

Sermon Matthew 6 24 34 8th S af Ep

Sermon: 8th Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Matthew 6:24-34

Theme: Two ways of life

Goal: Jesus proposes us to lift our eyes to higher goals in our lives.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Jesus knows our nature well. He knows that we worry about this and that every day. He knows that our faith is not as strong as we suppose it is... And He warns us: “O you of little faith.”

But Jesus doesn't despise us for our weaknesses. He comes to help us and to give us strength. He puts some goals to our lives as Christians, different goals from those who do not trust in Christ. He says that **life** is more than just food and clothes, and that **we** are more important than birds and flowers. He lifts our eyes to a higher goal, to His Kingdom, and not just to our dusty feet and daily worries.

I – You cannot serve two masters

If you are a business man, you know that your employee cannot work full time at two different jobs. Maybe he can work part time for two different masters... but, would you allow him to work for you and for your biggest concurrent?... maybe... but eventually he needs to decide for whom he will work properly.

You know the challenges you have to face as a Christian in your job; to be honest as God requires it; to speak good words as your colleagues are speaking bad words; to be faithful to your husband or to your wife when your colleagues are promiscuous; and so on.

You know how difficult it is to come to the services and to other functions in the church if your family are not coming with you, or if

your job requires more and more time from you. You need to take wise decisions as a Christian. These are exactly the challenges that Jesus is taking about in our Gospel. What are your priorities? “You cannot serve both God and money.”

This teaching of Jesus is related to the 1st Commandment, as Luther explains it: *“We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”* We cannot put our trust in our wealth, or in our wisdom, or in our power. Everything is good, but it is not God! Everything will disappear from our lives in the future and we will not take anything with us when we die. But Jesus promises to be with us always, even at our death and after it. Therefore, He is trustworthy!

II – Don't worry... seek first His Kingdom...

Have you ever experienced a lack of food? Or of clothes? Maybe.... but you survived! You are still here, in God's house this morning, in spite of what happened in your past.

This is the promise of Jesus in our Gospel: Don't worry about what to eat or what to dress. God takes care of you. “Seek first His kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

The apostle Paul wrote: “What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31-32). God gave us the most precious gift He had: His Son Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection we have what we need most: forgiveness of our sins and eternal life! So, we shall not doubt that God will give us whatever we need for this life and should not worry so much about it as we always do. Maybe He will not give us exactly what we want, but He gives us what He knows that is the best for us.

We read in Proverbs 3:5: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart

and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Obviously we need to make plans for our lives, and work for our daily bread. We cannot just sit and wait that God will provide, sending bread from heaven as He did to the Israelite in the desert. He gives us the intelligence, skills and opportunities to work. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (1 Th 4:10-12): “Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”

Conclusion: What are the priorities of your lives? What stands in the first place?

I attended a pastoral retreat some years ago. The presenter asked us to write in five small papers what we loved most in our lives. People wrote: I love my wife, I love my children, I love my house, I love fishing, I love farming, I love my car... and so on. The leader asked: Throw away one of these papers (It was a trash basket in the middle of the circle). - Second: Your house was burnt down; throw away another paper. - Now: You realize that you are sick and you cannot do anymore what you like to do. Throw away another paper. - Your sickness is cancer; what paper would you hold in your hand in your last hour? Throw away another one. - Then he asked us to read what was in the last paper. Many of the colleagues were holding the paper where they had written: My wife. - But some colleagues were holding the paper where they had written: I love my Jesus! - Nothing else was important anymore in their lives.

“Seek first His kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle
Cape Town, 27th February 2011

