

Many members. One body united in Christ

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

St. Matthew 6:24-34

27 September, Anno Domini 2025

Beloved saints of God,

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

Not surprisingly, no one wants to admit to loving mammon. It is unfortunate that the ESV translates the Greek μαμωνᾶ as simply “money” because while money is part of mammon it is by no means all of it. So as you hear your Lord’s warning, expand your thinking beyond your wallet or your bank account. Mammon is any kind of earthly, temporary, passing wealth. It stands in contrast to the true wealth - the forgiveness and life which God bestows as a free gift which He distributes through His Word and the holy sacraments.

Everything else that we can obtain for ourselves has no permanency and cannot save us from eternal damnation. Worse yet, the devil weaponizes all mammon to distract you from the one thing that is necessary - the Lord Jesus Christ whose Word alone is life, joy, and peace. Money doesn’t tell you that God loves you and will not hold your sins against you. Ask the rich man and Lazarus. Getting straight A’s and graduating with every academic honor that can be given doesn’t prove to God that you are superior to others nor does it make your calling and eternal election to salvation more sure. Having lots of followers doesn’t prove that you are good or right.

In fact, pay careful attention to the language that Jesus uses to discuss your

relationship to the gods of your heart - you serve them. That is not surprising or inappropriate in the case of the Triune God. You are His creation. And as a recipient of God's gracious creation and sustenance it is, as Dr. Luther writes in the Small Catechism, your duty to "thank and praise, serve and obey Him." But in the case of mammon, it is demonic madness that you should serve created things. God created man to have dominion over creation, not enslave himself to it. And that is what happens when we offer our lives, our time, our desires, and our energy in service of obtaining the things of this life - we enslave ourselves to them. They rule over us. And they are always tyrants. They always demand more of you while never actually giving you the good that you sought from them. Indeed, they rob you of the true God.

Again, no one wants to admit they are a slave to anything. But the proof is in the pudding. Look at your calendar. Look at where your money is going. Think about what causes you stress and anxiousness. What things are sacrificed in order to make room for other things? When we honestly look at these things, I doubt any of would actually be proud of what we see or be eager to admit the truth.

Worse yet, God already sees how we spend our time and our money and He isn't buying the excuses. He sees the worries of your heart. People might say you are being reasonable and responsible. And we are masters at coming up with justifications for our idols. But the truth remains that everyone of us enslaves ourselves to mammon, be it money or jobs or entertainment or grades or health or politics or beauty or popularity or our children or our independence or personal fulfillment. The list is endless. I don't know anyone, myself included, who doesn't complain because their schedule is jam packed. We don't have time to read or play with or talk to or pray with our children because of homework or practices or

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special events or all of the above. We don't sit down to dinner with our families because we are rarely if ever at home at the same time.

But mammon doesn't actually care about you or can do one whit to provide for you. It will only demand more and more from you as you chase after it and enslave yourself to it.

Shame on us. We allow our hearts to run after gods that are here today and gone tomorrow. We breathe a sigh of relief when the number in our bank account goes higher, never mind that that number is virtually meaningless. The only thing backing it up is the federal government which is currently running nearly 40 trillion dollars in debt. We sign up for credit cards that charge exorbitant interest rates and late fees because we won't tell ourselves "No" or even "Not yet". We pretend that we are being wise when we say "I just don't talk about religion. After all, who am I to judge?" rather than admitting that we are just trying to save our own skin or reveal that we don't actually know what the Word of God says.

And in return, we gain nothing and lose everything. When we give our hearts and thus our time and resources to mammon, then we do not give those things to God, our heavenly Father who created us and gave us those things in the first place and who gave to us His only and beloved Son to redeem us from sin and eternal death. "You cannot serve God and money." It is an either/or proposition. You absolutely cannot serve both. Either your joy is in Christ and the hub of your life are the things of God's kingdom and His righteousness - prayer, Holy Scripture, the gathering of the saints, the salvation of your children, the gift of your Baptism, the food of Christ's Body and Blood - or your heart is serving the things of this world and those things are eating at your soul like a cancer. And lip service to the things

of God doesn't cut it. The Pharisees were good at that and Jesus wouldn't have any of it, calling them whitewashed tombs filled with dead men's bones. We can't simply say that these things are the most important things. We have to actually work to order our lives around them. The things of God's kingdom are the non-negotiables which every other thing we spend money on or put on our calendar serves and is subservient to.

Dear children of the true and living God, stop enslaving yourselves to things that cannot help you and certainly cannot give you peace or the forgiveness of your sins or the certain hope of eternal life. Set these things down and lift up your eyes to your heavenly Father who does actually love you and care for you, your Father who knit you together in your mother's womb and numbered your days and counted the hairs on your head, your Father who beheld your idolatry and unbelief and saw how your worries and anxieties were destroying you and poured out the Blood of His Son to redeem you, to buy you back to make you His beloved child and heir and fill you with truly good, wonderful, and eternal things. He knows that you need food and clothing and He will most certainly give them to you at the proper time. He has sent His holy angels before you to prepare your way so that you, who have no control over tomorrow, have no reason to worry about tomorrow. Tend to your vocations today in the joyous knowledge that God is and will work out His good and gracious will today and tomorrow just as He has for all of your yesterdays.

What we need, all that we need is Jesus. He is life. He is good. He is truth. He is peace. He is wealth. What can Levis or Old Navy clothe you in that can compare in the slightest to the robe of Christ's own righteousness which covers all your sin? What food can HEB or Torchy's fill your belly with that is richer or finer than the

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Body and Blood of God's only Son which give eternal life?

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I say this as much to myself as I say it to you, take a good hard honest look at what and whom you actually serve. Sit down with your family and see what needs to be gotten rid of, what needs to be given up, what needs to be cancelled so that together you can reap the unspeakable joy and peace of seeking after the kingdom of God and His righteousness first. What does your family need to do to make sure that you are reading and talking about the Bible together every day and praying together? What does your family need to do to make sure that Sunday morning is completely set aside and dedicated to sitting in the Lord's house as a family with your Christian family, being taught and fed by your heavenly Father? What influences need to be cut off so that they can no longer have access to your heart and your mind to not only fill you with anxiety but also with the devil's lies so that you can instead be filled the Word of God which bestows the peace that passes all understanding?

Children of the heavenly Father, you are far more valuable than the birds and the lilies. You are more valuable than even the angels in heaven! God grant each of us His Holy Spirit so that we might serve the only true God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. This God and this God alone has come into our midst to serve us and give us life, peace, and joy to the fullest.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your

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hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.