

MORNING PRAYER
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
09.12.21

The command of Jesus I just quoted from today's Second Lesson is likely the most difficult one for us, as Christians, to obey. It is difficult for us to allow the Holy Ghost to bring us into obedience with this command and the instructions He gives in this entire Lesson from the Sermon on the Mount.

Our birth nature just isn't inclined this way. By nature we are self-centered. Added to our nature is the attitude of society which says we *must* put our own temporal needs first. Jesus reverses this order. He commands us to seek Him, seek His kingdom and His righteousness *first*, and *then* tend to our temporal needs.

Jesus is *not* saying that we should not take any thought to anything else but His kingdom and His righteousness. Such a person would be a fool! What He is saying is we need to order things properly.

We need to seek Him, His kingdom and His righteousness *first, foremost, before, above and beyond any other thing*, and *then* give thought to other things, the temporal things we need for life in this world. Oswald Chambers states this much better than I do. He wrote: "*Jesus taught that a disciple has to make his relationship to God the dominating concentration of his life, and to be carefully careless about everything else in comparison to that.*"

The keys to obeying our Lord's teaching here are, first, to make our relationship to God the *dominating concentration*, the main concern, of our lives, and then, second, to be *carefully careless*, aware but not anxious, about everything else. If we gain and keep that order in our lives we will be obedient to our Lord's command, which will lead us to a life of holiness and peace. Of course this command is counter-cultural, revolutionary even!

Jesus commands us to "*take no thought*". In other words, *have no anxiety about, don't be troubled by, put forth no time or effort to care about* our legitimate needs for food, drink and clothes. We are to "*Take no thought*" for any of them, *until* we are secured in the kingdom and righteousness of God. When we keep this order, those secondary needs will be added unto us. God will provide. When we learn to obey this command, and it is possible and expected that we learn and obey it, a whole new way of life is opened to us.

Chambers called it being "*carefully careless*" about everything else. When we are fixated on the kingdom and righteousness of God first, the Holy Ghost teaches us that we do not need to worry about anything else. Our needs for personal property and possessions (food, drink, clothes) become matters of indifference. We learn to hold loosely to all those things. And as we hold loosely to them, we come to trust God will add them unto us as He sees we have the need.

We will come to know in our spirits what St. Paul writes to the Philippians: “*I know how to be abased (have nothing), and I know how to abound (have all I need): every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*”

Such knowledge will bring us great peace. It will bring us peace because we will be living according to the rule of Christ’s kingdom and in His righteousness, the two things that should be the dominating concentrations of our lives! Living in Christ, by Christ, and for Christ and His kingdom will become our life’s “obsession.” Not in some obnoxious way! Quietly, but really. Beginning in our souls and working its way into our desires, actions and words, the kingdom of God and His righteousness will be the first thing we seek and live for.

As we do, our spirits and minds will be freed to “*take no thought*” for those secondary things. When we have them, great. When we don’t, okay, we don’t. God knows, and so we will wait for Him to provide. Easier said than done? Not really. Not if we live by grace through faith unto good works, seeking the kingdom and righteousness of our Lord Jesus.

As we use the grace the Holy Ghost provides us *today*, right now, at this very moment, we will be enabled to do the very thing Jesus commands us to do in this Gospel lesson. No special preparation is needed. As the *Nike* ad. says, “*Just do it.*”

We need only to take hold of the grace we have right now from our Baptism, our Confirmation, our regular reception of the Holy Eucharist, our time spent in prayer, and put it to use. Now.

Later in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount He says, "*Ask seek, and knock.*" When we do we will "... *receive and find,*" and what is now closed to us will be "*opened*". That verse is often limited to teaching people to ask, seek and knock for material things; the very things for which Jesus tells us to "*take no thought*"! That is a misapplication!

What we need to be asking, seeking and knocking for is to use the grace we have at our disposal *right now, this* moment, to use it to make the kingdom and righteousness of God the dominating concentration of our lives. It most definitely can be done. God's grace is sufficient.

Jesus never asks or commands us to do anything that He does not make us capable of doing. Therefore, while making our dominating concentrations the kingdom and righteousness of God may *seem* difficult, or even "impossible," it is not.

The grace we need to set and keep the order of our lives obedient to Jesus is already ours. All we need to do is put it to use.

May we do so, to the glory of His Name, the building of His kingdom, and the advancement of His righteousness in our lives and in His Church.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, let us never be anxious about those things which truly do not matter, focusing instead on seeking Your kingdom. Let us always remain fixed on following Your ways, Your will and Your Gospel. Give us the wisdom to recognize the pursuit of mammon for what it is and to reject it and all other false pursuits. This we ask in Jesus' Holy Name.

AMEN

Written by: The Reverend Paul T. Beutell

Presented by Lay Reader: Ted Randall