

## In Nomine Iesu

### The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity 2021 The God of grace also provides – Matthew 6:24-34

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the gracious gift of the Father to you and me. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ.

This morning we are going to talk about two gods. The first is the God of Providence, the One referred to in our nation’s Declaration of Independence, Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, and in our Pledge of Allegiance. The second is the God of Grace, the One whom the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments reveal to us in plain, clear words. The providential God is He who provides. He rules the entire universe, heaven and earth, and all that is in it. He governs it through what we call the laws of nature. He causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine. He determines the color of our eyes, how tall we will grow, all the days of our life, and when it is that we will die.

#### I

When times are good we are satisfied to have the God of Providence as our God, even if we do not think or talk about Him much at all. But there are times when the God of Providence seems not to provide. For example, instead of good health, He seems to send sickness and death. Instead of good weather He seems to send drought or flood. Instead of prosperity we lose our job, the stock market falls, and our savings disappear. So, it seems that at times this providential God appears to be less than concerned about our needs. He seems not to provide all that we hope and work for.

The second God is the God of Grace. He’s the one who became man, joining the human race as a baby in His mother Mary’s womb. He was born, lived a life of humble service, and did only what was good, nothing bad, wherever He went, whoever He met. After living a flawless, perfect life, He was betrayed into the hands of people who, in the most wicked and cynical injustice in the history of the world, had Him crucified as a common criminal together with two actual criminals. This is the God of grace, who takes your sins away and brings you eternal life. He suffered in your place so that you would be redeemed from your sins, reconciled to God, and have eternal life.

Dear friends, what a lot of people today don’t realize is that the God of Providence and

the God of Grace are one and the same, and that the God of Grace provides. Jesus tells us that our Father in heaven clothes the flowers of the field that come and go so quickly. He feeds the birds of the air that don't even think ahead to plan out their lives. Now if our Father in heaven does this, does this not mean that He is in charge of this world ... down to the smallest of details? Does this not mean that the world belongs to Him? He made it. He said, "Let there be," and there was. He governs by His almighty power the movement of the stars, the rotation of the earth, the seasons, the weather, the rise and the fall of nations, and, yes, the feeding of birds and life cycle of flowers.

The world not only belongs to God because He made it, but because He also redeemed it. He bought it back by giving His only begotten Son. Yes, it was God's Son who shed His blood on the cross for a world full of murderers, liars, cheats, adulterers, every type and kind of sinner. He allowed His Son to be shamed, mocked, tormented, and crucified for us, even though He was none other than the Almighty God become flesh.

The world belongs to God, and He governs it. He has never let it out of His control and has promised that He never will. But when we consider the terrible suffering, tragedies that fall upon people, even people we know - apparently without any reason or purpose as far as we can see - how can this be reconciled with the idea that a loving heavenly Father is in charge? This is where we need to remember that the God who provides is one and the same with the God who saves, who says in today's Gospel, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

How could it be that Jesus would invite us to call God "Father," and God would not be our Father? How could it be that Jesus would teach us to petition Him that His kingdom come, and His kingdom would not come? How could it be that Jesus would promise that if we seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, everything needed will be ours, and then we find out that nothing is ours? Is this what has sustained the Christian Church for the last two thousand years? No, it is not! Dear friends, the world belongs to God, and His kingdom belongs to us, as Jesus said. The world serves the purposes of the kingdom of God, and that's the way it will be until the end of time. God provides in view of His gracious promises. So, if you want to know that the God of Providence really will care for your material needs, first seek His kingdom of grace, just as Jesus said.

## II

The kingdom of God cannot be seen. In fact - and here is the truth that the unbelieving of the world does not and cannot understand - it is hidden under suffering. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 16:20-21) Look at all the believers of the Old Testament, all those whose lives and struggles and final triumph are set before us as examples. Their glory, which was reserved for them in heaven, was hidden under their suffering here on earth. So it is with all the children of God. They know that **God did not** bring suffering and death into the world, sin did. **Man did.**

Take note how our Savior describes God's kingdom. He says, "Seek first the kingdom of God **and His righteousness.**" This is not complicated language, but the vain, proud, and foolish refuse to take it at face value. Does He say we should seek righteousness? Does he say that if we behave ourselves, we will have everything we want in this life? No, He tells us to seek **God's righteousness**, not ours. God's righteousness is not the good things that **we do**, but **the good things that Jesus, who God sent into the world, has done for us.** To seek the righteousness of God is to **embrace His perfect life, not to try to repair our lives.** It is to let go of all trust in our own goodness and confess with Isaiah the prophet that all our righteousness is as filthy rags. To seek the kingdom

of God is **to believe that His righteousness, given us at our baptism**, is sufficient before God. It covers all of our sins. The rest of life then is lived out as His children, **forgiven and forgiving, blessed and returning blessing** to all whose lives we touch.

The kingdom of God is a contradiction in the eyes of the world. It has power. But you cannot see it. It has authority. But it appears weak. It has wealth, priceless and enduring treasures no power in the world can take away. But it looks poor. The God who rules the world and all that is in it is pleased to give to us something more valuable than anything in this world. He is pleased to give us His kingdom, which is greater and better than any the eye has seen or ear heard.

It is a kingdom in which a weak and poor little child has the same status as a powerful king. It is a kingdom in which there is no fear, anger, guilt, punishment, hatred, or sin of any kind. It is a kingdom in which sorrow, poverty, war, sickness, and death are forever banned. It is a kingdom in which pure peace prevails because God rules His kingdom by pronouncing everyone in it perfectly just, holy, and pure. St. Paul describes it this way, **“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** (Romans 5:1) This peace is no temporary, worldly peace, nor is it some peace that only might be ours someday. No, it is present peace. It is ours now, because Jesus took upon Himself our sin and gave us in exchange His own righteousness. It is ours now, and will remain ours forever. God’s kingdom is found here, whenever the good news of His kingdom is proclaimed, wherever Christ our Lord’s sacraments are given in accordance with His command, and forgiveness - real forgiveness! - is given.

The world doesn’t exist in and of itself. Nor did it create itself. It didn’t come about by the cold, impersonal interaction of atoms and molecules, thrown together by chance and time. It won’t be able to keep itself from being destroyed on Judgment Day, nor can it delay the coming of that day. On that day those who trust in things of this world, things Jesus called mammon, money, wealth, power, will find they trusted in something that is powerless. They will find they trusted in something with only the illusion of worth and goodness, like the forbidden fruit of Eden. The world and its mammon are cruel masters who promise everything to their servants, but in the end leave them with nothing.

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The God of Providence and the God of Grace are not two different gods, but one God, who gives us His kingdom through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. He gives us treasure that cannot be destroyed or taken away. He gives us His kingdom, which will endure long after the last light on earth goes out. Dear friends in Christ, seek first the kingdom of God’s grace in Christ. Seek first His righteousness. God Himself has called you into this kingdom. He gives it to you freely, without cost, for the sake of His dear Son. Yes, this kingdom cannot be seen. It is hidden under the suffering this fallen world inflicts on each of us. But in God’s kingdom you have nothing to worry about. Tomorrow cannot hurt you. Tomorrow belongs to the One who loves you and has promised that all things you need will be added to you who are His through faith, even transforming death into the gate to eternal life. Believe then that the God of grace also provides. Amen.

**Soli Deo Gloria**