

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 6:24-34
September 8th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
All Saints Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Pawleys Island, SC
St. Bartholomew Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
Pastor Jerald Dulas

No Man Can Serve Two Masters

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank Thee that Thou hast given us body and soul, and hitherto bountifully provided for us all the necessaries of life; and we beseech Thee, strengthen, confirm, and uphold our faith, that trusting fully in Thee, and seeking before all things Thy Kingdom, we may avoid all undue anxiety and greed of the Gentiles, and by Thy grace overcome every affliction; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ in His Sermon on the Mount declares that, “No man can serve two masters.” As He defines this, one cannot serve God and mammon, that is, worldly possessions. Unfortunately, this text has far too often been taken by preachers as a tool to give their hearers a list of things to do and not do. This is understandable, for it seems at first glance that that is exactly what our Lord is saying, “Serve God, do not serve mammon.” However, this text is not about what we are to do and not do, but rather about what we are unable to do, and what our Lord + Jesus, the Christ is able to do being the perfect and holy Son of God.

On account of our sinfulness, and sin in the world influencing our every thought and motive, we are continuously serving mammon—our worldly possessions. When do we not worry about what we shall eat, or wherewithal we shall be clothed, or what we shall drink? When do we not worry about our possessions, or lack thereof? Just consider the things that we do to protect our worldly possessions: We build fences, we put our possessions in safe boxes, we lock them up and away from harm, we take out huge insurance policies on our homes and cars and businesses, and even upon our very own lives. Our worldly possessions mean a lot to us. In all this we are slaves and servants to mammon—to our worldly possessions.

And what is the fruit of being a servant of mammon? What is the end result of being a slave to our worldly possessions? Worry and anxiety! “Where are we going to buy money for food?” “How are we going to pay for our vehicles repairs?” “How are we going to pay the rent or the house payment?”

“How are we going to pay for our college classes?” “Where is the money going to come from, when we receive so little from our work or retirement?” Especially in this economy. All these things cause us to worry and have anxiety. Sometimes to the point of tears. This is why mammon is a great tool of the devil. Satan leads us to despair and hopelessness and anxiety, so that we feel as if no help will be coming soon, if ever.

But our Lord + Jesus gives us great comfort in the words, “Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?” The question is meant to be rhetorical. It already assumes an answer. And the answer is a negative answer. No one can grow in height just by being anxious and worrying. In other words, my dear friends, all of our anxiety and worry will not change our current situation. There is no amount of being anxious that will change what we have and do not have. And when our Lord gets us to this point—to see the pointlessness of being anxious—He leads us even farther away from our master mammon. He leads us to Himself and His righteousness and His providence; to His gracious benefits to us. For what does He say next? “Consider the lilies of the field.” Our Lord + Jesus talks about how beautiful they are, and how their beauty far surpasses the beauty of King Solomon in his glory days. But these beautiful lilies of the field are in reality no more special than the grass of the field, which exists today, and then tomorrow is not only gone, but is cast into the oven. It is burned up, as if it possessed no beauty, as if it was not a beautiful flower to be treasured. No, it is cast into the oven and utterly destroyed. The point our Lord is making is that these things that are utterly destroyed in an oven, are given their beauty by the Lord God Himself. He is the One Who arrays the lilies of the field with such beauty. And we are worth far more to the Lord God than these lilies of the field. If He clothes the lilies of the field in such a way; if He cares for the lilies of the field in such a manner, how much more does He care for each and every one of us?

It is here that our Lord + Jesus points out our problem; why we are subject to mammon; why we are enslaved to our worldly possessions and driven into worry and anxiety. It is because we are of little faith. This is the whole point of our Lord’s current discourse. We are anxious because we lack faith in Him. We are driven to tears and stress because we doubt Him. “O ye of little faith.”

And this is the problem with our faith: we are looking at our checkbook balance, or our knowledge of the situation, or our ability to work our way out of the situation by finagling our finances and worldly possessions in order to deliver us from anxiety. In short, we are trying to trust in ourselves and our own abilities. But this is faith that is directed in the wrong direction, it is faith that is directed into ourselves, and not outward toward our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ.

Faith always clings to an object; to something outside of ourselves. It either clings to our works, or it clings to the works of Christ. The thing is our works always fail. This is why it is so dangerous to listen to the world’s description of faith, because the world would have our faith directed in on itself, even to the point where faith is directed at its own faith. For example, we have often heard people say, “If I just have faith.” Faith in what? Faith in our ability to believe strongly enough? This is faith that is directed inward; at one’s own self and one’s own faith. It is the type of faith that will eventually lead to despair and being anxious, for on account of our sinfulness, and sin in this world, we will always fail when left to ourselves.

But faith that looks outside—to a source outside of itself—that looks to our Lord + Jesus and His righteousness will never fail, will never lead to being anxious, will never lead to doubt and despair, for it believes firmly and steadfastly that our Lord + Jesus will provide all that we need for our body and life in His due season. A person with this type of faith learns, as St. Paul the Apostle did, to be content in all sorts of situations, for this person learns that worldly possessions are secondary to spiritual possessions.

This is what our Lord means when He says to “seek ye first His Kingdom, and His

righteousness.” It means to look to the spiritual possessions that our Lord + Jesus, the Christ won for us on the tree of the holy cross—forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. The logical next question is, “How do we seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness?” The Kingdom of God is found wherever Lord God’s gifts are to be found. It is found in the Word of God and the Blessed Sacraments. In the means of grace, the Lord God gives us, His servants, forgiveness, life, and salvation. In these gifts, He removes all anxiety and doubt through the work of His Holy Ghost, and bestows upon us a faith that learns to be content with all that He desires to give us, and a faith that clings to Him and looks to Him for all good. He gives us a faith that clings to His righteousness, and turns our anxious hearts away from mammon and our trust of it. It turns our anxious hearts away from trusting in ourselves, to trust solely in what our Lord + Jesus, the Christ has done for us. It turns our eyes of faith to the holy cross of our Lord for comfort and strength.

Therefore, my dear friends, in this way become servants of the Lord God and masters of mammon. Let the Lord God rule us by giving us His good gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Let Him rule us by directing our eyes away from this fallen and sinful world to His redemption that He accomplished through His perfect life and death on the holy cross. Let Him fill us with faith and life through His holy means, so that we become content in any situation in life. Then we shall become masters of mammon by not letting it lead us into being anxious, and by not deceiving us into chasing after the things of this life, as if they are going to save us from grief and sorrow. Let us become masters of mammon by being content in all situations of life, and let us seek first the Kingdom of God. Then believing with undoubting hearts that all the things that we need to support this body and life the Lord God will provide for us, let us trust in Him and Him alone. For He has already won for us, through the death of His One and Only-Begotten Son, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. This He freely and abundantly bestows upon us, whenever we come to this holy house and hear His Word, and receive His blessed Sacraments. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!