

Homily for 3rd Sunday after Pentecost, 17 June 2012
Prepared for St Elias Parish, San Jose
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Romans 5:1-11 / Matthew 6:22-33

Sometimes Jesus' words in the Holy Gospel need a lot of explaining. Sometimes His disciples didn't understand His stories and we share their confusion. Sometimes we have to try to think like Jews living 2000 years ago to figure out what Jesus meant and then we have to "translate" their situation so that it fits our lives.

Today is not one of those "sometimes." Today's Gospel reading is very clear, and to make sure we understand, the message is repeated several times in different ways.

Jesus' first saying in this Gospel passage (Matthew :22-23) tells us that we cannot see the world clearly and make good, moral, wise decisions if our attitudes are muddled or distorted or perverted by values that do not come from God.

His second saying (Matthew 6:24) tells us plainly: "You cannot serve God and money." In other words, if you make your decisions based on profit and other material considerations, you have turned your back on God. God tells us to value God, and other people, and ourselves, more than money. For God and for any true Christian, love is more important than profit.

The third saying (Matthew 6:25-32) also has a plain message: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear." Then Jesus gives a long illustration based on nature, where God provides what is needed, not just for survival, but even for beauty. What Jesus wants us to understand is that we are being cared for with love. God's love is more powerful than anything, so our worrying and planning and scheming are worthless and pointless.

The last saying sums up everything with a general rule for living: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you besides" (Matthew 6:33). Here we have to remember that the Kingdom of God is not just about eternal life in heaven. Jesus has brought the Kingdom of God into the world, and everyone who believes in Jesus has to work to build up the Kingdom of God for the benefit of the whole world.

We build up the Kingdom of God by living authentically as Christians, according to the teachings of Jesus, all the time. Not just in church on Sunday mornings, not just in our morning and evening prayers, not just in times of danger or distress when we call on God for help.

We have to make sure that we look at the world with Christian attitudes and values. We can't let the light in us be darkness. We have to make sure that we serve God, not money. Money is for us to use in building up the Kingdom of God by helping others, feeding the poor, supporting the church, and so on.. We have to stop worrying about unnecessary luxuries and comforts and optional equipment. God provides what we need for beauty and joy as well as for survival.

Finally, we have to **seek** the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. We can't be passive, sitting and waiting to see what will happen. We have to be active, learning more and more about God's will and Jesus' teachings, and we have to put them into action. God's mercy and love and justice come into the world through our faith and our actions. Everything we do must seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and give thanks and praise and glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever. Amen.