

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes October 11, 2006

Matthew 6:25-34

Matthew, chapter 6

[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 mammon.]*

25: "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life,
what you shall eat or what you shall drink,
nor about your body, what you shall 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 one cubit 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 men 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 all these things;
and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

33: But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be yours as well.

34: "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.
Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day."

Discussion Notes:

Program Introduction:

- We're all familiar with this verse, have sung it many times:
"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you."
- But what does it mean, what must we do, what must we avoid,

to “seek first the kingdom of God.”

- When a verse is taken out of its context & made into a song, it can be understood, interpreted, and then used in many, many ways, many of which can be inaccurate, unethical, even oppressive.
- And what can we expect in the promise that “all these things shall be yours as well”?
- This is what we’ll discuss today on Deep In Scripture.

Introduction:

- A very familiar portion of Scripture ... *read* ...
- On the surface, these verses seem simple enough ... but as a result has led to many misunderstandings, especially the extremes:
 - “Health & Wealth Gospel”
 - Don’t worry about tomorrow BECAUSE God will bless the faithful, the generous!
 - Combined with other verses, to say something different than intended:
“By his wounds you have been healed” 1 Ptr 2:24 (Isa 53:5)
“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” Lk 6:38
 - REMEMBER: “Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written” (DV, 12.3; CCC, 109-114)
 - 1: “Be especially attentive ‘to the content and unity of the whole Scripture.’”
 - 2: “Read the Scripture within ‘the living Tradition of the whole Church.’”
 - 3: “Be attentive to the analogy of faith.”
 - “Strict poverty”
 - Since God promises to take care of everything you need, now & forever, don’t worry, don’t plan, don’t prepare, just trust!
 - Combined with the lives of radical saints ...
 - But ignores the full teaching of the faith:
“If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8)
 - Again the problem is the imbalance of private interpretation; ignores the different expectations & responsibilities of the different vocations.
- So how does the average homeowner, husband / wife, father / mother live out these verses?

[break]

- This week’s special: “7 Steps to Becoming Financially Free Workbook” by Phil Lenahan
- So How does we apply these passages?
 - 1st, Remember what else the apostle Paul in the same letter as the above quote:
“I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.” 1 Tim 3:15
 - 2nd, remember the context: the Sermon on the Mount!

The immediate previous verse set the context:

*[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 mammon.]

- The requirement, for discipleship, of choosing whom you will follow.

Clear, familiar, everyday examples of how / why we can trust God radically, if we choose to follow Jesus:

25: *"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"*

- The key word / issue throughout: ANXIETY / WORRY; 6 times in this passage
- What is at the core of this anxiety, worry? *Focus of heart away from God.*
- Why the emphasis on Life & body? = soul & body = interior & exterior == trusting our entire being to God's care.
- Rhetorical questions: he knows that they know.

The birds: An example for taking care of life/ the soul:

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?"*

- He is drawing from their knowledge of what they have seen...
- Can be misunderstood to imply that we can lounge around & let God wait on us!
- But anyone close to the land knows that, even though God provides, animals have to work very hard to survive! ("survival of the fittest"; the "food chain")
- But in the common views of today, are we worth more than these birds?!
- Can the life of the soul be taken for granted? NO! We are called to nurture our soul through the food of prayer, meditation, Scripture, and the Sacraments, aided by the grace God provides.

A Key rhetorical fact about life:

27: *And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life?"*

- Have you ever had young children who became irreconcilable because the weather had canceled some long anticipated family plans?
- We can't change the weather, we can only do the best we can to predict, plan, and prepare;
- The same is true with life...

The Flowers: an example for taking care of our bodies:

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 men of little faith?"*

- Does this still apply to today? A thousand times more than in Jesus' day!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Anxiety about clothing has two levels of application:
 - In their day, clothing, precious metals, jewels were how they hoarded wealth;
 - Also, akin to externalism; practicing piety before men.
- Again, anyone close to the land knows the plight of the "lilies of the field," fighting against the other wild plants for light, water, and nutrients.
- What difference to the well-being of our bodies does our clothing make?

Break

Jesus' draws the audience toward his conclusion:

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 all these things;*

and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

- He quotes how their non-believing neighbors influence their thinking; is this still true?
- Does he mean we should not eat, drink, or wear clothing?
 - Of course not! But we are not to be anxious / obsessed / ruled by these things.
 - Our first priority, for our soul & body, is holiness / "heavenward-ness"
 - "The love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Tim 6:10
 - Generally, what we eat, drink, or wear has little affect on our soul & body.
 - Of course, poor diet & insufficient clothing can cause sickness;
 - But the danger of extremes that cause anxiety:
 - The Gospel of fad diets
 - The lust of clothing!

The central guideline for being a disciple:

33: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,*

and all these things shall be yours as well.

- So, what does this mean, what must we do, what must we avoid, to "seek first the kingdom of God"?
 - This is the message of his sermon! Living the Beatitudes!
 - Which begins with poverty of spirit, mourning for sins, and humility.
- "All these things" in the context means food & clothing, or the needs of body & soul.
- God's providence: miraculous? Sometimes, but usually thru natural means ...

His conclusion:

34: *"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow,*

for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.

- Does this mean no insurance, no investments, no retirement?!
- In the days of Jesus, financial security was in their land;
 - Today, in this age of information & electronic investments, few people can support their family's future on the land they own.
 - So we responsibility provide for our families through insurances, investing, etc., which God has provided for us. Through His providence, thru our jobs, etc.
 - Our calling is to be responsible stewards;
 - And this often means listening to trustworthy financial advisors who also are guided by the teachings of the Church.
- The danger: don't miss the present by worrying about the future or the past!
 - The present may be all that any of us have!
 - Jesus' parable about the rich landowner who, placing all his emphasis on preparing for the future, was called home unexpectedly that night.