

Rev. Danny Mackey  
Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity  
September 12, 2021  
Matthew 6:24-34  
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Muncie, Ind.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

*[Jesus said:] “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

This morning we hear one of Christ’s greatest passages of comfort. He tells us that we don’t need to be anxious because of who our heavenly Father is. Two lines in particular are comforting. “Are you not of more value than [the birds of the air]?” And also: “Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”

What determines something’s value? The short answer: what someone is willing to pay for it. You can put a price tag on anything. But if someone isn’t willing to pay the price, then it’s not worth that. And so we have to ask, what has God been willing to pay for you? What is your value? Simple really. Our heavenly Father gave His only-begotten Son for you. Jesus is the price the Father paid to redeem you, to purchase you. Not with gold or silver, but with His innocent suffering and death, with His precious blood. God has determined your value by willingly paying for you with His Son. That’s how valuable you are. A Jesus’ worth. A Son-of-God’s worth. That’s how much you’re worth. That’s how valuable every person is.

And because He values us so greatly, our heavenly Father provides for us—for all people. He makes the sun to shine on us. He makes the rain to water the earth. He makes the land to sprout and flourish. He gives us hands with which we can sow and reap and gather into barns. He gives us the strength to toil and spin. Our heavenly Father provides for all people so that they may eat and be clothed and live happy and productive lives. Because, as Jesus teaches, “Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.” Whether we believe or not, whether we’re good or not, our heavenly Father provides us all that we need to support this body and life.

Take comfort in the knowledge that our heavenly Father values you so greatly—values you His Son’s worth. Recognize His blessings toward you and all people and have your hearts made grateful for those very same blessings.

But because we’re sinful and fearful creatures, we struggle with this, don’t we? That’s why Jesus gently chastises His disciples with “O you of little faith.” Our faith is little, that is,

we treat the One we believe in as if He were little. Like He can't do what we're asking. Or like we ought not to bother Him with our little requests. But we say—and we confess—that our heavenly Father is God Almighty. Almighty not because He can do anything. (He can, by the way.) But we confess Him to be Almighty because we trust that He has and does and will do all things for us. All His might is for us. He is a big God. Big enough to do all things. Big enough to preserve and protect us. Big enough to save and to give us all He promises.

No other god is like our God. That's why our lesson begins with Jesus' admonition "You cannot serve God and money." Again, money isn't the best translation. Mammon is a better translation. Mammon, the stuff of this world, including money and property and prestige. That's what Mammon is. All the things of this world. Material things like food and health and the car that you drive. But instead of worshipping the God who created all these things—and also gives them to us—we worship the things themselves. As St. Paul writes, "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator."

Our heavenly Father knows that we need strength of body and good health. He knows we need food and clothing. He knows all our needs, like a good education for our children and a safe place to live. Yet we also need more than material blessings. We need more than healing for our bodies and food on our plate and clothes on our back. Remember, our God is a big God. "Life is more than food," says Jesus, "and the body more than clothing." Also, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

The unbelievers are focused on Mammon. That's what they put their trust in. And they despair. Mammon can't satisfy. It's a little, puny god. A god that can't provide for them. And so they are riddled with anxiety. Fearful of what the future holds, of the unknown, of whether or not they will get another morsel. Unbelievers determine their worth from the praise of others. They rely not on the heavenly Father but on themselves alone. And, maybe not today, but someday they won't be able to care for themselves. They'll be alone. And when someone else has to care for them, they'll fail to recognize that the people caring for them are a gift from the heavenly Father. And so they'll feel like a burden. They'll feel worthless. And they'll go to their graves bitter, sad, and despondent.

Mammon is not our god. We have Jesus, who teaches us how deeply the heavenly Father loves us and provides for us. He cares for us not just in our bodies but also in our souls.

That's why Jesus exhorts us, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Do you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Do you try to live by bread alone, or do you live by every word that comes from the mouth of God?

"Seek first" is about priorities. We prioritize the things that matter to us, things we find more necessary. I remember in college when I had to choose between writing a paper and doing my Greek homework. Both were important. But I just didn't have time for both. So I had to prioritize. What did I truly need to do? The answer: the paper. Professor Romer, my Greek teacher, even said that I learned a valuable lesson about priorities.

What do you prioritize? What do you see as needful? Is it the pleasures of this life? Your physical health? How about your job? What you're studying at school? These are not unimportant things. "Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."

And your heavenly Father knows you need His kingdom and righteousness. That's why He gives us the Third Commandment and places it before the others that deal with the stuff of this life. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." The Word of God, including the Sacraments, is more important than all other things in this world. All these other things will pass, but the Word of the Lord remains forever. Likewise, the people of God matter more than the stuff of this world. Are they not the people you hope to spend eternity with? If so, then gathering with them—congregating with them around Christ's Word, because that's what congregations do—should be of the highest priority.

So, what's important to you? We know what's important to God. You are. When you are of little faith. All the time. Even those of us who want nothing to do with the heavenly Father. He still loves us and provides for us. A Jesus' worth. A Son-of-God's worth. Because God wants you to have His righteousness. To receive His kingdom. And if you can't come to church, well the Church will just have to come to you. Call me. I'll bring you Christ and His Supper. You are that important. You are of that great of value.

And so are all those who don't believe in Christ, who don't prioritize coming to church, who are of little faith. That's why St. Paul encourages us, "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Let us pick up our phones and make a call or send a text to those who don't know God or have

neglected the holy things of God. Let us encourage especially those who are of the household of faith—those brothers and sisters in Christ we dearly love. We've given them space because we don't want to seem like we're pressuring them. Maybe we've given them too much space. Space enough for the devil and their own sinful, fearful flesh to get in there. They too are important. They too are of that great value.

Because of what Christ Jesus has done. Because of His redemption of us, His cross, His death and resurrection, our heavenly Father can look with favor on us. It's for Christ's sake alone that the heavenly Father doesn't simply destroy this world and all us sinful, fearful creatures. It's for Christ's sake alone that our heavenly Father shows us any kindness whatsoever. And it's for Christ's sake that our heavenly Father desires that we be saved so that we can be with Him for eternity.

It is through faith that we receive His righteousness. When we believe in our big God—and not the puny, little gods who can do nothing for us—then we are considered righteous by our heavenly Father. Worthy, because we trust that we are of more value than the birds of the air, than the lilies of the field. Valuable, because we hold fast to the gift of His Son. And this faith banishes our fears for the future, our anxieties. Because we believe in a God who uses all His might for us.

So seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. Seek care for your souls, not neglecting the holy things of God. Jesus died and rose again to purchase them for you. That's how valuable they are. That's how valuable you are. And they are here so that you may live with our heavenly Father and all His children now and forever.

In Jesus' name.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ + Jesus.