whatever form he takes.

2 "A 'god' is a term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart. It is the trust and faith of the heart alone that make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true

one. Conversely, where your trust is false and wrong, there you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. Anything on which your heart relies and depends, that is really your God." (Large Catechism, I, 2-3)

3 Do you want to know who or what your god is? What keeps you awake at night? What ties your stomach in knots? What makes your palms sweat and your thoughts race? In short, what makes you worry? That will give you insight into how you worship Mammon. Worry is the means by which Mammon is worshipped. He cannot provide you with anything, nor calm any of your fears. Mammon is not a giver, only a taker, not a creator, only a destroyer. There is not a pantheon of Gods from which you may choose the one who best suits your needs. There is one true God. All other objects of worship, be they gods or goods, are tools of the devil to draw your attention away from the one true, Triune God.

4 Worry is sin, pure and simple. It is not fitting for children of the Heavenly Father to worry because worry wars against faith. They cannot coexist. If you give in to worry, it eats away at faith. If you give in to faith, it dispels worry. No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. 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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his span of life? Which of you by worrying can add a single dollar to his bank account? Which of you by worrying can add a single minute to her day, an ounce of food to his pantry, a shred of respect to his reputation, a thread of clothing to her closet? Worry

accomplishes nothing except to make you doubt your Heavenly Father's provision for you. Repent.

5 Look at the birds of the air. They do not work long, late hours and yet each one has enough to eat every day of life its Creator has given to it. And what is a single sparrow worth? Consider the flowers of the field. They do not sweat or fret, hurry or worry, and each one is never without beautiful array as long as God gives it life. And what is a roadside lily worth? But you, you who have been reborn through Holy Baptism, who have been marked with the very name of the Triune God, what are you worth? The life of God.

6 Grass can flourish and fade; sparrows can fly and fall. God never gave His life for them. But for you—not for sparrows, or lilies, or angels—for nothing else in all creation except for you, for humanity—God died. The Second Person of the eternal, Triune God took human flesh in the Virgin's womb. The purpose of His living was to die, and not just to die a natural death—for the sinless Son of God death was never the natural end—but to die the death of sinners, separated from God the Father. You are worth the life of Jesus.

7 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. What shall we eat? Even if food runs out, we shall eat the Bread of Life, the Body of Jesus, born of the Virgin, crucified for you. What shall we drink? Even if drink runs out, we shall drink the Blood of Jesus, poured from His pierced side for you to forgive your sins. What shall we

wear? Even if clothes wear out, we shall wear the righteousness of Jesus, His holiness, delivered to you in Holy Baptism, draped over you in Holy Absolution.

8 About what, then, will you worry? Nothing. Everything else pales in comparison to this fact: you belong to your Lord who loves you in Jesus Christ. Even if food and drink and clothing cease, your Lord has promised to deliver you from this vale of tears to Himself in paradise. He has promised to raise your dead or dying body to dwell with Him in Eden restored. So what is there to worry about? So what if the bills are more than the paychecks, the neighbor's kids are a nuisance, your son is on drugs, your congregation is in debt, your synod is crumbling around you, kids make fun of you at school, you can't fit into your skinny jeans anymore, your job is in jeopardy, your stomach is rumbling, or your health is failing? So what? None of that can change the fact that you belong to the Lord.

9 The faith that drives out worry isn't something you have to conjure up within yourself. It's a gift, delivered by God. The cure for worry isn't to try harder not to be anxious. The cure for worry is in what you will eat, what you will drink, and what you will wear. Eat the Body of Jesus that forgives all your sins, even worry. Drink the Blood of Jesus that washes away anxiety. Hear His word of Absolution that silences all the voices of worry. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, His holy Word and Sacraments, here to forgive your sins, and all the rest of your daily bread will be added unto this. What is there left to worry about? Nothing.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
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