

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD
19TH SUN. AFTER PENTECOST/LWML

MATT 6:24-34
SUN OCT 4, '15

²⁴ "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 money. 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? ²⁶ 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.

Children's Message: A jar has sand in bottom, gravel on top.

Rocks are added, but not all can fit.

Another jar has the same amount of rocks, gravel & sand.

How is it done? The rocks are put in first,
then the gravel & sand fit in around them.

The way to make things fit is start with the big things.

There are lots of things we like to fill our life with.

We like to have fun, spend time with friends,
we need to eat food and sleep.

As Christians we want to learn about faith in Jesus
and express this faith in how we live.

But we have hard time fitting everything into our life
because we run out of time, energy, attention.

It is fine to have fun, friends and food. God gives them to us.

But the biggest and best thing God gives us is Jesus.

This is why we need to put faith in him first.

Then our lives will be full of everything else we need.

Children's message illustrates that order of things is important.

In recipe for cooking or instructions for assembling new item,
the order of things makes a big difference.

Text comes from sermon on mount, where Jesus talks about
how God's ways are backwards from our ways.

Actually, we are the ones who tend to be backwards

Today's other readings refer to creation, when God did things in order, in order to make an orderly creation.

But things became disorderly when Adam and Eve decided not to do things God's way but their own way.

like little children insisting on dressing themselves, they got everything inside out and backwards.

Now, because humans are fallen, upside down, we tend to see things backwards, especially when we look at God.

People think being good is what makes God love us rather than that God's love for us is what makes us good.

People think they are saved by choosing to believe in God rather than by God's choosing them and giving faith.

People think God promises to give whatever they pray for rather than praying for what God promises to give.

Text reminds us God gives us many wonderful gifts.

Problem we can have in our homes is, more things we have, the bigger mess it is when things become disorderly.

It is both a practical and a spiritual problem.

As I was studying text, I happened to read article by

Peter Lee, Presbyterian prof at sem in Washington DC:

“Consider this thought: a strategic method of Satan in America is to engage in a "silent war," one that is so subtle that the church can easily forget its true nature and the identity of their true enemy. In other words, one way in which the evil one persecutes the church in American is by *not persecuting the church in America!* Allow the American dream of prosperity dominate the values of the average Christian. Provide a way so that they indeed achieve success as the result of their years of education, hard work, and countless hours spent in their professional area of expertise. Their success is not seen as a blessing that results from the *Lord's sacrifice*, but a result of *their own sacrifice*. Then give them a craving for more success that can only come by working even harder. Let them focus on these things as the goal of their lives and lose focus on the central doctrines of grace. Let them lose perspective of the greater homeland that awaits them (Heb. 11:10, 16) and become more interested in their own domestic concerns (Hag. 1:4). Notice how God is slowly yet methodically removed from the consciousness of the church. At best, He is viewed as the means to a greater end – which is by definition idolatry. At worst, He is effectively absent in the daily life of the Christian. God is not given any recognition for the blessed life that we have. Satan has achieved his goal—sever the individual from the reality of God in life and lull

the church into a state of complacency—and he has done so passively and silently.

This article, like text, highlights two related problems,
both what we think we have to take care of
and what we think is taking care of us.

WE CAN BE SLAVES OF THINGS MEANT TO SERVE
WE WANT INSTEAD TO SERVE GOD'S KINGDOM
WE ARE PROVIDED FOR BY GOD IN HIS KINGDOM

WE CAN BE SLAVES OF THINGS MEANT TO SERVE

²⁴ "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 money.

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?" ²⁶

Jesus first spoke these words to poor Galilean peasants
who had reason to worry about tomorrows food or clothing
because they barely had enough for today.

Now that we have insurance, welfare, social security,
retirement plans, etc., we should be much more worry free.

We have first world problems. We say..

"what shall we wear?" because closet is so full, can't decide.

"what shall we eat?" because refrigerator and cupboards
are full of things we already had just yesterday.

We in our culture may feel even more stressed than back then.

In that day people worked from sunup to sundown
and farmers plowed with animals that go only go so long.
before they had to stop to rest them.

Now we have electric lights so we can work 24 hours.

and work with machines that never stop. What progress!

At first may seem first verse: "no one can serve two masters"
doesn't fit with rest of text, but Jesus words,

"Therefore, is say to you," tells us it does.

The point is we easily become slaves to the things we have.

We think we have pets but they think they have us.

Do you take dog for walk or does he tug leash, take you?

We may start out one way and end up other way.

Cell phones set us free from cords that tie us to the wall

but now people are more tied than ever to their phones.

Big beautiful house full of wonderful things
can mean we are slaves to mortgage & credit card bill.
All of these things we enjoy can use up our time, money, energy
so that we don't really enjoy what we have
but it keeps us from what we may say we really want to do.

WE WANT INSTEAD TO SERVE GOD'S KINGDOM

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,

When Jesus tells a parable of the kingdom of God
which he says is like sower who goes out to sow seed,
he says seed that fell among thorns is like people
for whom cares of world keep them from being fruitful.
As we celebrate Lutheran Women's Missionary League Sunday
we are reminded that like these women,
we want to be fruitful in God's kingdom.
Instead of being consumed by concern for our food & clothing
LWML women are concerned about the needs of others.
Just this last week, I was made more aware
of all the things LWML women do in our congregation.
When we have refreshments after the service,
when there are meals before evening Advent & Lent worship
that is organized by women of LWML.
People in hospital get cards, Baptized children get
birthday cards, sent by women of the LWML.
Who sees that children's Bible busy bags are ready to use
and straightens up in nursery? It the LWML.
These kinds of things also happen on a world wide scale
through projects that meet both physical and spiritual needs.
Point is not that you have to be part of LWML to do these things
but that all of us can seek ways to serve in God's kingdom,
look around and see things that can be done.
This includes not just things we do with our hands
but opportunities to build up the kingdom with our words,
speaking to people who need a word of gospel
to encourage them or to introduce them to Jesus.
But here it is easy to start getting worried again.
I don't know what to do. Needs are so great, what can I do.
What shall I do? What shall I say?
This is when we must understand that seeking God's kingdom
is not just looking for right things for us to be doing
if God is truly our king who deserves our full devotion

but looking to see what God is doing for us
since he is our king on whom everything depends.
What are we working for and who are we working for?
If you are self employed, you are free from working for boss.
But now there is no vacation and no day off
because day without work is day without pay.
But being in God's kingdom means we are not self-employed.

WE ARE PROVIDED FOR BY GOD IN HIS KINGDOM

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.

Jesus mentions Solomon and his glory.

Why did Solomon have what he had?
because he sought so hard to get it? No.

It is because when God asked what he wanted,
he asked for wisdom to take good care of God's people.

And God said he would give him this and the rest as well.

Jesus' isn't saying things like food & clothing are unimportant.

They are important to God. He knows we need them
and so he promises to provide them.

But why does God so lovingly provide them, and why is it
so important for us to know he is one who provides?

It is so that we will learn, "Man does not live on bread alone
but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Second reading from Hebrews 1 point out

Jesus upholds universe God created by word of his power.

God's word is even more important to us than daily food

because we are more important to God than grass
that is alive just for today and then thrown into the fire.

God wants us to be alive not just today but forever
and not to be thrown into the fire of hell.

This is why God has given us his word of gospel
about the Word made flesh, Jesus

Because we have turned everything upside down by our sin,
Jesus has done things upside down
to turn things rightside up.
The creator was made part of his creation.
Our master became our servant.
The giver of life gave his life into death for us
as the holy one who is separated from all sin
took all our sins on himself
in order for his death to give birth to life.
so that we who turned our backs on God
might be brought back to God.
This is why we can be sure God loves us enough
to provide for our physical needs as well.
God doesn't just tell us to seek his kingdom & righteousness.
He does for us everything we need to do.
Seeking his kingdom means simply looking to him
to give us his kingdom by grace.
The righteousness we need to seek is his righteousness
which he gives to us by grace when he forgives us.
This is why LWML isn't just about projects to help others
but sharing God's word together, encouraging in faith
This is what comes first, receiving God's righteousness
and being made part of his kingdom
so that our life is put back in order
and we can enjoy all God gives & help others as well.
So Jesus is not saying we are to worry about
looking after God's kingdom and God will look after us
but that we don't have to worry at all
because God takes care of both.
And in the process, he gives us every resource we need
for everything he gives us to do in his kingdom.

WE CAN BE SLAVES OF THINGS MEANT TO SERVE
when we end up taking care of them instead of opposite.
WE WANT INSTEAD TO SERVE GOD'S KINGDOM
Rather than letting the cares of this world make us unfruitful
we want to be servants of God and his people.
We are made able to do this because of Jesus service to us.
WE ARE PROVIDED FOR BY GOD IN HIS KINGDOM
in which he provides for our needs of life today
but first in importance, provides all we need for eternal life.