



Matthew 6:24-34

Jesus said to his disciples: "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. 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 can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry 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 clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you--you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

Introductory Prayer: Once again, Lord, I come to you to pray. Even though I cannot see you, I trust that you are present and I want very much for you to instruct me through your teachings. In the same way, you demonstrate your love for me by spending this time with me, I want to express my love for you by dedicating this time to you with a spirit of faith, confidence and attention. Here I am, Lord, to listen to you and respond with love.

Petition: Lord, help me to put you first in my life.

1. "No One Can Serve Two Masters" - "Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8:5). The two are opposed. There is a constant battle going on within, between the flesh and the spirit. The

one wants to master the other. "I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand" (Romans 7:21). Since the spirit is against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit, no one can fool himself into thinking he can serve both. It is impossible to serve both masters, because one is pitted against the other.

2. "You Cannot Serve God and Wealth" - Saint Thomas More had helped a young family friend, Richard Rich. But when Saint Thomas was arrested, Richard Rich's envy and love of power led him to testify falsely against More in order to secure his own position at court. Envy and unbridled ambition can destroy our souls. This illustrates the clash in our soul between defining ourselves either by who we are or by what we have. Pope Saint John Paul II wrote in *Evangelium Vitae*: "The values of being are replaced by those of having. The only goal which counts is the pursuit of one's own material well-being. The so-called 'quality of life' is interpreted primarily or exclusively as economic efficiency, inordinate consumerism, physical beauty and pleasure, to the neglect of the more profound dimensions - interpersonal, spiritual and religious - of existence" (no. 23). The two poles are at odds, and we are caught in the middle, having to choose one of them, as we cannot choose both.

3. "Strive First for the Kingdom of God" - What good will it do us if we concern ourselves with this world, only to lose what is most important, our happiness in the next world? What else matters but the kingdom of God? We are called to seek this kingdom, and to seek it here and now. Striving for the kingdom of God demands the best from us, but is not oppressive. It calls for us always to seek to do good and avoid evil. It calls for us to deny our inner tendency towards worldly goods and pleasures and to seek to become more and more like Christ. When we act as we are supposed to, we are striving for God's kingdom.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, I want to leave behind me all those attractions that keep me from putting you first. I know that it will be a struggle. I want to master myself for you. Help me to put you first, above all else in my life, so that I may truly strive for the kingdom of heaven.

Resolution: I will make a small sacrifice in order to grow in the virtue I need most.