

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Text: St. Matthew 6:24-34

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Just a few moments ago we heard JESUS say, *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”* Therefore, it is pretty clear to me that when it comes to whom we shall serve, we cannot serve two masters. Again, as our LORD said, *“either you will hate the one and love the other, or else you will be loyal to the one and despise the other.”* From this it logically follows then, that neither can we serve two gods, thus JESUS’ words, *“You cannot serve God and mammon.”*

I would submit, then, that mankind is faced with a serious dilemma. For the words of our LORD do not leave us any wiggle room. One either serves God or one does not, and, therefore, one will either spend eternity with CHRIST in heavenly bliss, or with the eternally damned in the torments of hell. One cannot have it both ways; *“You cannot serve God and mammon.”* It is really that simple.

So, what is most important to you? Is it this life, with all its selfishness and perversion, pain and suffering, tears and sorrow, sickness and death—this life which will one day surely end—or eternal life with our God in heaven; an eternal life of never-ending joy and peace? Or, to restate the question, *“To whom do you cling?”*

Do you cling to mammon, a god of false promises and false security, a god who can never completely deliver on his assurances of comfort and well-being in this life? Or do you cling to the One True God, FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT, who has provided, and continues to provide to you, all good things needed for this body and life? These are important questions, for the final answer will determine your eternal home. You see, your answer indicates that to which your heart clings; and that to which your heart clings, as Martin Luther writes, is your god.

Therefore, JESUS tells His Disciples, *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”*

You cannot serve two masters. If you attempt to do so, you will be consumed by one and be unfaithful to the other. Both masters will demand your total devotion, and you will be painfully torn between them until you give up on one and give your total loyalty to the other.

So, which is it for you? To whom or to what do you cling? Please, give it some serious thought. Do you desire mammon over the true God? Is your concern over your next paycheck or your next retirement check? Is your desire for God and *His* gifts of salvation and eternal life,

or is your desire more for the things of this creation rather than for the Creator Himself? If JESUS asked you to forsake all you have, to take up your cross, and follow Him, would you be willing to give up all you treasure, your house, your pets, your spouse, your children, your grandchildren, all you own, or all that is of any value to you?

He did, you know. JESUS did ask you to forsake all things. For it is written, *“Then JESUS said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.... For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’”* and also, *“No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.”*

Now please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that you should sell all you own, get a divorce, shave your head, and join a monastery or convent and neither is our LORD. What JESUS *is* saying is that the perishable things of this life, in fact life itself, are not to be honored, desired, or coveted above God.

You see, mammon, of itself, is really not a bad thing. Mammon is nothing more than the money or treasures of this life, great or small. Mammon is nothing more than simple earthly goods and possessions with which we live out our lives as we go about our vocations in service to God and neighbor. But mammon is dangerous because our things, our life, so easily become the focus of our happiness to the point of destroying our relationship with God.

For a time, we may fool ourselves into believing that we can serve both God and mammon. We tell ourselves that once we have enough set aside to buy a home, get that new car, get that education, have a comfortable retirement, etc., then we can finally attend worship on a regular basis. Or perhaps we tell ourselves life is so short it is a shame not to enjoy it. Church and worship can wait until we retire or for a time when we can work it into our schedule; then we will spend more time with God.

Yet, in most cases, it is my guess that the day when there will be more time in your life for God will never come. And while life may be short remember, your eternity lasts forever. As the old saying goes, *“The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”* Therefore, I must ask you, with what have you paved your road?

So, you see, serving both God and mammon is impossible. You cannot love mammon—your possessions, your time, and money, in short, your life—and give God equal time. Either your devotion and love will be with your worldly commitments and your money and pleasures, or your loyalty and love will be with God and His Word and His heavenly gifts. *“No one can serve two masters.”*

Thus, in the end, we are really left with just two options. There are only two masters, two gods—One the only true God, the other a false god. So as I asked you before, to which of these gods do you cling? Do you serve mammon, allowing it to order your day and your deeds causing you to worry over things you cannot control? Do you chase after the promise of mammon only to find that you never seem to have enough money, enough time, enough stuff?

Or do you serve the God who feeds the birds of the air though they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns?

By the way, this is the same God who brought Abraham's children through the wilderness and the sea, rescuing them from the hand of Pharaoh. This is the God who fed those same children with bread from heaven without their toil or sweat. This is the God who fed the widow of Zarephath and her son, the Prophet Elijah, as well as her entire household, from an inexhaustible bin of flour and jar of oil, all without their toil.

Do you serve the God who clothes the lilies of the field in greater glory than Solomon, though they neither toil nor spin? This is the same God who was incarnate by the HOLY SPIRIT, born of the virgin Mary, and made man; our LORD, JESUS CHRIST, who took on human flesh—for you. He is the same God who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried—for you. He is the same God who rose again on that first Easter Morning and then ascended to the right hand of the FATHER; all this He did for you. This is the same God who promises to return for you and call you, body and soul, to be with Him in His Kingdom, all without your toil, without your work, without your merit. Do you seek His Kingdom and His righteousness? Where are they to be found?

Are they to be found in things? Are they to be found in stuff? Can you purchase them at "Stuff Mart"? Can mammon save you? No! Mammon cannot help, it cannot save; to serve mammon is to damn yourself for eternity having worshipped a false god! So, again, I ask you: where are God's Kingdom and righteousness to be found?

Until the promised day of JESUS' return we find His Kingdom wherever two or three are gathered in His Name. In particular, we find His Kingdom here in this Holy House, and thousands just like it around the world, where His Word is taught in its truth and purity, and the Sacraments are administered according to His Word.

Right here, as we are gathered at the foot of His Cross to receive His Word in preaching and Sacrament, JESUS is truly present in the very midst of us. And where JESUS is present, ***there, and only there***, is one to find the Kingdom of God. For He and the FATHER are one, and where you find JESUS and His Heavenly FATHER, you find also the HOLY SPIRIT, for the Godhead cannot be divided. Where you find the Holy Trinity, where you find the One True God, FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT, there, you will find the Kingdom of God.

Thus, it is in God's Church where one will find God's Righteousness. Is JESUS not the Righteousness of God in the flesh, bodily present with us, giving us His gifts of Word and Sacrament which bring to us forgiveness of sin and eternal life? Is not that Righteousness which is poured over us in the blessed Holy Water of Baptism? Is it not there that we are cleansed from sin and our impure garments removed so that we are then clothed in the garments of CHRIST's righteousness? In Baptism, God adorns you in a garment far greater in beauty than even the lilies of the field can boast; He robes you with His Righteousness.

That same righteousness is placed upon your tongue and poured into your mouth with JESUS' Holy Body and Blood; the is the same Body and Blood which pleads for us before the Mercy Seat of God. Therefore, with the Church we sing,

JESUS Thy Blood and Righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Mid flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head. (LSB 563)

Therefore, it is in the Church of God that we *“seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness,”* that *“all these things shall be added to you.”*

So, it is that as God's holy people, we do not have to worry about what we will eat or what we will drink, because JESUS has promised to feed us daily with Living Bread—Bread He, Himself, provides—Bread which comes down from heaven and is given to us that our thirst for deliverance and righteousness be satisfied with the very Blood He poured out, and the very Body He sacrificed on the Cross for the remission of our sins.

Therefore, though bodily hunger indeed, may come, even so we rest on JESUS' Words, *“Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My Flesh is Food indeed, and My Blood is Drink indeed. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living FATHER sent Me, and I live because of the FATHER, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.”* These are the Words of eternal life. These are the things of JESUS. Therefore, seek the Kingdom of God by receiving the things of JESUS, the King of kings; the LORD of lords, and the King of God's Kingdom.

Then be at peace dear ones. The Day is soon coming when the worries of this life will be behind us, for the Day is not far off when we will cast off our mortal coil—this perishable flesh and blood of our mortal bodies—and be robed in new, everlasting clothing in the resurrection of our flesh on the Last Day; the Day of our LORD. For as it is written, *“...this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality...then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting’ ...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST.”*

Thanks be to God, the Giver of all good things, and thanks be to JESUS that even now His message of salvation and His Kingdom have already been established among us. How do you know? Because you have confessed your sins, even this day, and heard Him say, *“Have no fear dear one, for your faith has saved you, and I forgive you all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✱ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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