

# **BaptistWay Bible Series for January 25: Trust, not anxiety or greed**

January 14, 2009

Having tile floors and long hallways, the cry of the baby can be heard throughout the church. As I peek into the many Sunday School doors in search of the baby's mother, a familiar lady in the reception area hands me a sealed envelope. Unable to stop my search to engage in conversation, I smile and place the envelope under my arm. Alas, the mother is discovered and, within moments, the hallways are quiet again. Before I return to the room with the other children, I stop to curiously open the envelope and see what is inside.

But first, let's go back in time. Just imagine that Jesus is sitting on the side of the mountain, teaching the disciples and all others who have gathered around. After much teaching, Jesus starts talking about treasures in heaven, the inability to serve two masters, and how God will provide for our every need if we seek him first (Matthew 6:19-34). Can you imagine Jesus looking into the eyes of a homeless family who have no idea where their next meal is coming from and making such a radical statement?

Even today, when I know the checks for my current bills are larger than the money in the bank and my only hope is that another payday comes before all the checks clear, this statement has a powerful impact. You probably know what I mean since 80 percent of the United States lives paycheck to paycheck. But why do I try so hard to provide for myself when I should spend more time listening to and serving God?

The concept of serving God is best understood with a historical

understanding of Jesus' teaching that no one can serve two masters (v. 24). Our country's unfortunate history with slaves negatively affects how we understand this verse. Even though slaves were owned by their masters in biblical times, there were two different kinds: those captured in battle and those who chose to be slaves, which we will call servants. The servants would have been valued members of the household and, at times, even well-educated.

By committing to one master, servants could guarantee shelter and food for their family and, therefore, gained security. In modern times, we commit lots of our time to jobs in order to provide for ourselves and loved ones. We even do work we find less than enjoyable because security is something that still is greatly desired.

Jesus uses this imagery to show the listeners how committing oneself completely to the Lord will bring the security they long for. Jesus tells us in verse 33, "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." What are these things? Well, according to the preceding verses, God will provide for your physical needs of food and clothing (vv. 25-32). God has given you life and, as his creation, you have innate value to him. He knows what we need even better than we do.

This teaching does not exclude those without financial struggles. Instead, Jesus is warning the wealthy not to have a false sense of security or an inaccurate understanding of their spirituality based on their material possessions.

Treasure represents the accumulation of what is valuable. Even the most valuable treasures on earth are subject to being consumed, ruined, or stolen (v. 20). The "treasures on earth" and the "treasures in heaven" represent a contrast in values. What a person values is driven by the nature of a person's heart, which is obvious in a person's life.

Remember the envelope? It turned out to be a thank you letter from a couple in the church and guess what was inside. Cash. I tried not to cry, but the tears came anyway.

How many countless times has God provided for my needs? And how many times have I succumbed to anxiety and worry instead of trusting him? Even when God has provided time and time again, it is so easy to get lost in the fear of tomorrow. But what does Christ tell us in verse 34? He challenges us, “do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Ultimately, we need to make God our first priority, not worry about tomorrow, and trust he will supply all our needs in return. Sounds simple enough. The hard part is how! What if we choose to see the ways God is providing for us instead of choosing to see what we fear? Don’t look for what we don’t have, but thank God for what he has given us and trust he will continue to provide, just as he has promised.

### **Questions to explore**

- *What things do I worry about every day?*
- In what ways has God provided for these things in the past?
- What will my life look like when God is my first priority? What will other people notice different about me?
- What small step can I take today to help reach that goal?