

A New Year's Message from the Prince of Peace

Thomas Robinson, *Longing for a Prince of Peace 4*, January 1, 2017

Matthew 6:24-34

²⁴ **No one can serve two lords**, for they'll either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and Mammon.**

²⁵ **Because of this fact**, I tell you, **refuse to be anxious any more about your life** (*psyche*, soul), what you'll **eat** or what you'll **drink**, or about **your body** (*soma*), what you'll **wear**. Isn't **your life** (*psyche*, soul) **something more than food**, and **your body** (*soma*) than **clothing**?

²⁶ **Look at the birds** of the heaven: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet **your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you more important than they are?**

²⁷ And which of you by **being anxious** can add a single yard to the length of your life?

²⁸ And about **clothing**, why are you **anxious**? **Examine those lilies** in the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even **Solomon in all his glory** was not arrayed like any one of them. ³⁰ But if **God is clothing the grass of the field** in this way, which today exists and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not **much more clothe you – you of little faith!**

³¹ Therefore **don't be anxious**, saying, 'What are we going to **eat**?' or 'What are we going to **drink**?' or 'What'll we **wear**?' ³² For the nations are seeking after all these things, and **your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.**

³³ But **seek first God's kingdom** (rule) and **his righteousness** (justice), and **all these things will be added to you.**

³⁴ Therefore **do not be anxious about tomorrow**, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Matthew 6:19-23

¹⁹ "Do not treasure up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but treasure up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy (single, generous), your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is evil (corrupted, envious), your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great the darkness!

Mark 1:14-15

¹⁴ Now after John was handed over, Jesus went into the region of Galilee proclaiming God's good news, ¹⁵ and saying, "The right time has arrived in full, God's kingdom has come right here! Change your ways of thinking and trust in this good news!"

Matthew 6:9-12

⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Luke 12:15

¹⁵ But he said to them, “Keep watch and be on guard against all kinds of greed, because your life is not made up from the stuff you possess, even when it’s abundant.

Romans 1:21-23

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Thinking themselves to be wise, they became foolish, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for a likeness of an image of a mortal human....

The Challenge of Mammon and Human-size gods

The Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6; Lk 2:14) speaks on a mountain to crowds of poor laborers, farmers, sick people, about the in-breaking of God’s rule. Seek God’s kingdom now! (Mk 1:15; Mt 6:10)

Israel’s ancient prophets attacked idolatry. It was about the people’s desire for human-size gods they can bargain with, get stuff from. It was also about reality. Serve Baal to get fertility and you serve nothing. Self-deception. The one living God is already there freely creating that fertility. But no bargain. God’s purposes are larger than fertility.

Jesus says, “You cannot serve God and Mammon.” Mammon is Aramaic for ‘stuff,’ ‘money,’ ‘what you trust.’ Jesus personifies it as the god who offers to supply all that. Matthew and Luke leave it as a god’s name. Mammon is the practical, powerful, human-size god who promises to provide all and secure all who serve him. He is money, power, sex, intellect, control, family, race, violence, war, progress, greed, etc. He’s the default god of humanity. We anxiously serve without realizing. (David Foster Wallace, “*This is Water*” 2005).

The problem: Like Baal, Mammon isn’t God or a god. Mammon is us worshipping ourselves. The reductionist god. The deep cause of human brokenness and sin (Rom 1:21-23).

Refusing Anxiety and the Something More that is You

Jesus urges us to break our default desire to serve Mammon by refusing to be anxious.

Don’t worry about life’s stuff. That anxiety for more in all its forms is our vulnerable spot that gives him power. Refuse anxiety, not because you know all will go well. It probably won’t. But because You are ‘something more’ than anything “Mammon” conceives.

God is everywhere you look, pervading/caring for everything. He has put something more in you, in your life & body, that allows you to see God, have faith, to know that deep reality and know yourself with God as “heavenly Father.” You’re God’s image in his world.

Mammon lies: You’re ‘nothing but’ your stuff, power, physique, money, résumé, talents, etc. They secure your life. You need more. Worry, strive, grasp. You’re not good enough yet!

The God of all Stuff who wants You as Something More

This isn’t asceticism. The stuff of life is created freely by God who knows your needs. But not a bit of it can make you a successful human, image & child of God, something more.

God is not an add-on (if you have time for ‘spiritual’ things after work). Make God God in your life. Seek his life/justice. It changes you and everything around you. When God is your living creator/father and you are that ‘something more,’ God’s image and child, then the stuff of life can ‘be added to you’ without anxiety, because You are there. Little gods dissolve to stuff they are. God & You, beloved child, dance at the center.