

## “OUR MOST SECURE PROVIDER”

Matthew 6:24-35

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### INTRODUCTION:

1) When someone else did all for you: With all the mess after the WW II, the beautiful country of Germany was divided into two parts: The East Germany and the West Germany under two completely different political and economic systems. The East Germany had a Communist government which followed the Communist political and economic system: They made decisions for all their people: The age they could get married, how many children they could have, where they might live and what kind of job they be assigned to. They also rationed how much and what kind of food each person needed to eat, what kind of school they could go, how much money they could make. When they came home, the government provided them the kind of news they might read and the kind of program on their TV they could watch. Everyday, from the government and the leaders at their school, work-place and neighborhood would tell them what to think and to say. The government and it's agencies made all decision for the people, provide everything for the people, so, the people didn't need to, or wasn't allowed to, make any decision on their own.

2) When you have to make your own decisions: That system ran for about 50 years and began to crack. People began to ask why can't they make their own decisions, why did they need to listen to the government in all things. Why is life of people was so much like life in an animal farm: The farmer make all decision and provided for all the needs of their animals. With the vocal help of the US president Ronald Reagan, the two Germanys eventually reunited into one Germany—the East Germany was disbanded to join the West. Then a surprise to many that some of the people from the East side had problems of making decisions on their own, or unable to provide their own needs and that of their families. Their dependent mentality was so deep they had lost all the ability to be responsible for themselves. In the first few years, some of them honestly regretted to join the West. They had no idea of a free society, the market-oriented economy, the precious freedom to choose what you see fit, do what you like to advance yourself. In fact, to make all decisions on your own, to provide all your needs on your own, to plan for your life and the future on your own isn't as easy as some might think. With limited resources, knowledge and wisdom, many find it hard to do all these on their own. That is why some of us struggle in our life.

3) Jesus provided us a solution: In the passage from the Bible today, Jesus

gave us an answer to our question: Who is the ultimate provider for all of our needs? Since the beginning of human history, men always had the burden of making decisions and provide their needs. Even with strong faith in Jesus, Christians aren't immune from the struggle of decision making and the responsibility of providing needs. The Bible has so much to say about human responsibilities to labor for their own needs and that of their families and the society, and most Christians are faithful in doing that. But if you have lived a few more years than others, you know that there are times when we find it very difficult to fulfill our duties on our own. Sometimes things aren't as easy as we like to see, and it's easy for us to become anxious or worry. The theme of the message Jesus wanted to teach us today is both biblically correct and practically workable for those at Jesus' time and for us today.

To achieve what Jesus had taught us, we need to see the road-map in his teaching in the passage we have today:

#### ULTIMATE LOYALTY TO OUR LORD: (6:24)

1) Our relationship with the Lord: “No one may serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will revere one and despise the other.” (6:24a) Master, or *kurios* in Greek, often translated lord mostly in the New Testaments. This title represents the ultimate respect, obedience and honor due to someone over you. In this teaching Jesus used it to illustrate the relationship between a slave and his owner. All the way to the Old Testament time, slaves and slave-owners was part of the early time in history. Joseph was sold to an Egyptian military commander as a slave in his house. There are several common understanding both the slave and his owner practice: The owner paid a ransom to purchase a slave, and the slave became part of the property of the owner, and he can only serve his master.

Since Jesus purchased us with a high price, the blood of his life, so he owns us and everything belong to us: life, time, loyalty and obedience. (1 Cor 6:19-20) Unfortunately many, if not most, Christians don't understand or don't want to accept this biblical teaching: We are completely owned by the Lord Jesus. The root of most of our problems as Christians even after we are saved and owned by Jesus, is we still want to be independent of him to run our life on our own. We have a broken relationship with our Lord.

2) Our object of loyalty is the Lord: “You cannot serve God and mammon.” (6:24b) “Mammon” is better translated “wealth” than money, but money is a common word for wealth or all material things of this world. Since money is what most people seeks, even with little children, money has become master

to a lot of people including many Christians.

One thing we need to make it clear: God doesn't hate money or rich people. In fact most of the godly people in the Old Testament were very rich people. God often promised to bless his faithful with pouring of material blessings. What Jesus wanted to remind us is: We can never allow money to become the master of our life, the focus of our pursuit or the center of our dedication or allow it to take place of our ultimate loyalty and commitment to Jesus. Jesus explained this in the previous section of this chapter: We cannot try to store money in this world and in heaven at the same time; we cannot live our life in the light and darkness at the same time. So, we should not try to love God, our Lord, and money or everything money can buy, at the same time. We should never live our Christian life in serving two masters, period.

#### ULTIMATE ATTITUDE ON NEEDS: (6:19-24)

1) The danger of modern day attitudes: In Matthew 6:19-24, Jesus focuses on two extreme attitudes on material possessions: First, the unnecessary store and stockpiling for selfish reasons, 19-21. Then in 24-34, He focuses on the attitude toward what men eat, drink and wear, the necessities of life men must have to survive. The first is directed to the rich while the second at the poor. Being rich or poor, both have their spiritual problems. The rich tend to trust in their possessions, and the poor are tempted to doubt God's love and ability to provide. The rich are tempted to become self-reliant in their false security on riches, and the poor are tempted to worry and fear in the false insecurity of their poverty.

Whether men are wealthy or poor, or somewhere in between, their mindset toward material possessions is one of the most reliable measures of their spiritual condition. Men as earthly beings are naturally concern about earthly things. But in Christ we are created as heavenly beings and, as children of our heavenly Father, our concerns should now focus primarily on heavenly things. Even though we still live in this world, but we are not “of the world.” (John 17:14)

2) The assurance of God's provision: The focal point of Jesus' message in the passage is: Do not worry—not even about our necessities. He gives his command, ***Do not be anxious*** three times (25, 31, 34), and gives four reasons why worry or being anxious is wrong. Most of us understand and believe this is true, but it isn't as easy to put it into practice when we face the reality.

#### FOUR REASONS WORRY IS UNNECESSARY:

1) We have God as our Master: “I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; not for your body, as to what you shall wear.”(6:25) In the ancient eastern culture, like that of Egypt and others, when a master bought a slave, he didn't just own him, he was also in control of the needs of the slave: what to eat, what to drink and what to wear. If the master happened to be mean and stingy, the slave will surely have a tough life. But if the master is a reasonable person, like the one Joseph had, then he would be assured of sufficient provision the rest of his life.

Let's consider this: If we really believe that God is the Master of our life, and he is the creator of all things, and he had died to save us from eternal loss, would there be one day, he doesn't care of our everyday needs? When Jesus commanded us not to worry for our life, *psyche*, it is inclusive to all parts of our needs, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Most of us will believe God is able to meet our emotional and spiritual needs, but, why can't we believe that he is also able to provide our material needs?

2) We have God as our Father: “Look at the birds of the air. . .and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.” (6:26) The basic thrust here is that we believers have absolutely no reason to worry of our basic needs because we have God as our heavenly Father. Jesus used the insignificant creature, birds, to show us God's knowledge of their needs and provision to meet them, to show us how foolish and unnecessary for us to worry about the needs of our body.

“And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?” (6:27) Some of us worry about our life expectancy—how long shall we live. Many of us are very cautious about what to eat, and how much we do exercise and that is good if we do that to improve the quality, productivity of life, but that will not and cannot force God to add an hour to our life span.

Dr Charles Mayo, the founder of the world famous Mayo Clinic wrote, “You can worry yourself to death, but not to life. Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands and the whole nervous system. I have never met a man or known a man to die of overwork, but I have known a lot who died of over worry.”

3) Worry is inconsistent with our faith: “For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” (6:32) Pagans or Gentiles refer to those who do not believe in a heavenly Father as we do. These are the people they have no heavenly Father they can count on their supply, so they need to eagerly run after to seek these things.

But that is completely foolish and unreasonable for those who do have faith in a “heavenly Father” who knows we need those things. To worry

about our physical welfare and needs is the mark of a worldly mindset. When we think like those in the world and crave like the world, we will worry like the world. Because when our mind is not centered on God, that mind has to center on things of the world that will lead to worry. A trusting Christian is “anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving (let his) requests be made known to God.” (Phil 4:6) Instead of seeking the security of physical needs like the world, Christians are to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (6:33) Christians have a different way to feel secure because God is the center of our life and He knows our needs and will provide all our necessities without delay.

4) Worry doesn't help our future: “Therefore do not worry for tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (6:34) We've seen some people are very good in worrying. If they can't find anything to worry today, they will always find somethings to worry about tomorrow. If we spend all our energy to worry about tomorrow, how can we have joy in our present day life, and how can we find energy to face the unknown of tomorrow? As human beings, no one can predict what may happy tomorrow, if we want to worry about the future, we surely have a lot to worry about. But if we could use the time and energy instead of worry but to prayer, the Bible told us: “The peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard our heart and our mind in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:7)

#### FOCUS ON THINGS WE CAN DO:

1) We can change our object of trust: Instead of trusting things we can see to feel secure, we need to increase our trust in God our heavenly Father who loves us and has all the abundance to provide our needs. When we were little children, we never doubt our earth fathers may forget or don't have enough to provide us, why do we doubt God as our Father on his love and ability to give us our daily needs? The problem isn't about God, it's our faith in God.

2) We can change our priority: “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (6:33) Most of us seek things first than God's kingdom and his righteousness, but Jesus asks us to seek God's kingdom first. God promises us to give us all the things we need in our everyday life if we can seek first his kingdom. This is why we don't have the sense of security and settle to worry, it's because we have our priorities all mixed up. Seeking God's kingdom is about living, serving Him as the first in our life. He knows what we need and will always provides.

