

## **“BE A SPARROW!”**

8<sup>th</sup> Sun. a. Epiphany, A

Sun. & Wed., February 27 & March 2, 2011

Zion Lutheran Church, Beecher, IL

Sermon Text – Matthew 6:24-34

Old Testament Reading – Isaiah 39:8-16

Epistle Reading – 1 Cor. 4:1-13

Gospel Reading – Matthew 6:24-34

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. [Amen.] Our sermon is based the today’s Gospel reading. The title of the sermon is: *“Be a Sparrow!”*

Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

Isn’t it interesting to see how the current events of the world reflect the words of Jesus? Jesus says, **“You cannot serve two masters...”** (Mt. 6:24, ESV)

And... when we open our eyes, all round us we see the result of being on the wrong side of that equation. From Greece... to Cairo... even to Madison, Wisconsin... what do we see? We see the worry and anxiety that comes from people serving the wrong “master.”

But “serve” and “master” *aren’t* adequate translations. The language of the original Greek text is more forceful than that. It says: **“You cannot be slaves of two Lords.”** You see, it *isn’t* simply a matter of serving... No! This really falls under the realm of “control.”

Like it or not, the truth is, every person is controlled by someone. There *are* no exceptions. Either a person will be governed by God... in heart, body, and mind... or, likewise, in heart, body, and mind... that person is governed by Satan.

And a person can’t be controlled by two Lords... it’s one or the other. This is what Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel reading.

Again, what do we see happening on the newscasts? The god of mammon (or money) is toppling country after country, state after state. Governments that dispense their sacrament of money are finding their chalices are running dry. This god... this deceptive and false god of money... is the god that so many have been encouraged to “fear, love and trust above all things.”

From this god came wages and bonuses... stimulus payments and pensions. But what once seemed to be an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-kindly god... has been shown to be powerless and quite limited. And the result?

Well... what do we see people doing now that this false god has failed them? To your amazement... consternation... and disgust you’ve seen it. People riot. They march. They shut down society. In France and Greece, they even turn over cars in the streets and set them on fire!

With an ugly, sneering face, they shout and call fellow human beings all manner of names... and, for many, they not only threaten violence... but they even *act*

on it! And it's all done in pursuit of the fleeting things of this world – things that don't last!

When we attach ourselves to the false lord of money over against the true Lord, Jesus Christ, there's really only one possible outcome, and you know, don't you... you *know* what it is!

Worry... anxiety... sleepless nights... and never... *ever* is peace to be had! Being attached to the wrong lord... the lord of money... means being enslaved to... *and by*... the things of this world.

With this god... no matter what we acquire... or how hard we work... or to what degree we strive for something more... with this god... there's *never* satisfaction... there's *never* contentment.

This false god will drive you mercilessly to work harder and harder... to scheme... to manipulate... even to... as we've seen played out on the world stage... from Greece to Wisconsin... we've seen people behaving *not* like civilized children of God who were created in God's own image... no... we see people following in the exact way of Satan, himself... spreading hate, fear, animosity, chaos... and even violence and death!

They fall into all manner of sin; stopping at nothing (as we've seen)... in an effort to get what it is that they think that they must have above all else... money, power, and privilege.

Incredibly... and sadly... they willingly follow the command of their false god when he says to them: **“Work, struggle, connive, scheme... do whatever it takes... *and do it*... until you drop!”**

But this false god never satisfies the human heart... *ever!* For when one chases after the things of this world... there's always one more dollar to desire to have in one's pocket... there's always a fancier car that could be in the garage... and there's always a different home... with one more bedroom or a bigger yard... that relentlessly pursues us, trying to convince us... that if we only had that one more thing... *then* we'd have peace and contentment.

Dear people of God, on this day, and through His Words, Jesus comes to you and gives you His perfect Word of admonition and advice. In love, He comes to you and simply says: **“Do not worry.”**

With those words, He's not blasting you so much as He's *asking* you... begging you in a way... to enter an entirely different realm. He's asking you to have a different mind-set from those in the world who rip into their fellow man... tearing others up... and who destroy *themselves* in the process.

To be “anxious” or to “worry” isn't so much a specific act as it is a condition of one's heart. Sure, we can be... and really... we ought to be “*concerned*” how things are going in our life and as we make plans for our future. But our concern is always under girded by our faith in God's Word of promise to take care of us – *always*.

To be anxious and to worry is a sin... for it shows that we've allowed "Money" to become our god... which can... *and eventually will...* drive us to reject God's promise to take care of us as *He knows* to be best. And in the rejection, you lower yourself into the cesspool of snarling people... each futilely seeking to fend for him or herself... doing whatever it takes to have what they *think* will provide peace and security.

On this day, God calls you to be a sparrow. Live your life with joy and freedom and trust in His sure Word. God said... *therefore He will...* provide food and drink and clothing to you. Remember St. Paul's gorgeous words: **If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?**  
(Rom. 8:31b-32, ESV)

The God who calls you to not worry about your earthly life is the same One who has given you eternal life through His one and only Son! The God who says that He will provide for all your earthly "tomorrows..." is the same One who, through the blood of the crucified and resurrected Jesus, has opened up the gates of heaven where time no longer exists... and where likewise... sin is not to be found!

And if God can do all *that*... certainly taking care of our earthly needs is as nothing to Him.

Again, think about it. Which is harder for God to give... the forgiveness of sins and eternal life... or a bit of bread and meat in your belly and clothing on your back day by day? Without a doubt, if your Father has given you the *greater* thing... will He not *also* give you the *lesser*?

Dear people of God... be a sparrow. In trust, eat the holy meal that God provides for you. In trust, wear the robe of righteousness that God put on you in Baptism. Look to Him for all your good. Believe what you hear... and *not* what your eyes see.

God wants you to know and believe that He is your God and there is no other God but Him. Don't worry about tomorrow. All your tomorrows are bound up in Jesus. The Father gives you all that you need for the sake of His Son.

All tomorrow *really* holds is the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Today is the Day to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Today is the Day to know His goodness and mercy for they rule over us forever.

You, dear Christian, are as free as a sparrow. You're free to sing and praise God for the mercies that He shows you in His Word. You're free to glorify His holy name for time *and eternity*! Thanks be to God! [Amen.]