



## GOSPEL FOR THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

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 money.*

*Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will 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 a single hour 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 you 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 after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

*Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

1. This Gospel reading is part of the long sermon Christ gave to His disciples on the mount [Matthew 5-7], in which, among other things, He especially warns and admonishes His Christians against the shameful vice of greed and worry for the belly, which is the true fruit and proof of unbelief. This does especially great harm in Christendom when it takes possession of those who are in the preaching office, who should think of nothing other than how they can correctly teach God's Word and faith and rebuke the world's error and sin; or also those who must confess God's Word before everyone and for the sake of God must be ready to serve everyone, even if they must lose property, honor, body, and life to do so.



2. Christ also wants to teach here how He would have His kingdom separated from the secular ways and governance. He does not want His Christendom on earth ruled in such a way that it is composed and constituted as a governance where Christians are first abundantly provided with temporal property, riches, and power and need not expect any lack or danger. Rather, He wants them provided with spiritual property and necessities, so that they have His Word, the comfort of grace, and the power and strength of the Spirit against sin and death for eternal life. Whatever they need beyond this, temporally, for their body and this life, they should expect this from Him through faith, and they should not be frightened if they do not see this before their eyes and have it prepared for the future, but are tempted by lack. Rather, they should know that their God and Father in heaven cares for them and will certainly give to them, provided that they take care to seek this with firm confidence, remaining with His Word in His kingdom and serving Him there.

3. This is why He makes a distinction through this sermon, to separate His Christians from the heathen and unbelievers. He does not give this teaching to the heathen, since they do not accept it, but to those who are already Christians. However, He does not regard those to be His Christians who only listen to the words and can repeat it, like the nuns read the Psalter.<sup>1</sup> In this way the devil also listens to the Gospel and the Word of God, and even knows it better than we do. He could also preach it as well as we do, if he so wanted. However, the Gospel is supposed to be a teaching which is living and is put into practice. It should strengthen and comfort the people and make them courageous and confident. Therefore, those who only listen to the Gospel so that they can know and speak about it do not belong among the Christians. Rather, those who believe and do what the Gospel teaches are righteous people.

*"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, or he will cling to one and despise the other." [Matt. 6:24]*

4. Whoever tries to serve two masters will serve in a way which cannot be called serving, for it must happen as the Lord says here. A servant certainly can be forced to do a work which is unpleasant for him to do, but no one can force him to do it gladly and mean it from his heart. He will certainly do it as long as the master is on hand, but when he is away, he hurries away from it and does nothing good. Now, the Lord wants the service done out of love and willingly; if not, then it is not a service. No one likes it when someone resentfully does something for him. Now, if it is true among people that no one can serve two masters, how much more is it true with service to God,

<sup>1</sup> I.e., without comprehension.



that our service cannot be divided but must be done willingly and from the heart to Him alone. This is why the Lord adds these words:

*"You cannot serve God and mammon." [Matt. 6:24]*

5. God cannot tolerate us having any other master alongside of Him. He is called "Jealous," as He Himself says [Exod. 34:14], and cannot put up with anyone serving Him and also His enemy. "Either it is all Mine," He says, "or let it all be gone." We will find few who do not sin against this Gospel reading. The Lord passes a strict verdict; it is frightening to hear that such a thing is said about us. Of course, no one will confess—nor even tolerate anyone saying—that we hate and despise God and that we are His enemies. If someone were asked if he loved God and was faithful to Him, he would say: "Yes, I love Him. Would you regard me as such a damnable person as to be hostile to God?" However, look at how the text here concludes that we all hate and despise God, love mammon, and cling to it! It is impossible for someone who loves money and property and clings to them not to hate God. Here He compares the two opposites and concludes: "If you love one of the two and cling to it, then you must hate and despise the other." Therefore, no matter how irreproachably a man lives here on earth, if he clings to property, it cannot be otherwise than that he must hate God. On the other hand, it is certain that whoever does not cling to money and property loves God.

6. However, where are the people who love God and do not cling to money and property? Look at the whole world, also at those who are called Christians, to see if they despise money and property. It requires effort to listen to the Gospel and also to act according to it. No one can deny—God be praised!—that we have the Gospel. But what do we do with it? We think only about knowing how to speak about it—nothing more. We imagine that it is enough to know it. We are not concerned about acting according to it in the future. If anyone were to lose a gold coin<sup>2</sup> or two, he would be concerned and afraid that the money had been stolen. However, he could do without the Gospel for a whole year! No matter how diligently and seriously we want to retain it, it can still be taken away.

7. Now, the world cannot conceal its unbelief with its coarse, outward sins, for we see that it loves one gold coin more than Christ and all the apostles, even if they themselves were there and preached. I can listen to the Gospel daily without it producing anything beneficial in me. It can certainly happen that I have heard it for an entire year, but the Holy Spirit was only

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<sup>2</sup> *gülden*. A gulden was the most valuable gold coin in common circulation. In 1529, the *Torgau Ordnung der Visitatoren* stipulated a senior pastor's annual salary as 80 gulden while a chaplain would receive 60 and a schoolmaster, 50. The loss of a gulden or two would therefore be a significant loss: 4 to 8 percent of a schoolmaster's annual salary.



given to me for one hour. Now, when I reached this hour, then I reached not only 500 gold coins, but more than all the world can give me, for what would I not have if I had the Gospel? I would have obtained God, who makes silver and gold and everything on earth! That is much more than if I had a church full of gold coins.

8. Do you see that our heart is a scoundrel full of malice and unbelief? If I were a true Christian, I would say, "Whenever the Gospel comes, it is a hundred thousand gold coins—even much more—coming to me." When I have this treasure, then I have everything which is in heaven and on earth. However (says Christ), we must serve only this treasure, for we cannot also at the same time serve mammon. You must either love God and hate money for His sake, or you must hate God and love money. There is no third choice.

9. "Mammon" means property or wealth, and properly such property which is not used but is kept as a treasure. It is properly the money and property that is put away as a reserve. If a heart is endeavoring and striving to bring and gather a lot of property for himself, he, of course, cannot give much attention to God's Word and kingdom. Now, Christians do not do that, but ask God for their daily bread [Matt. 6:11] and are satisfied with what they can have, given by God, with a good conscience. The others, however, are covetous and strive only for great reserves on which they can rely, so that—if our Lord God were to die today or tomorrow—they would still know where they would be! This is why St. Paul calls wealth and greed "the god of this world" [2 Cor. 4:4] and "idolatry" [Col. 3:5]. Christ agrees with this when He calls it "serving mammon."

10. Now, how does it happen that greed is especially called "idolatry," and other sins, such as impurity, fornication, lusts, evil desires, and other vices which are against God, are not? This happens to our great shame because gold is our god whom we serve, in whom we trust, and on which we rely, and yet it cannot preserve or save us, does not even itself exist, neither hears nor sees, has no strength or power, no comfort or help. Even if someone had the whole world's wealth, he would not for even a moment be secure against death.

11. What help are great treasures and wealth to the emperor when the hour comes for him to die? They would be a shameful, repulsive, powerless god, which cannot help even with an ulcer, which cannot save even itself! It lies there in the chest and leaves him waiting, like something powerless, feeble, weak. Whoever has it must watch day and night so that the thieves do not steal it or it otherwise perishes. Shame on you, you powerless, dead god, which cannot help in the least! Nevertheless, it is fastidious and dainty, expects most glorious treatment, and is secured in large chests and castles. If this treasure or property includes clothes, they must be protected and



defended against the least worms and moths, so that it is not spoiled and eaten up!

12. Nevertheless, the walls ought to spit at us because we trust more in the god whom the moths eat and rust spoils [Matt. 6:19] than in the God who creates and gives everything, heaven and earth and everything in them. Is not the world foolish when it turns away from the true God and trusts in shameful mammon, in the poor, miserable god which cannot protect itself from rust! God allots all kinds of enemies to money and property, so that we would see and recognize our unbelief and godless way of life when we trust in a powerless and weak god. We could so easily come and cling to the true, powerful, and strong God who gives us everything: money, property, fruits, and whatever we need! Yet we are so foolish and make gods out of creatures! Shame on you, you cursed unbelief!

13. Other sins happen when man uses creation in such a way that his flesh has its desire and joy from it, such as with eating and drinking. Likewise, wrath satisfies its desires, as do other vices even more, except that in these vices the man must become afraid and afflict himself with worries from which he has no benefit. The money is piled up and lets itself be served. The miser who has it dares not lay hands on it nor use it for his desire and joy, lest he anger his god.

14. This is what happens to those who serve these idols. The true God lets Himself be used to serve the people. Mammon does not do this; it prefers to lie quietly and be served. For this reason the New Testament calls greed "idolatry" [Col. 3:5], since it only wants to be served. However, loving and not enjoying could annoy even the devil. All those who love this god Mammon and serve him experience this. Whoever does not become ashamed and blush has an iron brow.

15. Thus it depends on this word "serving," since it is not forbidden to have money and property, for we cannot do without them. Abraham, Lot, David, Solomon, and others have had much property and money. Still today there are somewhere rich people who are also righteous. However, it is one thing to have property and another to serve property, to have mammon and to have mammon as a god. Job also was rich, had much property, and was more powerful than all who dwelled in the East [Job 1:2-3]. Nevertheless, he said: "Have I made gold my confidence and said to the gold nuggets: 'My comfort'? Have I rejoiced that I have much property and that my hand has acquired it all?" [Job 31:24-25].

16. In summary, God does not want us to serve money and property with greed and anxiety, but to do our work and commit the worry to Him. Whoever serves is a slave; he does not possess the property, but the property possesses him. He dare not use it when he wants and cannot use it to serve



others; he is not even brave enough that he dares to touch it. However, if he is master over the property, then the property serves him, and he does not serve the property. Then he dares to use the property—as did Abraham, David, Job, and other rich people—and cares only for the Lord, as St. Paul teaches (1 Corinthians 7 [:32]). Then he helps the poor with his property and gives to those who do not have. When he sees someone who does not have a coat, he says to the money: “Get going, Sir Gold Coin; there is a poor, naked man who does not have a coat. You must serve him! There lies a sick person who has no refreshment. Get up, Sir Annaberger and Sir Joachimstaler;<sup>3</sup> you must go out and help him.” Thus those who manage their property are masters over their property. This is certainly done by all true Christians. However, those who save much money and think only about how their pile can become larger and not smaller are nothing but slaves to idols.

17. He is a master over mammon who uses it to help those who need it and who trusts God who says: “If you give, I will also give. If you have nothing more, you still have Me, and I still have enough—yes, I have more than I have given away and still can give away.” In many places we see many good, poor people only so that the rich can help the poor and serve them with their wealth. Therefore, this is what it means. We must have property, but should not to cling to it with our hearts, as also Psalm 62 [:10] says, “If you come into wealth, do not let your heart cling to it.” We should work, but not worry about our livelihood. The Lord says this in the Gospel reading in clear words when He concludes and says,

*“Therefore, I say to you, do not worry for your life, what you will eat and drink, nor for your body, what you will wear.” [Matt. 6:25]*

18. He uses for this a rational, natural rationale for them to conclude that they ought not worry about their livelihood. Reason must conclude and admit that God has given us our body and life without our worry and assistance, and we certainly see that it is not preserved by us.

*“Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” [Matt. 6:25]*

19. It is as if He means to say: “You are turning things around. Food should serve the body, but you let life serve food.” So also with clothing. Clothes are supposed to serve the body, but the body must now serve clothing. God’s order, however, is that He first gives life and maintains the body.

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3 Silver was discovered in the region of Annaberg in the late fifteenth century, and coins were minted there. The silver coins minted in Joachimsthal were called “Joachimstaler” or “Thaler” for short.



Where He has given this, then both food and clothing will certainly also be given to you and not be absent.

20. Now, we must pay attention to the words of the Lord here. He says, "Do not worry," but He does not say, "Do not work." Worry is forbidden to us, but not working. Yes, it has been commanded and imposed on us to work until the sweat runs down our nose. This is why He says to Adam: "In the sweat of your brow you will eat your bread, until you return to the dust from which you were taken" (Genesis 3 [:19]). Psalm 104 [:22-23] says, "When the sun rises, man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening." We are not to worry, which is forbidden to us here, for we have a wealthy God who promises us food and clothing before we worry about them and ask for them.

21. Why, then, does He not give it to us without work? Because this pleases Him. He tells us to work, and then gives it to us not because of our work, but out of His kindness and grace. This is obvious to us, because even though we work the ground every year, He nevertheless gives us more one year than another. Therefore, we are acting like fools—even acting against God—when we worry about how we will gather together money and property, since God abundantly promises us that He will give us everything and abundantly provide for all our necessities.

22. However, someone might say: "Does not St. Paul say that we are to be careful, such as: 'If anyone rules, let him do it carefully' (Romans 12 [:8])? Likewise, he says about Timothy: 'I have no one who is so completely of my mind, who is so naturally concerned about you' (Philippians 2 [:20]). St. Paul himself boasts that he has great concern for all the congregations [2 Cor. 11:28]. From this you can see that we nevertheless should worry." Answer: Our Christian way of life consists of two points: faith and love. The first applies to God; the second, to the neighbor. We do not see the first—faith—which only God sees; we do see the second—love—which we are to show to our neighbor.

23. Now, concern which comes from love is commanded, but worry which is in addition to faith is forbidden. If I believe that I have a God, then I cannot worry about myself. When I know that God cares for me like a father for his child, what do I have to fear? What do I need with much worrying? I simply say, "If You are my Father, then I know that nothing bad will happen to me." Psalm 16 [:8] says, "I have the Lord always before my eyes, for He is at my right hand; therefore, I will prosper." Since He also has everything in His hands, I can lack nothing since He cares for me.

24. If, however, I go ahead and try to worry about myself—which is against faith—He forbids that worry. Concern of love, however, He wants maintained, because He wants us to be concerned about others and to share with them our property and gifts. If I am a sovereign, then I should be



concerned for my subjects; if I am the father of a household, then I must be concerned for my domestic servants; and so on, according to the gifts each one has received from God. God is concerned for all, and that is the concern that faith grasps. We are to be concerned for one another through love, namely, if God has given me something, then I am careful so that others may also get it.

25. Therefore, we must not explain this away, but rather understand the words simply the way they read. We are not to worry about our livelihood. God says, "Do not worry about what is to be given to you, but work and let Me be concerned about what I will give." However, when He has given it to you, then you can be concerned about how to distribute it correctly. Do not worry about how you will get it, but strive for how your domestic servants and others can also get the same thing God has given you. See to it that your domestic servants work and do not become impudent.

26. If I am a preacher, then my worry should not be where I will get what I am to preach, for if I do not have it, then I cannot give it. Christ has said, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your opponents cannot contradict or withstand" [Luke 21:15]. Rather, since I have this, I should be concerned about how others can get it from me and how I can best present it to them; teach the ignorant; admonish and restrain those who know it; correctly comfort distressed consciences; awaken careless, sleepy hearts and make them awake; and so on. St. Paul did this and also commanded his disciples Timothy and Titus to do this [e.g., 1 Tim. 4:6–16; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2; 4:2; Titus 3:8–11]. This is to be my concern, namely, how others can get it from me. However, I am to study and pray to God. Study is my work, which He wants me to do, and when it pleases Him, He will give me success. It can certainly happen that I study for a long time, and yet am not given success so quickly, until it pleases Him, and then He gives it abundantly and in excess, even in one hour. Thus each one should stay in his estate,<sup>4</sup> attend only to the activity committed to him, and let our Lord God worry about how He will give it. When He gives it, then He also worries about how to give it to others.

27. This is what the Lord means when He says here that we are not to worry about food and clothing. Rather, in short, He wants us to work. If you do not till and work the fields, you will have to lie behind the stove<sup>5</sup> for a long time until you are given something. It is true that God certainly could support you without your work and have a roast and a boiled dinner, grain and wine grow on your table for you; but He wants you to work and in these matters use your reason or mind and your hands, which He has given to you, not so that they are idle, but so that they are doing something.

<sup>4</sup> See sermon for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity on Mark 7:31–37, fn. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *hinder dem ofen ligen*. "Behind the oven" was the proverbial place for the lazy.



28. The same thing applies to the preaching office and in all of our life. He gives us wool, which He makes to grow on sheep. It does not immediately become cloth, but we must work and make cloth out of it. When the cloth is there, it does not immediately become a coat, but the tailor must first make it, and so forth. In all things, God acts in this way: He will take concern for it, and we are to do the working. He wants to give us what we could not produce or make ourselves, but we are to use what has been given to us and work with it.

29. We have examples of this teaching before our eyes abundantly in all created things. He lists especially two examples of this, which really should make us blush with shame, namely, the birds and the flowers in the field. He says,

*"Look at the birds under heaven: they do not sew, they do not harvest, they do not gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."*  
[Matt. 6:26]

30. It is as if the Lord means to say: "You have never seen a bird with a sickle with which it reaps and gathers into the barn. They do not work as we do, but nevertheless they are fed." With these words the Lord does not want to say that we should not work, but with this example He wants to take away our worry. A bird cannot do field work as we can, and yet it is not without work. Rather, it works at what it was created to do, namely, it produces young, feeds them, and sings to our Lord God a song. If God had imposed more work on it, it would do more. It awakens early, sits somewhere on a branch, and sings the song it has learned. It knows nothing about food and does not worry about it. When it is hungry, it flies off and seeks the grain which God has put away for it—about which it never thought while it was singing, even though there was sufficient reason for it to be worried about food. Now, shame on you, because the birds are more righteous and more believing than you, since they are happy and sing for joy even when they do not know what they have to eat.

31. It is said to our very great shame that we cannot do as much as the birds do. A Christian should stand ashamed before a bird, which has a skill he has not learned without preaching and admonition: to trust God and let Him be concerned. If in the spring you were to say to one of them: "How can you sing so happily, when you have no grain in the barn?" it would mock you and spit at you, who want to be a Christian and God's child, who hear His Word and promise so abundantly, and yet who do not trust that you can expect from God what you yourself cannot give without worry and greed and with a good conscience and a cheerful spirit. This is a powerful example. It



truly should offend us and provoke us to trust God more than we do. This is why He concludes with the words:

*"Are you, then, not much more than they?" [Matt. 6:26]*

32. Is that not a great shame that the Lord makes the birds our masters and recommends that we should first learn from them! Shame on you for your offensive, shameful unbelief! In the first book of Moses, we have the command that we are to be masters over all creatures (Genesis [1:28]). It is our own fault that God must make the birds into our masters to show us how we serve mammon and forsake the real true God.

Now follows the second example about the flowers of the field, by which the Lord would provoke us not to worry about clothing. He says:

*"Who among you can add a yard to his size by worrying about it? Why do you worry about clothing? Look at how the lilies of the field grow. They do not work or spin. I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of them. If, then, God in this way clothes the grass of the field—which is here today and tomorrow thrown into the oven—will He not do much more for you, O you of little faith?" [Matt. 6:27–30]*

33. It is as if He meant to say: "Your life is not yours, nor is your body yours. You could not make either of them longer or shorter, unless God grants it. Nor should you worry how you can be clothed." Look at how the flowers of the field are adorned and clothed—none of them did any of this. Even though they neither spin nor do anything themselves, yet they are beautifully clothed. God worries about these common, little creatures which are so very ephemeral, created only for one or two days. There is almost nothing more to them than color and fragrance. Even though there are so many beautiful colors, each one must have its own clothing, the most beautiful of all, in order to honor God (without this it would be nothing at all), because God can adorn them much more gloriously and beautifully than people can with all pearls, gold, and precious jewels. This is why He brings in for contrast the richest king, Solomon, and along with him all other kings and masters, and says that none of them with all the world's property is clothed or can produce such beautiful adornment as God clothes one of the flowers.

34. Once again, with these words the Lord does not want us not to do work, but rather to work, spin, weave, labor, and make clothes with what God has given to us. However, we are not to worry and doubt whether He will give it to us nor to live and act as if we should and must give and produce it for ourselves without God Himself.



35. Thus, once again, our shame is pointed out, and scorn is spoken over us by the flowers, which are trampled underfoot or eaten by the cattle, and yet are so highly exalted by God that they become our schoolmaster and teacher, so that we certainly can take off our hats before them and honor and thank them as our masters.

36. However, we are so blind that we do not see what God wants and what He intends. The flower is there for our sake, so that we would see it. It brags and boasts and says: "Even if you had on the finery of the whole world, yet you would still not be like me. I stand there and do not worry where the finery comes from. I do nothing about it. Even if you are beautifully adorned, you are still an unbeliever and serve powerless mammon. You are still a poor, stinking maggot sack.<sup>6</sup> I, however, am fresh and beautiful and serve the real, true God." The Lord now draws a conclusion from these examples and parables and says:

*"Therefore, you shall not worry and say: 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' The heathen strive for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need all of it." [Matt. 6:31-32]*

37. As I said at first, Christ preaches this to His Christians—especially to those who are in the preaching office or else who have nothing or cannot ever acquire and gather reserves and mammon for themselves like the rest of the world—so that they also can know how they and theirs can be supported and maintained. Yes, they must be in danger of being robbed of the temporal property God has given them. Thus in all things they must live completely on God's counsel and wait for Him, since the world gives them nothing.

38. This certainly hurts flesh and blood and is difficult for them. Yes, no one can put up with this or do it except a believing Christian. The world is so minded that it does not want to be in uncertainty, but wants to be sure first to have arranged and to have in readiness whatever it needs for its livelihood, peace, protection, and security, so that it can remain. It does not want to look to the hands of God or people, but, since it sees that the world enriches no one because of his faith and godliness, it thinks that it must also live and act as the others do, so that it, too, can have something.

39. He comforts and strengthens His Christians against this and once again repeats that they should not worry or fidget and doubt in unbelief: "Where will we stay? Who will give us anything? Where do we poor Christians have our livelihood, protection, and peace in the world?" Rather, they must know that their heavenly Father is concerned about this and will also give it to them. This is why He is called their Father (not of the unbelievers)—even

6 One of Luther's favorite colorful expressions for human mortality.



though He does feed all the world and give it everything—to show that He will also not forsake His children. He leads them into His great work of creation, so that they can see how He feeds and preserves everything He creates, as each was arranged—even all the birds in the air who strive for no livelihood and do not know beforehand from where they should take it. Yes, He also especially adorns and clothes the flowers, on whom such beauty and finery seem completely in vain (because in some places it lasts only a day), so that it really could be applied elsewhere. Therefore, He must think and worry much more about how His Christians are to be fed and clothed and where they can dwell and stay as long as they have to live on earth.

40. He admonishes them to believe this, and He persuades them most strongly, not with many words but with serious ones. After He has reminded them of the daily examples and works of God on His creatures, He breaks off abruptly and concludes with these words: “Will He not do much more for you, O you of little faith?” [Matt. 6:30]. He would gladly say: “Well, you should be ashamed of yourselves—if you are Christians and know that you have a Father in heaven—that you have let Me preach so long about this! Yes, you should be ashamed and not tolerate it being said about you, as I nevertheless must say, that you have such a small, little faith and do not trust the living God—who gives you His Word and promise and has chosen you as His children—without doubting and worrying about whether He will support and maintain your body and life! How can you possibly stand without shame and disgrace—not only before God but also before all creatures—when it is repeated about you, and you must testify with your own confession, that you, who have God’s Word and grace so abundantly, trust Him so very little to provide for your miserable maggot sack and stinking belly?”

41. He speaks to them even more miserably when He says, “The heathen strive for all these things,” etc. [Matt. 6:32]. It really should frighten a Christian when he hears the frightful verdict spoken publicly that those who worry about and strive for mammon are heathen, that is, people who truly have no God, except that in God’s place they serve mammon, which has God’s name but is nothing but worthless lies. Thus they are completely separated from God, deprived of all divine knowledge, comfort, grace, and happiness. These are nothing other than the most miserable, most unhappy, condemned people, who never have any salvation or comfort to hope for.

42. Here you see painted what kind of thing the world is, namely, the very large crowd—with the exception of very few Christians—who, as soon as they grow up, completely turn away from God and serve the lying god, mammon. They regard it to be the great god—yes, the only god—because the crowd which clings to it is so large, but it is a mere powerless, worthless name. A Christian really should be horrified and frightened of this when he



thinks about the blindness and misery of the world. He should fervently sigh and work only to be far separated from such a shameful way of life. He should flee from it, if he can, as from a fire—yes, from the midst of hell.

43. Third, in order to stir up our faith in the most delightful and comforting way, He once more says, “Your heavenly Father knows that you need all of it” [Matt. 6:32]. He certainly is your Father, and the Father only of you, not of the birds or of the geese or of the ducks, not even of the godless heathen. Only trust that He is so good and has such fatherly concern for you that He will not forget you nor forsake you. Yes, He knew long before what He would give to you, and He provided for this before you yourself thought about it or felt your need. Who (except He alone) knew or thought about what you would be or need before you were born into the world [Ps. 139:16]? Therefore, do Him the honor of believing that He sees and knows this, and, because He knows, He will act as a Father toward you.

*“Strive first for the kingdom of God and for His righteousness, and all this will come to you.” [Matt. 6:33]*

44. This is the chief passage in this sermon; it gives the correct rule and orderly method for us to have both divine or eternal possessions and bodily necessities. If you want to be concerned in the right way, where it is proper for you to be concerned, then let your first—really your only—concern be to strive to live according to God’s Word, to carry out your office, and to serve Him in His kingdom, as His Word teaches you. (This is where you find the righteousness which belongs to this kingdom.) Let more depend on this than on everything which concerns this temporal life.

When you do this, you have acted and provided well and need not burden yourself further nor have any worries in your heart. Yes, it will be much too little and common a thing for you to worry and take pains about such a common thing, that is, your belly’s necessities. Do this only for the honor of God, and much more for your own benefit and salvation, so that you strive for the great, eternal treasure. When you attain and retain this, then the rest will take care of itself. You cannot obtain this from God better than in this way: that you first seek and ask for the big thing from Him.

45. He desires that we ask for what is big from Him, and He can give what is big and plentiful. Because He gladly gives what is big, He also will not let what is little be lacking but will also throw that in as a bonus.

God has always demonstrated this in the experience of many righteous people, who followed this rule and teaching and strived for how they could help build God’s kingdom, serve the Church, promote God’s Word, and give of their property for it. In turn, He has also abundantly blessed them with property, honor, etc. The old examples, not only of Scripture but also our



histories, testify about some good kings and princes who, with a Christian intention, first donated abundantly for parishes, pulpits, the maintenance of the preaching office, and also for schools. This did not make them poorer, but rather much more abundantly blessed and endowed by God, so that they reigned in good peace, victory, and prosperity.

46. He would still gladly do this, if the world could or would be happy to follow the faithful advice He gives here and regard His promise as true—and not rage against His Word with unbelief, greed, and unchristian behavior, to its own harm and ruin. For them He must also reverse these words and demonstrate the opposite. Whoever will not strive for God's kingdom and His righteousness, but despises it and against God's will intends to provide only for himself with his own wisdom and calculations, will both be deprived of what is eternal and either not attain to what is temporal or not be satisfied and happy with it.

*"Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. It is enough for each day to have its own affliction." [Matt. 6:34]*

47. The world will always worry about the future and think that it is making its affairs more certain in that way. It thinks that it is accomplishing so much that it can defy danger and protect and preserve itself. It does not see that this is in vain and that its calculations fail. It is true, and experience testifies, as Christ here says, that each day brings its own misfortune and evil. This is why it happens that with all its own calculations and cleverness, by which it intends to safeguard itself and get ahead of all future danger, the world only causes more misery and harm.

When they see that things do not happen the way they thought they should, or there is an accident, then they begin to hesitate, fall from one thing to the next, and imagine that they must seek help, protection, and deliverance wherever and however they can. Thus they have recourse and strive to help matters with all kinds of unusual intrigues and tricks by which they stir up unbelief against God and conscience, so that they can carry out what they have in mind, even though they see that God does not grant it success. From this comes much misfortune, misery, murder, warfare, and all the evil tricks of the godless world. Each one intends to carry out his affairs without God, to oppress and suppress anyone who would hinder him, and would rather throw everything onto a heap than give up and yield his obstinacy. In this way, everything good in all affairs and governances perishes, and nothing but misfortune grows, as all histories and daily experience show more than enough.

48. Christ admonishes His believers against this, so that they do not waver and base what they do on uncertainty, with fruitless worries about



the future. Rather, at every time and daily they are to do what is right and not worry how things will turn out, nor let themselves be diverted for the sake of uncertain future good or evil. They are to commend the worry to God. Then they can take what happens to them as good and overcome it with patience and faith. On earth it cannot happen differently than this: in their governance, estate, and office they will daily find things other than they would like to see, and this causes them much trouble and work. This is why Christ calls this life a daily affliction or misfortune, that is, all kinds of calamity, opposition, and hindrance. We should know this and be prepared for it, so that we are not frightened away from doing good nor give way to the world and participate in its wrongful, evil affairs, and thus lead ourselves and others into ruin and damnation.