

Third Sunday of Matthew
6:22-33
Serving Two Masters - Anxiety

In this morning's Gospel, we heard: "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is your darkness!" Our Lord commands us to keep our eyes focused on God. For we must be sincere and single hearted. If we fill our minds with anxieties over the wealth of this world we will extinguish the lamp and darken our souls. If we keep our eyes focused on the darkness of this world our whole body will be filled with darkness and we will turn our backs on God. So, we must be focused on generosity not stinginess.

The Lord also tells us that we cannot serve two masters. For if we try to, we will grow to hate one and love the other. What are the two masters Our Lord is referring to? God is one of these masters and the wealth of this world is the other.

The word mammon is the Aramaic word for wealth. The acquisition of wealth can control our life. It can demand that we spend all our time seeking it, preserving it, and multiplying it. God, our true Lord, also makes total demands on our hearts. We must choose which one we are to serve.

Some of us think that we can divide our loyalties in this life. After all, that's what secular society is all about. At any moment, you serve the master of choice. When in church or with church people, I serve God. When I'm studying, I serve the school. When I'm working, I serve my company or my superior and so on. Jesus says this is impossible. "No one can serve two masters."

Why? Because, the nature of humanity is to love one thing more than another. Every time we make a choice, about anything, we are expressing our devotion to one thing over another. We must ask ourselves, "Who is our master?" We must examine our lives and look at how we respond when given with a choice. For example: Do we choose to attend church on Sunday and the Holy Days or to do something else like sleep in, run errands, do chores, study, play, hunt or spend time with family and friends?

Do we choose to say our prayers in the morning and evening or do we watch television or spend time on the computer? Do we give money to those in need or do we buy a cup of coffee for ourselves or purchase something that we do not really need? Do we support the Church or spend that money on something else which will raise our status in our family or community? Which master do we serve?

Choosing not to serve wealth means that we will give it away in the service of God, thus treasuring up wealth in heaven instead of on earth. The poverty that we are called to live in is the poverty that we know that all things are from God. If God calls us to give some of our wealth away, whether that be to the poor or to the sick or to the imprisoned or to build his Church then that is what we must do. The wealth God has given us does not belong to us, it belongs to God. God does not condemn wealth.

Remember Job, he was considered to be one of the wealthiest people on earth as well as a righteous man. But when God allowed it to be taken from him, Job did not get angry at God since he knew that God would still care for him. Abraham also was incredibly wealthy and he, through obedience to God, became the father of many nations as was promised to him by God, if he would be obedient to Him and go where God told him to go. He was commanded to offer his only son as a sacrifice to God and Abraham was willing to because he loved God and trusted Him. Due to his obedience to God, God sent his angel to stop the sacrifice and Abraham was blessed by God.

But some of us will ask ourselves, if I have God as my master and I don't seek after the things of this world, whether it be social, political or material how will I survive? We must trust God to provide for us and take care of us. We are commanded by Jesus not to be anxious about the things of this world, for God will provide for us.

What is anxiety? It is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. It is based upon a fear that has no basis in reality. When we are anxious about something it becomes the overwhelming focus of our life. It takes the place of God in our life. We are not being told not to be concerned about the things of this world, but not to be anxious about them. Our Lord promises us that God will take care of us. We are not to be anxious about the cares of this world. He gives examples of the birds of the air being fed by our Father. He tells us to look at the lilies of the field, that God clothes them

in beautiful attire for which they did not need to work. That by being anxious we cannot even add one moment to our life. Jesus also tells us not to be anxious about what we are to eat or what we are to drink or what we are to wear.

Those that do not serve God are anxious about these things, but we, as Christ's followers, are to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to us.

St. Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians.

“Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, these do; and the God of peace will be with you.”

St Peter writes: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

The Kingdom of God is the enjoyment of all that is good. This comes through righteousness. To him who seeks after spiritual things God, in his generosity adds that which is needed for physical life.

St. Seraphim of Sarov tells us...

"Excessive care about worldly matters is characteristic of an unbelieving and fainthearted person, and woe to us, if, in taking care of ourselves, we do not use as our foundation our faith in God, who cares for us!

If we do not attribute visible blessings to Him, which we use in this life, then how can we expect those blessings from Him which are promised in the future? We will not be of such little faith.

By the words of our Savior, it is better first to seek the Kingdom of God, for

the rest shall be added unto us (see Mt. 6:33)."

We are to worry that we are being obedient to God. We are not to be anxious about anything for God is with us.