

There’s so much to worry about: Bills, work, and family; our health, our wealth, and the weather. But Jesus introduced us to another way of looking at things, another way of living our lives, lives free of worry and anxiety. That’s what we’re going to talk about this morning, and what it means for our walk with God and one another.

OPENING PRAYER

MATTHEW 6:26-34

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 mammon. 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? 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 Gospel, we heard Jesus say that we may rely on God for everything we need in this life, **Matthew 6:32**, for **“your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”**

The Lord encourages us in our hearts when he tells us God is our father and assures us that he knows what we need, that he cares for us. But how hard it is for us to believe that this is true! We have so many concerns and worries day by day which eat away at our souls, which fill our hearts with anxiety and fear, which steal away our joy.

But the Lord knows this too. He walked among us as a man, a lower middle class tradesman, from the other side of the tracks, for 30 years, and he felt our pain, he experienced our struggles. Jesus confronted on a daily basis the frailties of the human spirit, the limitations of the human body, and the darkness which lay just below the surface of every person's heart.

Thus Jesus began this teaching about our Father in Heaven with these words: **Matthew 6:24-25, "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 mammon. 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?"**

Jesus originally shared this message with ordinary people—laborers, slaves, fishermen, and middle management—at his Sermon on the Mount. So when he said, **"No one can serve two masters,"** the people immediately thought to themselves, "There's nothing worse than having two bosses! You can't get your work done on time, and even when you do, no one's happy with what you've done!"

When I worked in academia I reported to my department chairman and I also reported to my dean, which was fine, for a time, that is, until the dean was sacked and replaced and the new dean went to war with my chairman. Guess who took it in the head?

Again, Jesus said, **"No one can serve two masters,"** and then he said, **"You cannot serve God and mammon."** **"Mammon"** is **"money,"** as in, **"You cannot serve God and money."** Jesus wanted the people to understand that these two things are mutually exclusive, for they both demand undivided loyalties just as two bosses in one's workplace would.

Jesus was not talking about making a living. He was not telling everyone to quit their jobs as though gainful employment was evil. Rather, he was addressing a lust for money that is so great that it overshadows our devotion to God.

Consider what Jesus later said, when he proclaimed, **Matthew 25:45, “As you have done to the least of these My brethren, so too you have done unto Me.”** To serve God is to love our neighbors, and, as we know, the pursuit of money as a way of life usually—no, always—includes taking advantage of or stealing from our neighbors. But there’s more.

Five times in the Gospel Jesus used the word “**anxious**” to describe the state of the person who’s master is money. He said, “**do not be ANXIOUS, asking, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘...drink?’ or wear?’**” And “**do not be ANXIOUS about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be ANXIOUS for itself.**”

Again, Jesus was talking to ordinary people—day laborers and herdsmen, moms and dads, people who struggled to care for their families. He was not browbeating them for being worrywarts, for not having enough faith. But he was encouraging them to know in their heart of hearts that they were not alone. “**Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them**” (Matthew 6:26). Jesus was encouraging the people to trust God as their father just as a child trusts their father to provide for their every need.

But, alas, children become adults, and adults do not look to their parents for support, and so we worry, we worry about putting bread on the table, making sure those we love have a roof over their head, and we worry about stuff. Stuff: Have you ever thought about how the more stuff you have, the more you worry about it, and the more you worry about it, the more stuff you need? I do. And the more stuff I need the more I worry that it has become my god.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, when money and material possessions are our god, we devote all of our mental, emotional, and spiritual energy into getting it and keeping it, and we neglect our higher calling, our vocation to love God and to love our neighbor.

Each one of us probably has a stockpile of stuff we haven't used for years which we could give to the poor and we would never feel the difference. But we don't like that because we have been indoctrinated to believe that the more stuff and bigger stuff we have, the more security we have, and the better off we are. It's a trap! It's a rabbit hole! It's a black hole of sorrow, despair, and anxiety!

It makes so much more sense to serve and love God. After all, stuff didn't die for you and me, and stuff didn't rise from the dead for you and me, and we won't have any stuff in heaven. But we will have Jesus. And so it's him whom we serve.

Friends in Christ, this week may you breathe more easily—less anxiety, less worry. May you have a sense of peace that God loves you as his son, his daughter, and he will provide for your every need.

This week may you take a moment to see with your eyes and with your heart the wonders of God's creation, the lilies of the field and the birds of the sky, and know that you are of so much more value than they before your Father who art in Heaven.

And this week may you have the opportunity to share this Good News with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.