

Faith or Fear
Matthew 6:24-34
February 19, 2017

“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. 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? Look 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? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If 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? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

There are only two ways to live our earthly lives. We must either live in faith or we must live in fear. There are no other options. Either we trust in God to provide our needs, or we must work to provide for ourselves.

The Sermon on the Mount contains all the ground rules for living a Christian life. Those first twelve verses of Matthew chapter five invite us to examine relationship with the world, with others, and with God. In this week’s text, Jesus invites us to examine our relationship with worldly wealth. Where we place our trust decides whether we will live in faith or in fear.

Pharisees, both ancient and modern, live by a misconception. They believe that the more material wealth you have the more God loves you. We know that can’t be true because, during his earthly life, Jesus was dirt poor.

We are going to examine today’s text in small pieces.

Matthew 6:24 *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.*

This was a judgment on the religious elite of the day. While these religious leaders sought to worship God with Temple sacrifices, they ended up as merchants selling animals for sacrifice and exchanging ordinary money for Temple money.

They carried on their business in God’s house. In their greed, they exchanged worshiping God for using God to provide a profit. Jesus made it clear that the human heart is only big enough for one master.

In this verse, the word “serve” is very important. Our material blessings are given by God and are meant to serve our earthly needs. However, when those material things hold a place of devotion in our lives, they stop serving us and we begin serving them.

It is impossible to serve two masters. God and the love of earthly wealth are diametrically opposed to each other. A person will bow to one or the other, but he cannot bow to both. It's self-delusion for a person to think that he can bow down in two different directions at one time.

When it comes to serving two masters, it's a question of priority in love and devotion. Scripture calls on us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. That leaves no room for another master. Just a few verses ahead of our text, Jesus told the people: *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (Mt 6:21 NIV).

Augustine, one of the early church fathers, said, “Whatever I love, that is my God.” Your heart can only belong to one master, and the Christian's heart belongs to God.

Matthew 6:25-27 *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? Look 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? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?*

Those who are poor are not free from the love of money and worldly possessions. The wealth of this world can still be the idol they fall down and worship. Money can make them its victims by causing them to envy what they don't have, or by causing them to worry about their daily needs. Jesus reminds us that such envy and worries are signs of a faith issue in the lives of believers.

Jesus makes two points to help us trust in God. He tells us that it is God who provides life and all the things it takes for life to exist. Therefore, shouldn't we trust in God to provide our daily needs? The birds have no resources by which they can provide for themselves, yet God sees to it that the birds are cared for. Aren't we more important than a flock of sparrows?

In verse 27 Jesus asks if we can worry ourselves into living longer. The King James translation asks if we can make ourselves taller by worrying. In either case, it's laughable to think that worrying is the answer to longer life or taller people.

Matthew 6:28-30 *And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If 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?*

Here, Jesus directs his listeners to the flowers that covered the hillsides. He reminds the people that the beauty of the flowers is short-lived. Then Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater. He asks, if God dresses these flowers so beautifully, flowers which are here today and gone tomorrow, why wouldn't God give earthly clothing to his people, who were made to live forever?

Jesus uses the term: *O you of little faith* (Mt 6:30). Several times, he addressed his disciples the same way.

Matthew 8:26 *[Jesus] replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.*

Matthew 14:31 *Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught [Peter]. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"*

Matthew 16:8 *Aware of [the disciples'] discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?"*

Jesus used this phrase in times when his disciples failed to put their complete trust in the promises and power of God's Messiah. How often has he said these words to us? The book of Proverbs commands us to: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding* (Pr 3:5 NIV).

Matthew 6:31-34 *So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

How can Jesus be any plainer than when he says: *Do not worry* (Mt 6:31). Jesus isn't suggesting that we shouldn't worry, he's commanding it. Worrying is a sign of unbelief. Worrying is the equivalent of telling God you don't trust him to take care of you. Worrying is a horrible waste of imagination, because most worrying is just imagination.

Jesus goes on to say that pagans, or unbelievers, worry about such things. Why do they worry? Simply because they are unbelievers. They don't trust in God's promise to provide. That leaves them with only one choice – to earn their own way through this world. Since they can easily recognize their human limitations, they put their trust in the fleeting wealth of this world.

The child of God lives by a different creed because the child of God lives in a different kingdom. His heart belongs in the kingdom of God's grace. He knows that he has a heavenly Father, who loves him enough to die for him and, therefore, he trusts God to provide.

The primary job of the Christian is to make his or her first priority to seek the kingdom of

God and God's righteousness. Every believer is already a member of God's kingdom. However, those who truly follow Christ are to continually seek, to continually desire nothing more than God's rule of grace in their hearts.

When a Christian's heart is found in Christ's loving hands, then they know that material items such as food, drink, and clothing will all flow from those same hands. Scripture tells us: *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* (Ro 8:32 NIV).

In verse 34, Jesus tells us to live today and let tomorrow rest in God's hands. God wants us to trust in him so completely that today is our only thought. The more we worry about tomorrow, the less we trust in God, and the more we live in fear not faith.

Are you living in fear? Are you anxious about tomorrow? Faith is the antidote for fear. When we walk through this life by faith, we can dismiss the worldly trappings of money and material possessions. When we walk through this life by faith, we can dismiss all earthly fears because we know we have a heavenly Father who has promised to meet our needs.