

Matthew 6:24-34

Some years ago Harry Chapin recorded a song which became very popular. Entitled, "Cat's in the Cradle," it's about a father and his son.

"My child arrived just the other day; he came to the world in the usual way,
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay; he learned to walk while I was away.
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it, and as he grew, he'd say,
'I'm gonna be like you dad, you know I'm gonna be like you.'

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon; little boy blue and the man on the moon;
When you comin' home dad? I don't know when
But we'll get together then son; you know we'll have a good time then."

But he never did have that good time with his son. There was always something to do, something to keep him busy. It wasn't until his son had grown up and moved away that he came to the sad realization, he had been so focused on building a life for his son, that he never had a life with his son.

Today in our text Jesus comes right out and asks us, Are you making that same mistake with Me? Are you so focused on building a life for you and your family, that you miss out on the whole point of life?

To live is Jesus. Every Christian knows this, but not every Christian does this. We know that life is not about money. It's about every Word that comes from the mouth of God. It's about faith, and forgiveness, and hope in Jesus Christ. What happens, however, when what we know in our head does not move down to our heart and affect the way we live? We become, says Jesus, like the Gentiles; like those who are not of God.

You do not have to look far to see how the Gentiles live. They are the fabric of our society. Work to live, strive for success, live to impress the neighbors, drive the fanciest car, wear only the clothing styles that are in fashion, make sure the kids are involved in every school sport and activity, take a back seat to no one, act wealthy even if you aren't. The Gentiles, says Jesus, are consumed with building a life, with what they wear, what they eat, where they live, how they live. This is their focus, and therefore, says Jesus, this becomes their god. "You cannot serve God and money," He says, "Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other."

Christians, like Gentiles, live in a world of money. God commands us to work so that we may eat. We are not to slough off like lazy bums believing God will take care of us anyway. It is not wrong for a Christian to succeed in life. It is not wrong for a Christian to live well. It is wrong, however, for a Christian to put building a life ahead of living his life with Christ. It is not the mark of a Christian, but the mark of a Gentile to always put work ahead of worship, to always be too busy for the study of the Bible, to seek first the things of this world and not the things of God.

Friends, is it not time that we confess to each other we have been living too much like Gentiles? Gas prices jump, and immediately we become frustrated. Tuition rates skyrocket, it costs more to buy groceries, the car breaks down, there is a hole in the roof, and we who are not Gentiles, but Christians, do what Gentiles do - we worry, we panic, we get upset. We become so absorbed with trying to build a life, that Jesus' words go in one ear and out the other..."Is not life more than food? Do not be

anxious saying, What shall we eat? Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things, but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.” We say we are Christians, and not Gentiles, but the way we live gives away what is really in our heart. What we seek in life day after day gives away what really is our (God).

In the song, “Cat’s in the Cradle,” the little boy kept saying, “I’m going to be like you dad; you know I’m going to be like you.” And that is how he became...like his dad. He, too, when he was grown up became too busy for what really mattered, because he was too busy building a life. And that is how it works. Like father, like son; like mother, like daughter. Parents, if you live like the Gentiles around you, how will your children live? If you do not seek first God’s kingdom in Jesus Christ, what do you think your children will seek in life?

Do not worry, Jesus says. Do not be anxious. Seek first the kingdom of God. All of these are not so much commands from our Lord as they are invitations. Jesus invites you, as His Christian, to do what no Gentile can do--trust that God will take care of your life. He takes care of the birds. He takes care of the grass and the flowers of the field. Are you not of more value than these? He asks.

Jesus answered His own question by going to the cross for you. If you were of little value, God would never have sent His Son to be born for you. If you were of little value, Jesus would have resisted the soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane. If you were of little value, He would have ordered His angels to fight for Him; He would not have died for you. But He did all these things. He did suffer, He did allow the soldiers to beat Him, He opened not His mouth to defend Himself, He closed His eyes in death. All this He did for you because you are of such value to Him.

Does God know, therefore, when it costs more to fill your car with gas? And does He care? Does He know and care when the bills just keep piling up and you do not know how to pay them? Does God know and does He care about every big, and little crisis in your life? Yes. Your Heavenly Father know all your needs, says Jesus. Do not worry, He will take care of you because you are of much value to Him.

Does it matter that often times we place little value on Jesus, on His Word, on His Church? Does He still value me even though I often live like a Gentile and not like His Christian? Friend, do not worry. No matter how you have lived, His blood was shed for you. He forgives you for all the sin in your heart and life. He seeks you, even though you have not always sought Him first. And through His words reaching your ears, through His Sacraments for you, He finds you and draws you to Himself in love.

It was too late for the father in the song to build a life with his son, but it’s not too late for you. God will help you, from this day forward, to live your life in Christ, to seek Him first, His words, His mercy. If you are sitting here today hearing these words, (or reading them), know that through them God is seeking you. He seeks you because He values you.

Let the gas prices do what they will. They cannot prevent God from loving you. Let Gadhafi in Libya and all the Middle East nations go crazy with violence and riots. That cannot stop God from calling you His own forgiven child. Let the Gentiles seek whatever they want. You are no Gentile. You keep seeking Christ and His words, because through them He keeps seeking you. And He will take care of you. No matter how dark it looks on your horizon, God will take care of your life because in Christ Jesus He values you. Amen.