

Pastor Don Nelson

Sermon: March 22, 2015
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“TRUST AND TREASURE (PART 2)”

Matthew 6:25-34

❓ Who is our Master? Whom do we serve?

● Matthew 6:24: **“No one can serve two masters.”**

A κυριος [kúrios] is a person or thing who has a position of authority and exercises practical control. As much as we like to pretend otherwise, each of us has a master other than ourselves.

● Back to verse 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.”**

“Hate” and “love” are relative terms here. We might not have especially strong *feelings* toward either potential master; but when the two come into conflict, the one we side with is the one we “love.”

● Now the conclusion of verse 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.”**

📖 When Messiah uses the word “money” he means more than mere currency. Money symbolizes currency *and* the real estate and material goods we buy with it *and* services we purchase with it *and* opportunities we procure with it. Together, they add up to *wealth*.

☑ {Roland Chia} **“You cannot serve both God and money.”** No one is entirely consistent; still, in the end our

bodies, minds, and hearts really do belong to one or the other. It follows that Christians who “[display] **divided loyalty are [not] demonstrating...partial commitment to God, but... deep-seated idolatry.**”

❓ Idolatry of money and possessions can be subtle. How can I be sure who my master is?

❓ Some “Would I” questions are helpful here:

Would I compromise my convictions for a big pay-out?

Would I lie or cheat or manipulate others to acquire and safeguard material treasure?

Would I break the law to get rich?

Would I risk my health for wealth?

Would I sacrifice a friendship, or my family life, or my marriage for a huge income?

Would I kill another human being to protect my money and possessions?

Those are helpful to consider, but there is more to material idolatry than that. Immediately after the Lord Jesus states that we **“cannot serve both God and Money,”** he brings in the issue of anxiety.

☐ Please turn with me to Matthew 6:25-34.

■ Verse 25a: **“Therefore”** (that is, since **“you cannot serve both God and Money”**), **“do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.”**

■ Verse 31: **“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’”**

■ Verse 34a: **“Do not worry about tomorrow.”**

“Do not worry about your” existence. “Do not worry” about provision. “Do not worry about” what will (or will not) happen in the days ahead.

“Do not worry,” “do not worry,” “do not worry.”
Μη μεριμνάτε [mē merimnâte]: “Do not be anxious.”

📖 Anxiety is disruptive unease, disquiet or alarm. It is the dread that provokes impulsivity in one person and paralysis in another. It is the apprehension that wakes us up at night, wondering, “What if?” It is the fear of loss and need that makes us suspicious and stingy toward others.

Anxiety appears to be reasonable when we are caught in its grip. Am I right? Any anxious person can list a dozen reasons why they *should* think and act as they do.

{Jn 8:32} Anxiety *feels* like truth. But Jesus declared that “**the truth will set you free**” – and anxiety is slavery.

Those for whom money and possessions trigger anxiety are in bondage.

☠ They are not free not to pursue more: when wealth beckons they must chase after it.

☠ They are not free to freely share: when they give, it is with clenched teeth.

☠ They are not free to fully enjoy what they have: they cannot help but wonder “Am I spending too much?” “Did I get the best deal?” “What if my new car gets dented?”

Anxiety centered on wealth is folly.

■ Matthew 6:25b: “**Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?**”

Anxiety is a root and fruit of disproportionate thinking. In our anxiety we are consumed by lesser matters.

■ Verse 27: “**Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?**” Anxiety is an exercise in futility. It does not improve our lives or make us strong. To the contrary, it is implicated in hundreds of thousands of premature deaths.

■ Verse 34: “**tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.**” Anxiety is self-defeating. It crushes us under the weight of misfortune that might, or might not befall us, sapping our strength to face it if it does come.

? Doesn’t this ring true? Haven’t we suffered the disproportion, futility, and self-defeat of anxiety?

Wealth is not inherently bad. It is a useful device in service to bodily existence and spiritual life. The trouble begins when we treat it as treasure instead of a tool.

★ {Gal 1:4} To put it another way, material wealth is a good servant but a demonic master. Wealth is transitory, it can anchor one’s soul to “**the present evil age**,” and it demands ultimate trust and devotion.

You heard correctly! I am saying that money (and all it represents), when we elevate it from tool to treasure and from servant to master, becomes an idol, a false god.

☑ How does this connect back to worry? To quote Scot McKnight, “**Anxiety is a barometer of one’s God: those with anxiety about** [food and drink and clothing] “**worship** [wealth], **while those**” who do not worry about these things “**worship the providing**

God.” So the ban on materialistic anxiety is, in effect, a prohibition of idolatry.

? It’s been a hard message so far. Where is the Good News? Where is the Gospel that brings life and liberty?

Allow me to start by naming the elephant in the room. Some of us who are true blue Christ Followers are afflicted by anxiety disorder.

For those who do not struggle with anxiety, it can be hard to understand those who do. Please be aware that if they could “just stop,” they would. But their anxiety is not ordinary **“worry.”** It is a real emotional disorder with biochemical components.

✦ If you do have anxiety disorder, hear the Good News: medical help is available. Your doctor can prescribe medication. Some patients benefit from visiting a therapist. God has provided these good resources for our well-being.

That is not all.

✦ Whether or not you have anxiety disorder, hear the Good News: We can train ourselves to trust God, who is trustworthy!

■ Matthew 6:26a: **“Look 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?”**

■ Verses 28-30:

“Why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all

his splendor was dressed like one of these. If 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 little of faith?”

■ And then verse 32: **“For the pagans run after these things”** (food, drink, and clothing), **“and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.”**

The false god Money taunts us: *You don’t have enough! It’s going to run out! God is holding out on you!* Have you heard his voice?

{2 Co 1:5} Yet the Holy Spirit empowers us to **“demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and [to] take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”**

✦ We do not passively wait for this to just happen. We **“demolish arguments”** and **“take captive every thought”** by remembering God’s provision in the past, paying attention to God’s provision in the present, thanking God for his kindness and generosity, and meditating on God’s goodness and love.

As we train ourselves to trust God, it becomes far easier to overcome materialistic worry.

And there is more!

✦ Hear the Good News: God reigns supreme, and we can devote ourselves to his kingdom!

■ Matthew 6:33: **“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”**

{Rev 11:15; Ro 12:2} The false god Money is one of the **“rulers ... authorities”** and **“powers”** of **“the present evil age.”** It exists to advance **“the kingdom of the world”** by **“[conforming]”** humans **“to [its] pattern.”**

{Lk 12:15} It deceives the larger part of humanity into believing that matter is more real than spirit, that **“life... [consists] in an abundance of possessions,”** and that one’s worth and security depend upon currency, real estate, and material goods.

{Mt 7:21; Mk 1:15} Yet the Holy Spirit empowers us to **“take [our] inheritance, the kingdom prepared... since the creation of the world.”** We are ushered in as we **“Repent and believe the good news”** that **“The Kingdom...has come near”** in Christ Jesus.

✦ {Rev 19:16; Ro 12:2; Mt 22:37, 39} Citizenship in God’s Kingdom is not an abstract status. We live as subjects of the **“King of kings and Lord of lords”** as are **“transformed by the renewing of [our minds]”** and as we live by his creed of whole-hearted, holistic love for God and neighbor.

As we train ourselves to serve God’s kingdom, it becomes far easier to overcome materialistic worry.

Join me in singing:

**Seek ye first the kingdom of God
and his righteousness**

**and all these things shall be added unto you
Allelu, alleluia!**

Matthew 6:25-34 is the word of the Lord.