

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin R. Eden

The Eighth Sunday after Epiphany
Saturday, February 26, 2011 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 27, 2011 at 8:00 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.

Do Not Be Anxious

Matthew 6:24-34

The words of Jesus read in our Gospel lesson are familiar. We have heard time and again that we cannot serve two masters – God and money – or Mammon (possessions) as the King James puts it. We also hear that we are not to be anxious about anything. These words are read each year at Thanksgiving. And for the last generation here in the Western world, few people have been truly anxious about where their next meal was coming from. Something for which we should be thankful.

In my lifetime, until very recently, I can't remember going into a grocery store and not buying produce because of the price. But the other day – I got a little anxious. Ever since I turned 16, I never gave a thought to going for a drive. I love to explore new places. It is a great time to think. A lot of sermons have been written behind the wheel. When we lived up North, we would drive 2-3 hours to go shopping. But \$3 (heading toward \$4) gas leads to a little anxiety.

The farmers might be a little anxious this Spring concerning the sowing of seed. Will there be flooding? Will the soil dry out? Will it ever get and stay warm? Jesus says, your anxiety will not bring about

better weather, lower gas prices, or lower food prices. Your anxiety will not lower your utility bill or get you a new job.

But do not think that God is not concerned about your troubles. He knows what you need even before you ask for it, as Jesus says. Pray for and be confident you will have your daily bread. You may not have your daily steak and lobster, you might not even have your daily Big Mac, but you will have your daily bread.

The issue of money or possessions in relation to God is how our anxiety about them affects our relationship with God. Jesus is not saying “Don’t worry, live for today and the credit card bills of tomorrow will take care of themselves.” Budgeting, saving, planning for the future – these are all aspects of good stewardship of what God has given us.

The heart of the issue is a matter of the heart. Where do we place our trust? Is it in our hard work and the possessions we have acquired – is that where we find our peace and comfort?

We see how money issues affect relationships among husbands and wives, family and friends. Have you ever had a friendship or relationship with a family member change or even end because of a money issue? When I worked for AAL, I had clients who were sisters who had a disagreement with their parent’s will over a couple thousand dollars. They would not speak to each other – and it had been several years since the disagreement came about.

In college, I saw this happen with some friends of mine over

about a hundred dollars. But even if it is many thousands of dollars, look at your family; look at your good friends; what price do you place on them?

If I were to lose a friend in such a situation, what would pain me most is the thought that friendship with me could be sold at such a low price.

But who am I? I am nothing. What about our greatest Friend? – Christ our Lord. At what point do we discount Him if our bank account doesn't look the way we think it should? At what price do we sell the conviction of our faith?

At what point do we lose the faith and trust that our Lord *has* and *will* provide for us? What price do you set on that? Anyone who could give a definite answer to that question, anyone who would dare set a price on the priceless gift of faith and salvation is the one to whom Jesus is speaking. You cannot serve two masters. You “will hate the one and love the other.”

The question really is, “which one can you do without?” Can you do without money so long as you have God, or can you do without God so long as you have money?

The reality is that God desires to bless us in this life – and He has. Look around. Do we worry more about eating too much or eating too little? “The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want.” There is nothing I lack. He leads me to green pastures. “My cup runneth over.” And we stand before a closet full of clothes and say “I have

nothing to wear.”

At the time when John D. Rockefeller was the richest man in the world, he was asked how much money did he want, how much was enough. He answered, “Just a little more.”

Jesus says, “Do not be anxious about your life.” Do not worry about clothing and food and the comfort they bring. God will provide your daily bread and all that you need. By this, He encourages us to find real peace and comfort and satisfaction in the kingdom of God and in His righteousness, rather than in the false comfort and “peace which is no peace” that the world offers – which will never bring satisfaction even to the wealthiest of men.

That which is here today and gone tomorrow will never satisfy for eternity. Having enough of, or the right kind of, possessions never secured a true friend. My relationship and your relationship with our Lord is based on much stronger stuff than anything we physically possess.

To impress our Lord and secure our relationship with God, we certainly would look into our closet and say, “I have nothing to wear.” Only when we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ are we made presentable, and are able to stand before our Lord and have a relationship with Him.

Therefore, Jesus says, “Do not be anxious.” Everything you truly need, God has already provided. Amen.