

The Second Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Matthew 6:24-34(NIV)

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money. ²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Theme: *What’s First?*

We all have priorities that we set in life. Do I want to go out or do my homework? Should I work late tonight or go home to my family? Do I need to go to this activity? What are we doing this Sunday morning? Can I afford this or that? Priorities are important because setting the wrong ones can be devastating. For instance, sleeping in rather than getting to work on time wouldn’t be a good priority. What Jesus asks us to consider in this text is what our number one priority is.

I. Putting the wrong things first can be devastating.

Jesus talks about two wrong priorities in these verses Mammon and worry.

Mammon can’t help us. In verse 34 Jesus says, “*You cannot serve both God and money.*” The Greek word which is translated as “money” is “mammon.” Mammon is a Greek word for which we have no English translation. The best translation might be “luxuries.” It is what is left over after we have bought what we need. It is that which is beyond our daily bread. There are many things that can fit into this category. It could things like a new car, a nicer home, a television or video game system. It might be cable television or high speed internet. It can also be things like sports, music, a vacation or entertainment. It can also be our money, or investments. None of these things are bad in themselves. There is nothing wrong with purchasing a nicer home, having a new car or watching something on cable on your 52 inch HD television. What is wrong is when our hearts are set on them because then they will all disappoint us.

I find it interesting that when you buy a new car, the salesman tries very hard to sell an extended warranty because he promises that the repairs will be very costly. Eventually, the new car smell goes away and it is just a vehicle. Sometimes we overextend ourselves to buy things that we want, and it becomes a big burden to pay for something that we really couldn’t afford. In that way we begin to serve our possessions. Sometimes we think that we are set for life, and then something unexpected

happens and everything that we looked forward to is gone. We are pleased so much when our investments go up, but it can be very depressing when we see them go down. Eventually, every one of us will die if Jesus doesn't return first, and every single thing, that we have, will go to other people, who will probably fight over it and then squander it. If our wealth and recreation become our priorities, we will find that they will disappoint us.

Worry about the necessities in life isn't any better. Jesus goes on to say, *"Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will wear... Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life?"* When we don't have extra money or leisure time, worry can easily set in. There are all kinds of worries that we can have today. The spike in the price of gasoline is causing a lot of anxiety. Just a few weeks ago who would have imagined that gas would be \$4.20/gallon? The price of food and health care keep going up. There are times when our job doesn't seem very secure. The worst worries of all are about our health and the health of our loved ones. I have even heard people speak as if they are doing a good work when they worry about someone.

But worry is just as devastating as trust in our riches. When we worry and fret, we often get on other people's nerves. Often times we can't do anything about the situation anyway. When we do try to do something out of worry, we only make the situation worse. Worry and anxiety can end up destroying us. It takes away all of our hope and peace.

II. Having God's kingdom first in life is a wonderful blessing.

Jesus sets our hearts at rest by saying, *"See first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

What is the kingdom of God? It is his rule among us. It is not in a place, but in our hearts. It is where Christ rules as Lord. Christ is calling for faith in Him in these verses. When we seek the kingdom of God, we are seeking Jesus as our Savior. He is the greatest treasure that we have because He holds both temporal and eternal gifts in His hands for us. He holds the forgiveness of sins. He paid for every single one of them on the cross of Calvary. The way that we enter the kingdom of God is to receive the forgiveness of sins in His name. When our children are born, we bring them into God's kingdom through the washing of rebirth in Holy Baptism. As Christians we examine our lives and confess our sins and trust in God's complete forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We look at our lives and see sin, but we look to Christ for His righteousness. He makes us fit for the kingdom of God.

In the *Small Catechism* in the section on Holy Communion Martin Luther writes, **"Where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.** Forgiveness in Christ's name opens a whole new world for us. We know that He loves us. He hears our prayers. He works everything toward our good. It is He who invites us to pray for our daily bread. He invites us to come to Him when we are weary and burdened, and He will give us rest. When we are weak, He is our strength. When we are guilty, He is our righteousness. When we are betrayed, He is the friend who will never leave us. Even when we are dying, He is our life that will never end. Christ holds everything that we will ever need, and He will never fail us. He proved it when He gave His body and shed His blood on the cross for us and rose from the dead as our Savior.

Faith in Him is what fills our hearts with peace. When the wealth and worries of this world are in

first place, we never find peace. The wealth only disappoints us and the worries only fill our lives with anxiety. But how blessed it is when we seek Christ and His kingdom first. We have the peace of the forgiveness of all of our sins. We have confidence in every situation in life that He is with us and will care for us. He takes our cares and worries, and fills our hearts with the peace that passes all understanding. That is the peace which knows that He loves us, guides us, and delivers us from all evil. Nothing will ever be able to separate us from His love.

There will be times when it doesn't seem that way, when Jesus and His love seem so far away. That is what Asaph thought at first in Psalm 73 when he wrote, *"This is what the wicked are like – always carefree they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure."* But then he came to realize that when the wicked fall, there is no one to catch them. They fall hard and fast. Then he wrote one of the most beautiful sections of the Bible, *"Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."* He came to realize that there is no greater treasure than having our Savior by our side. As he writes at the end of the psalm, *"It is good to be near God."*

What is your priority, the wealth, pleasures, and worries of this world or Christ. When the wealth and worries of this world are in first place, they will eventually disappoint us and even devastate us. We will fall and never be able to get back up. But when we seek Christ and His righteousness, we will find that He will never fail us. He is the Savior who holds all the spiritual and the earthly gifts that we need.

Amen.

***Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
May 24, 2008***