

# Scripture Study

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



## Opening prayer

Isaiah 49:14-15

(Psalms 62:2-3,6-9)

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

**Matthew 6:24-34**

## Overview of the Gospel:

- Continuing with the Sermon on the Mount we have been hearing from in the last several weeks, this Sunday we will hear Jesus deliver a series of sayings on the love of God versus the love of possessions, and about the necessity of placing our dependence upon God.
- Verse 24 is probably best read in light of the passage a few verses earlier (Matthew 6:19-21) concerning the storing up of treasure, not for this world, but for the world to come. “Mammon”, which we often think of as money, more accurately refers to possessions in general. We cannot divide our loyalties between the acquisition and accumulation of “stuff” beyond our needs, and the daily seeking and serving of God. Our primary call is to *holiness*, not to material wealth.
- In verses 25 through 34, Jesus warns us to avoid excessive worry over our material future. By saying this, he is not precluding planning and the prudent use of resources to meet one’s future needs. He is, rather, excluding that obsession about the future that causes some to frantically cling to and hoard money and goods, putting their trust in these rather than upon God. Using simple examples from everyday life, he concludes by telling us what we should in fact be seeking (verse 33) and by providing an important common sense key to achieving daily peace (verse 34).

## Questions:

- What does the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading tell you about the character of God, especially in connection with this Sunday’s Gospel Reading?
- As this Sunday’s Gospel tells us about the loving providence of God, so in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading St. Paul tells us that we should leave the judgment of the state of another’s soul in God’s hands. Do I ever put my self in God’s place in this regard? When I see a wayward brother or sister, what is *my* responsibility?
- What is the link between treasure and heart? Heart and eye? Eye and body? Master and money? How does your choice of treasure, master and perception (verses 19-24) affect your attitude toward life (verses 25-27)?
- What is your attitude toward your possessions? Your estate? Your career? Whatever you hold valuable? How are you “serving” these things? How does that compare with what Jesus says in Mt 5:3?
- What does God’s care for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field teach you?
- Considering this past week, is your “bank” on earth or in heaven? What do you need to change accounts? Who has been your master lately? Why?
- What causes you the most worry? What are signs that indicate you are worrying too much? What is God saying to you through this passage about handling your particular worry or disappointment?
- Why is it better to pray rather than to worry?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 270, 305, 1753, 1942, 2113, 2547, 2608, 2830, 2836, 2848.

## Closing Prayer

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!**

*Christian confidence consists in perfect abandonment in God over and above every provision of human prudence. Oh, what joy it is to walk in this perfect dependence on Providence, to be always under this divine protection!* --St. Jane Frances de Chantal

# “Do not be anxious about your life”

**Scripture:** *Matthew 6:24-34*

*"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. "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? 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? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 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? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. "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.*

**Meditation:** What does the expression “serving two masters” and “being anxious” have in common? They both have the same root problem – being divided within oneself. The root word for “anxiety” literally means “being of



two minds.” An anxious person is often “tossed to and fro” and paralyzed by fear, indecision, and insecurity. Fear of some bad outcome cripples those afflicted with anxiety. It’s also the case with someone who wants to live in two opposing kingdoms – God’s kingdom of light, truth, and goodness or Satan’s kingdom of darkness, sin, and deception – following God’s standards and way of happiness or following the world’s standards of success and happiness. Who is the master in charge of your life? Our “master” is whatever governs our thought-life, shapes our ideals, and controls the desires of our heart and the values we choose to live by. We can be ruled by many different things – the love of money and possessions, the power of position and prestige, the glamour of wealth and fame, and the driving force of unruly passions, harmful desires, and addictive cravings. Ultimately the choice of who is our master boils down to two: God or “mammon”. What is mammon? “Mammon” stands for “material wealth or possessions” or whatever tends to “control our appetites and desires.”

There is one master alone who has the power to set us free from slavery to sin, fear, pride, and greed, and a host of other hurtful desires. That master is the Lord Jesus Christ who alone can save us from

all that would keep us bound up in fear and anxiety. Jesus used an illustration from nature – the birds and the flowers – to show how God provides for his creatures in the natural order of his creation. God provides ample food, water, light, and heat to sustain all that lives and breathes. How much more can we, who are created in the very image and likeness of God, expect our heavenly Father and creator to sustain not only our physical bodies, but our mind, heart, and soul as well? God our Father is utterly reliable because it is his nature to love, heal, forgive, and make whole again. Jesus taught his disciples to pray with confidence to their heavenly Father: *Give us this day our daily bread.* What is bread, but the very staple of life and symbol of all that we need to live and grow. Anxiety is neither helpful nor necessary. It robs us of faith and confidence in God’s help and it saps our energy for doing good. Jesus admonishes his followers to put away anxiety and preoccupation with material things and instead to seek first the things of God – his kingdom and righteousness. Anxiety robs the heart of trust in the mercy and goodness of God and in his loving care for us. God knows our needs even before we ask and he gives generously to those who trust in him. Who is your master – God or mammon?

*“Lord Jesus, free me from needless worries and help me to put my trust in you. May my first and only concern be for your glory and your kingdom of peace and righteousness. Help me to live each day and moment with trust and gratitude for your providential care for me.”*

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