

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus said, “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant 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.”

“What is the world to me?” That’s the question asked in the Hymn of the Day you sang a few minutes ago. So, what’s your answer? Well, the answer to that question is a telling thing for you in your life. The Gospel reading today has a parable that answers this question in a thought-provoking way. It’s a tough reading where Jesus tells a parable that’s a bit of a head scratcher at first. There’s always the initial reaction to it where it sounds like Jesus is commending a man for being dishonest. You see, however, what Jesus is teaching you what not to do and how, then, you as a Christian answer “What is the world to me?” rightly. Yet, you do all this trusting in the Lord who has overcome the world and he and he alone is your treasure.

Listen again to those words of Jesus, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’ And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’ So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.”

Being greedy is deadly. This manager was that and not only was he greedy, but he was dishonest. Another way it can be translated is the “unrighteous” manager (that’s the Greek word used here). He’s smart. He’s commended for his shrewdness. The reason is because he’s good at the things of this world. Our as Jesus put it, “For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.” People who love the things of this world and find their passion and security in them are going to put forth that effort in any way they can to preserve it. This guy doesn’t want to fall out of favor with the people around him, so he cooks the books. He lies and deceives to make sure he has a plan to be in the good graces of the people and he won’t have to dig or beg. He’s got it all covered. He broke many of the commandments in this parable especially as he stole from his master and lied to cover it up. What is this world to this man? Well, money is his world to him. Reputation before others is of value to the point that he cheated to save face and not have to endure shame and humiliation was his world. The world, then, to the dishonest manager is a canvas by which he paints and creates any number of false gods and see his life defined by the things here and now. His creation is shrewd and masterful. Yet this shouldn’t surprise you. Jesus explains that when he said, For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.” Not only does sin come naturally to man but man is very good at sinning. Sin becomes an “artform” if you will when one persists in it and lives outside of Christ and is impenitent.

Jesus concludes with the last verses of the Gospel reading. “No servant 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.” This is one of those times where the translation is a bit off or broader than what the ESV has used. The word used in Greek here is not “money” it is mammon. It’s all the “stuff” of this world around us. It’s things. Mammon of course includes money but it’s much more like possessions and other things along those lines.

This is first a warning to you when you answer the question “what is the world to me?” by living your life putting all the things of this world around you in ways that elevate them to a position where you cling to them and place your love and trust in them. When your job, your school, your farm, your family’s activities, your community, your friends all at a place where you would sooner break God’s commandments than give those things up. Or when you look at the reputation you have, would you rather ignore or cover up your sin and live a life that goes against God’s word rather than not fit in with what’s going on around you and with the people around you and be seen as one of those “ultra-religious people.”

Thinking about this, you may be thinking, “Now pastor, you’re right, but I can have it all. I have my priorities in order. I can be in everything, do everything and have everything because I am a hard worker. I am resourceful. I can be a pillar in all these things and fit God in when I can because, after all, he and the church are just a personal matter.” Well, “what is the world to you?” with a mindset like that? That all sounds so very... shrewd. Jesus said, “For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.”

When you think about your possessions, your wealth, your time, effort you should examine them in your life according to what God teaches you. Look at how much time and attention will put in the protecting the stuff around us and securing its future all the while we neglect the one thing needful in this life? An easy way to see what a society or people value is where they put their money. Or another way to think of this is, look at what are the biggest buildings, the most elaborate or most protected and you can tell what the gods of people are. We look around us and see these very in things in our day in government buildings, financial centers, hospitals, and sports venues.

Answering the question, “what is the world to me?” with loving the world over God is just the same as living as “this life is mine to get ahead in life, walk over others, and put myself first.” It’s coveting, stealing, lying, and most especially it’s idolatrous. The Epistle reading shows you how so many things in the Scriptures teach you what not to do because it will hurt you and hurt others. “Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.”

The Holy Spirit also inspired St. John to write in 1 John 2, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” Go back to the gospel lesson which ends today with the words of Jesus, “No servant 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 [mammon].”

Take note of what Jesus said and what this unrighteous steward did. Jesus then teaches you not to be unrighteous but to consider the things of this world and use them for the good of God, his Kingdom, and your neighbor. Remember what Jesus teaches you, the people of this world are good in how they do these things and as Christians you are called to be wise in your dealing with possession, money, time, and all things pertaining to them. Baptized into Christ, you are a child of light not a child of this world and age. You are to think about these things in terms of what they are to be used for in service to God.

Jesus said, “And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.” God does use you and teaches you to not simply shun this world and live in some secluded community, as tempting as they may be at times. No, he warns you about the things of this world and with what you do have and understand properly you use for the sake of Christ and his kingdom which is to say it’s for the sake of your neighbor.

Now, then, ask yourself once again, “what is the world to me?” Look around you and what do you see? You see your fellow saints. You see your family. You see the church. You consider your place in life according to God’s commandments. You see who you are in the church, your family, and the world around you. See that you have you have

abused your place in these estates. See that you have been unfaithful in what you done and failed to do. See that mammon has gained sway in your life and you have been tempted to try and serve two masters rather your Lord and him alone. Repent of that life. See too what God teaches you is to be your new life as a Christian and using what you have been given for the sake of the Lord and for the sake of your neighbor. Delight in this new life.

This is where Jesus teaches you in the positive to be wise in how you deal with these things. Pay attention to where your money goes and how it's used. Pay attention to the effort and time you put into something. Think about why you do something or why is it you care about it? What do you stress over and why is that? What's your thought process, your reasoning? In the reading today Jesus is showing you how to view mammon. Use it for things that serve the Lord and those who will be with you in eternity rather than something that is here one day and gone the next or will just let you down.

Dear people of God, the Father looked at his creation and answered the question, “what is the world to me?” by sending his only begotten Son to take the sin of the world onto himself, suffer, die, and rise again so that the world would be and is redeemed and you have eternal life. That's what you have and what a joy it is to have Christ. Listen again to that last stanza of the hymn and see how the question is turned into a declaration. “What is the world to me! My Jesus is my treasure, My life, my health, my wealth, My friend, my love, my pleasure, My joy, my crown, my all, My bliss eternally. Once more, then, I declare: What is the world to me!”

There's great comfort today in seeing the expense and great sacrifice the Son of God endured for your sake. Here is Jesus who emptied himself and endured what you owe God for your sin. He's the one whose Kingdom and treasure are in heaven and yet he laid aside his glory so that you would have all this freely and fully. He came into this world and by the means of the unrighteous cross you have his perfect, obedient righteousness covering you in your baptism. That's the beauty that is your Lord for you and is something that no one or thing can take away from you.

Dear Christians behold Jesus and ask, “What is the world to me?” See your possessions, your time, your money, and all the stuff in this world for what they truly are and who they are to serve rather than you serve them. Use them wisely not for evil but for good for you are the sons of light called out of the darkness by the Light of world. Be wise in these things and learn the example of shrewdness from those in this world and what great lengths they go to preserve these institutions and possessions. Your heart, though, is where your Lord and his gifts are found. You see these things of this world for what they rightfully are and use them as those who belong to Christ and whose lives are lived in service to him. As a fruit of your faith, you use mammon in service to Christ and his church and you teach your children to do the same. Your God isn't made with the hands of men but the one who has redeemed you by his blood. The one who gave up everything for your sake for you are his treasure now and forever.

Baptized into Christ that treasure is yours. Christ is yours and you are his dear treasure. The world comes and go but your Lord has overcome the world. Use what you have been given wisely. Be faithful in a little and God makes you faithful in much. View everything through the lens of Jesus crucified and risen for you. Know who you are in this world and know what you have in Christ. Your sin is forgiven, and you have eternal life. He is your joy, your crown, your all, your bliss eternally. Dear saints of God that means everything, absolutely everything. It means everything during times of lack and suffering. It means everything during of plenty and joy. It means everything as you go through this world as one who is a citizenship is in God's Kingdom. It means everything even as you lay dying and take your final breath. For on that day you even declare, “What is the world to me!” as the Lord gives you life amid death. And together, as God's people, look forward to that final day with the Lord raises you up and the new creation and a world which will know no sin, suffering, death, and crafts and assaults of the devil. On that day, all of us together will see Jesus face to face with all of God's saints and gladly declare, this time rejoicing in this new creation, this new world given to us by the Son, “What is the world to me!”

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.