

"Two Masters"

Matthew 6:24-34

May 25, 2008

Graduate Recognition

In the fall of their Sophomore year of High School this fine group of young adults gathered in this place on a Sunday morning and one by one they stepped up to the microphone and shared a statement of faith in God. The statements were unique to each student but were similar in the fact that they talked about faith in God and a desire to live in a relationship to Jesus. Those statements said things like: **"I believe in God, and I believe that God created the world and that His Son, Jesus Christ died for my sins. I believe that God is responsible for every blessing in my life and that God is with me at all times."** **"I believe that having faith is a choice, a choice only you can make. I have chosen to have faith and to be close to God I will live a Christian life and I will pray to Him always."** **"I believe that God will help me to do what is right in His eyes and guide me on my journey through life."** **"I believe that through God all things are possible. When you pray to God He will always hear you and answer your prayers. We may not always understand God and why He does things but He has a reason for everything."** **"My faith in God is something that will never leave me. Every time something good happens, I know that God is behind it, and every time something not so good happens, I know that God is with me."** Of course, there were the more practical statements, like one that said: **"..... At times I think that God isn't too happy with me. But He forgives me anyway. I try to do the right thing most of the time, but sometimes it doesn't quite work out that way. But God loves me anyway."** or the one that just said: **"I can't compete with the other kids and their brilliant speeches, ... so, Thanks!"**

Brilliant - right? 2 ½ years have past since then and I wish that we would have another year together now now with that added maturity now with that additional life experience 'under your belts' now as you face the questions concerning what life will hold for you as you set out into your post High School life. Now, in these days, do you still believe? Now, in these days, do you continues to hold to your faith in God and a desire to find out what God's will is for you life?

No matter who we are or what we are facing in our lives, we must make the decision to believe or not. Every day with every decision and every event, we chose to believe and follow God or not!

Jesus begins His comments in today's gospel text by telling His followers that they simply can not serve two masters. Sometimes we think that this word of Jesus is simply a choice between being a follower of God or an enslavement to money. Hardly! What Jesus is talking about is your whole life. Certainly He is saying that

we can not be enslaved to money and possessions and still be a servant of God. But more than that it is not possible to follow God and at the same times follow nothing but your own desires it is not possible to be enslaved to our culture and enslaved to God. Always we make a choice. Unfortunately, too often we choose money or possessions ... we chose the culture ... we chose our own desires and pleasures over the way of God. and then we worry and live lives full of anxiety.

Recently there was a survey done involving teenagers and their religious beliefs. The results of the survey indicated that teenagers held a very distinctive set of beliefs that the author characterized as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. The surveyor said that **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism consists of beliefs like these: 1. "A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth."** 2. "God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions." 3. "The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself." 4. "God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem." 5. "Good people go to heaven when they die." These are not bad beliefs they don't exactly square with Lutheran teaching but it is not bad to believe that God wants us to be nice. The author of the study went on to say that **"this is not a religion of repentance from sin, of keeping the Sabbath, of living as a servant of sovereign divinity, of steadfastly saying one's prayers, of faithfully observing high holy days, of building character through suffering, of basking in God's love and grace, of spending oneself in gratitude and love for the cause of social justice, et cetera. Rather, what appears to be the actual dominant religion among U.S. teenagers is centrally about feeling good, happy, secure, at peace. It is about attaining subjective well-being, being able to resolve problems, and getting along amiably with other people."**

You can not serve God and self. But what will it be for you? You who are about to graduate, whom will you serve as you go out into the big world? The choices will be endless and for many with whom you will share the journey ahead, God is not even in the equation. Self is everything. Countless other beliefs will be brought to bear on your choices. Will you still choose to believe in God and Jesus and the forgiveness of sin?

Last week, as I drove toward the eastern part of the state, I turned on the radio and found myself listening to a Canadian radio station. I was fascinated by what I was hearing. In very calming tones, the speaker told of how they practiced their worship of 'the goddess'. Candles adorning the space where a large picture of the goddess hung provided a quiet place to find peace while meditating on the goddess and being thankful for the good things that had been a part of the persons life. The whole program focused on "The goddess and the Green Man" - the green man being another 'god-like' figure that was ecologically friendly and to whom people were called to direct their worship.

You can not serve two masters. That is what Jesus tells His followers ... and that is what I tell you today. There are countless masters to whom we can bow. There will be the continual call to worship money, power, possessions and there will be calls to design your own religious beliefs and reject the long held beliefs of traditional religions even the goddess and the green man will beckon you. Who will you serve? In a world where you will have a million options - a world where the evening news focuses on pastors with radical political beliefs or far right conservative theologies and the church comes off as something to be avoided in such a world, will you hold to your faith and believe in God or will you chose to serve another master?

For some reason, Jesus ties this word about choosing to serve God with worry. Wow - what an important word for our day. I don't think that I have every experienced a time when I have seen more evidence of worry than I have in our days. What will your future hold? Natural disasters abound. Wars and terrorism are an ever present reality. Stock markets decline. And who can possibly afford to put gas in the Ford to keep it puttin' for the Lord? In the midst of it all, Jesus tells us not to worry God cares God provides. As you go out into this world ... don't worry Go with God as your master.

AMEN