

Thank You, Father!

Matthew 6:25-34 ²⁴“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Do you think we are better off than a hundred years ago? Listen to what life was like back then. The average life expectancy was 58 years for men, 61 for women. Only 12 million homes had a radio. Imagine all the computers and TVs and cell phones we have today. Gas was sold in cans at drugstores. 14% of homes had a bathtub. 8% had a telephone. The speed limit was 10 mph. The average wage was .22 cents. 95% of births were at the home. The leading cause of death was pneumonia and influenza, tuberculosis and diarrhea. 20% could not read or write and 6% went to high school. Leeching was still practiced and 2 million children between the ages of 10 and 15 had full time jobs.

What can we conclude from this? Are we more blessed than those who lived 100 years ago? No, not really. Sure we have more things, and we thank God that the flu is actually treatable, but we are no more blessed than them. There is a real danger to equate blessings with quantity. The word “blessing” means to be happy. It isn’t what you have; it is whether you are happy or not. In some ways they were more blessed than we are. Gas was only 11 cents a gallon and a stamp was 2 cents. There were only 230 murders in all the U.S. in one year. They were not tied like slaves to their phones or TVs or computers. The family was much stronger.

Don’t thank God for the big dinner waiting for you today, and then less thankful for that piece of leftover pizza you will have on Saturday. This is where dumb animals can teach us smart adults a lesson. They are happy living day by day, trusting God will provide what they need. If the feeder is empty, the bird doesn’t throw a brick through your window. He keeps flying until God provides something. Cats and dogs are at your feet at dinner time, always. They don’t sulk in the corner and refuse to ask for food because you didn’t pet them when you came home. How much more important are we than them. We have a Father in heaven; he provides us daily bread so we are happy with a table full of typical thanksgiving food today or a slice or warmed pizza on Saturday.

In fact, God has a reason for promising to take care of us. **“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry.”** The word for worry here has the idea of dividing things up, of dividing your attention, of being distracted. The devil loves to keep you chasing after this or that because if it means you have little or no time for God. But our Father promises to take care of us so we are not distracted from reading and hearing and believing his Word, thinking about Baptism, coming to church, praying, things which last for an eternity.

So, as you scan the table today with its turkey and sweet potatoes, green bean hot dish and pumpkin pie, consider yourself blessed, not by how much, but because you Father is taking care of you, again. Thank you, Father in heaven.

The Word of the Lord.

Thank you, Jesus!

Romans 5:1-2,6-11 ¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ...

⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Here is a game to play at Thanksgiving. Say this simple phrase, “We have,” and then ask each person at the table to finish that statement. Go around the table more than once.

In these words of Romans, we have the phrase, “We have,” listed five times. What are these five things “we have?” **WE HAVE** been justified through faith, which means the judge says we are innocent of any sins we commit. **WE HAVE** peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **WE HAVE** gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand, in other words, it is as if we are standing in heaven right now. **WE HAVE** now been justified by Jesus’ blood, which must be important because this is the second time he says it. And finally, **WE HAVE** received reconciliation with God, which means the ugly, heated argument between a holy God and the awful sinner has ended; everything is right with God.

Now compare that list of “we haves” with the list around the Thanksgiving table. Justification may not sound as tasty as cranberry sauce; reconciliation may not smell as good as pumpkin pie. Peace with God may not pay the bills. But these things mean more than turkey and fixings. Remember the previous reading, where Jesus told us not to worry or be distracted by what we eat or wear. God will provide them for us. Why? So we may prioritize his kingdom and his righteousness. That brings us to this second reading. What happens when we prioritize his kingdom and righteousness? We find in the Bible righteousness, justification, access, peace, reconciliation, heaven.

But what makes this amazing is the fact God did this when we were powerless, in other words, when we have fallen in sin and can’t get up on our own. It reminds us we were ungodly, in other words, objects that would make our holy God turn away in horror. We were God’s enemies fighting and resisting him. This reminds me of the time our cat got fleas and we gave her a bath. She clawed our arms up and down and resisted us fiercely. He saves us while we were biting and clawing him. But that didn’t stop him.

Look at what we have. We are saved from godlessness as we are the children of God, from our sin as we are declared innocent of every sin we commit, we are no longer enemies but are reconciled by the blood of Jesus Christ, and we have access, God’s number and address, to pray to him, and one day we will walk into his heaven.

The turkey dinner will be eaten, leftovers will be offered for days to come, but soon they will be gone, but what we have by the blood of Jesus Christ will last forever, and each day it is as satisfying and delicious as the first time we bite into the turkey dinner on Thanksgiving. Thank you, Lord Jesus.

The Word of the Lord.

Thank you, Holy Spirit.

The Thanksgiving dinner is a team effort. Someone prepares and cooks the turkey. Others cut, boil and mash the potatoes. Someone has the job to set the table. If company comes, I am sure they brought something for the table.

Our salvation is a team effort. God the Father gave up his Son for us. God the Son washes us clean with his blood shed on the cross. But God’s love and Jesus’ sacrifice would mean nothing if it isn’t for God the Holy Spirit. Listen now to how he brings it all together.

Romans 8:5-17: ⁵Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

¹²Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—**heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.**

Twelve times the Holy Spirit is named. Without him we would never believe and be saved. Every time you look at an outlet in the wall, I want you to think of God the Holy Spirit. You don’t plug a vacuum cleaner or phone charger into that wall and things miraculously work. No, there is process going on there. Wire runs from the power company into your house and to that outlet. So, when you plug something in, it receives electricity from the power company through that wire and it works.

I want you to think of the Holy Spirit as that electricity. The wire he uses is what we call the Means of Grace, God’s Word and Baptism and Holy Communion. And because he comes to us through that wire, we believe and are saved. A vacuum or charger without electricity is dead. The human without the Holy Spirit is dead. But he did act on us. **And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”** ¹⁶**The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.** We believe. We are alive.

But he does one other thing. ¹⁰**But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.** ¹¹**And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who**

raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. Now we actually work as God intended. We don't want to live in the old ways of sin and this sinful world, but as God intended when he created us. We die to the world and live in Christ. Thus, the vacuum does what it is intended to do, vacuum. Now we humans do what the Lord intended for us, to live a life that is God's love, not the world's, for him and not for ourselves.

Thank everyone who helps with the dinner today. It is a team effort. Thank the Father, Son and Holy Spirit works as a team for you.

The Word of the Lord.