

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
October 10, 13 & 14, 2007
St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

Who or What is Your God? Matthew 6:19-24

Most of us know that the first commandment that God gave to the human race is, “You shall have no other gods.” Now that seems like a rather easy commandment to keep, doesn't it? After all haven't you and I come here today to worship that true God? Don't we confess that we believe in the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? Don't we acknowledge that we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior? If that is the case then the sermon theme for today, “Who or What is Your God?” seems like a rather stupid or at least simplistic question.

Yet as we continue our study of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we soon find that this isn't such a stupid question. In fact, Jesus spends some time in talking to his disciples about this matter. Now these are people who have confessed that they believe that Jesus is the promised Savior. They acknowledge him as the true God. It is to these people, Christians; Christians like you and me that Jesus has them consider the question **“WHO OR WHAT IS YOUR GOD?”** As Jesus presents this question to his followers, to us, he has us reflect on **I) What Do You Trust for Your Security? II) What Do Your Eyes Focus On? And III) Who Are You Serving Or Living For?**

WHAT DO YOU TRUST FOR YOUR SECURITY?

I feel safe and secure. My future is set. I have saved enough money to take care of myself in my retirement. I should be ok. How often haven't we heard people make that comment? How often haven't we thought the same thing? Haven't we been told that if we have enough money invested, plan properly then our future will be secure? If you are told that enough, after a while you begin to believe that. You begin to place your trust and confidence in what you have done to make your future certain and secure. We can become just like the foolish man who had so much that he had to build larger storehouses and granaries to keep all his crops and said to himself, “You've got it made.” And that night God said today you die. What good did all those material things do him? None what so ever. That is why Jesus says to us, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Vv. 19-21)

Now is Jesus saying that we should not save and not plan for the future? No. Absolutely not. For the Scriptures speak much about setting aside, planning and being wise managers of what God entrusts to your management and care. Jesus is talking about our priorities and where we are placing our trust and confidence. He says don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth. In other words, don't think that the things of this world are all that there is. Don't think that this world's material blessings are what is the most important and what will last and keep you safe. Our Savior points out that these things that we have can be gone quickly. Moths can eat up your clothes. The food you have will be eaten up or rot and spoil. The other wealth that you have accumulated can be stolen by thieves. None of these things last. So don't put a lot of stock in them. Don't put your trust in them. Don't make them your god.

Where should we store up treasures? Where should we put our confidence and trust? Jesus says, “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (v. 20) How do we do that? Well, are you more concerned about accumulating wealth and things than listening to the Word of God? Do you neglect hearing and reading God's Word? Do you rarely if ever receive your Savior's body and blood in the sacrament of Holy Communion? Is gathering for worship and Bible study

something that you have no time for because you are too busy? Jesus says to us, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things (our material and physical needs) will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33) The things of this world will not last. But God’s Word endures forever. In the Lord God we have the greatest treasure and the best security. We have the treasure of eternal life in heaven. We have the security of knowing that we will be safe and at peace forever because of the work of our Savior Jesus Christ.

WHAT DO YOUR EYES FOCUS ON?

Jesus now goes on to talk about our eyes and if they are healthy or sick. He also uses the concept of our eyes being single minded or wicked. In other words, are your eyes focused on what is most important or are they distracted by all the things the world seems to offer us. Jesus says, “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good (single minded), your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad (wicked) your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Vv. 22-23) Eyes that are not single-minded and focused on God’s Word can be led to view happiness and meaning differently. You may look and say I will be happy if I just own this entertainment center. I will be considered successful if I drive this car. I will have a wonderful life if I own this home. True happiness will be found if I have that beautiful woman as my wife or that handsome man as my husband. By nature our eyes are diseased and wicked. We are blind when it comes to what is really important and valuable. We don’t know what the true treasures are. It is only the Holy Spirit who enlightens us. He opens our eyes through the power of God’s Word to see what is truly valuable, what really lasts, what is really important. The Spirit opens our eyes so that we see that we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. We see that we have an inheritance in heaven that moths and rust cannot destroy and which thieves can never steal from us.

Yet even after our eyes have been opened to see the truth, we still have to battle the sickness of our eyes. We still have to fight with God’s help to keep our eyes focused on that which is true and pure and to make decisions and choices in our lives that reflect what we know to be true and right. It is a battle. A battle that the Lord helps us in and a battle that when we lose focus God forgives and helps us to refocus and to move forward. As we attempt to keep our eyes single minded in our focus Jesus now turns to the thought of who are you serving or living for.

WHO ARE YOU SERVING OR LIVING FOR?

Jesus says, “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.” (v. 24) You can’t have two masters. You can’t have two gods. We may try but it doesn’t work. As Jesus says, you either love one and hate the other or you are devoted to the one and you despise the other. Now our Savior names the two gods. They are the Lord God, our Creator, Savior and Comforter or Money, the wealth of this world.

In and of itself money is not evil; it is a gift that God has given us in this life. God has given us money to take care of ourselves and our families, to help those in need and the less fortunate, to use to spread the good news of Jesus our Savior throughout the world. However we often look at money as something that will solve all of our problems. If I had just a little more money then I wouldn’t have the problems in paying all my bills. If I had a little more money then I wouldn’t be worrying about my future. When you think this way what has become your god? Money. Does my security come from money or does it come from the promises of my Savior Jesus who has told me that I don’t have to worry because he will take care of all my needs.

Why is it when we talk about money in church that we often become rather defensive and tense? Because my money is mine and I don’t want to give it up. Is it really your money? Isn’t it God’s money that he has given to you to manage in your life? Or has money become our master and we its slave. How many people don’t ruin their health, their families and their lives in the pursuit of wealth because money has become their god and they have become its slave. Jesus warns us, “You can’t serve two masters.”

During the next months we will be hearing much about money and the ministry of this congregation. As we begin a capital fund appeal for our school building to improve and upgrade our facilities, we will naturally be talking about costs as we plan and prepare. We will need to be gathering funds. Will we see this as an opportunity to use the Lord's money to provide an adequate facility for our children, grandchildren and children yet to be born to learn about Jesus their Savior? Or will we selfishly think and say, "This is my money. Let the parents of those children pay for their children's education. My children are grown and gone. I never used that school why should I pay for it." We will also be talking about our proposed work plan for 2008 and the funding of the ministries that we as a congregation have undertaken. Will we support generously and cheerfully our missions and the training of our future pastors, teachers and staff ministers? Will we support secondary Christian education as we give to Lakeside Lutheran High School? Will we support the ministry of St. Mark's as we continue to reach out in this community to the thousands of people who are unchurched in Watertown and also to our own members as we work to grow in our faith and love?

We can't serve two masters. We serve either our Savior Jesus or we serve Money. Why serve Jesus? Because he has loved us and proven that love by living and dying for every one of us here today. He provides for all of our needs in this life. He has prepared an eternal home for us in heaven. With those treasures we now serve our true God as we live for him and as we generously and cheerfully support the spread of His Word with our time, our abilities and our money.

Amen.