**Matthew 6:25-33**

I happened at a men’s breakfast when one of the guest’s dogs walked in and went to all the other guests begging and looking for food. It’s the first and perhaps only thing on its mind: ‘where can I satisfy myself here with what I love, like and want; food!’

It reminded me of what is on so many people’s mind, when they encounter a new opportunity for the first time: ‘How can I make money here!’

Every so often, churches have a bazaar or sale of things for their parish churches. As usual, the first who arrive are those who go through the items to see whether there’s something of value. Only because they are looking for something for themselves to sell it on for a profit later. What’s on their mind is not how can I help the church, but how can I make money.

Someone went with a group to a car boot sale to sell items for their church and she said, it was the worst experience of her life. In the morning she had been selling items which she found later in the afternoon for sale on other stalls for a much higher price.

You only have to look to the stockmarket or to the crypto currency craze, to see that it’s all about making money. It’s not for nothing that it is said that such markets are ruled by only two things, which are greed and fear. Everybody wants to enter via the same door and leave via the same. The winners on such markets are those who are first in and went out, just before the mob is forced to leave to stop their losses.

Against this backdrop of greed and money making enter the words of Jesus of our reading in: 33. Seek first God’s Kingdom and His righteousness.

It is just one simple sentence, but it is not as simple as it looks like, because it’s part of a large pericope of teaching.

In the whole gospel of Matthew are 3 teaching pericopes by Jesus and the first pericope is here. And it’s much longer than at first glance:

The pericope already begins in Chapter 5:1 (introducing the beatitudes) as it says: ‘He went up on the mountain and sat down’. When Rabbis and Teachers of the Law in Jesus’ time taught, they were sitting down, hence the sitting down here meant that a time of teaching on Jewish Law had begun. This teaching pericope then continues to Chapter 8:1 where it says: ‘When He came down from the mountain…’

So, the whole of chapters 5, 6 and 7 are just one teaching pericope, but it is only in our reading this morning that we find for the first time in this whole pericope the word: Therefore (dia touto lego umin = because of this I tell you). Here Jesus captures all His teaching of what He had said in the preceding chapters: Therefore (for this reason/because of this) I tell you….

All what Jesus had said before He concluded with: Therefore, is an inherent part of all He taught to the people beginning with the well-known Beatitudes. And from the Beatitudes follows all teachings about the requirement of righteousness, about not seeking retaliation, about love and forgiveness, about not committing adultery, about not hating others, about prayer and compassion and about serving God and not money.

The ‘therefore’ in our readings introduces an enumeration of what God desires from us and of what is of most importance.

But, that doesn’t mean that Jesus is saying that food is not important or that clothes are not necessary. The Lord’s prayer, which is in the same chapter in the verses 9-13, also contains the prayer for our daily bread, so it is important.

Jesus’ words should be put in the right context. Rabinus in the 3rd century already noted how Jesus in Matthew didn’t say; ‘don’t be anxious about food, drink, or clothes’, but ‘don’t be afraid/concerned about WHAT you eat, drink or wear’.

Jesus is not talking against developing and moving forward in time with new developments. At this harvest service we are reminded again that at the one hand we give thanks to God for the harvest, but at the same time we all know that without new techniques and agricultural developments we would never be able to gain a harvest good enough to feed all the 7 billion people on earth. If we let nature provide only for our food, we would not have much to eat.

Again, the context against which Jesus spoke His words about food, drink and clothing might explain His teachings. In Jewish theology at the time of Jesus, the gentiles were seen as people of food and drink and raiment, for that was their whole purpose of life. The Jews saw themselves as being completely different, because they were seeking God’s wisdom and guidance. And that’s what Jesus reminded His hearers of and His teaches us as well; Seek God’s Kingdom first, which means to value what God values and to obey what He demands, before we commit ourselves to our own desires for money, wealth and self-indulgence.

It is as G.K. Chesterton once said about this: There are 2 ways to have enough money; one is to acquire more, the other is to desire less. And what about this one: To be clever enough to get all the money, one must be stupid enough to want it.

The words Jesus spoke, reminded the people to love God with their whole heart and soul above all, and not by simply obeying laws and commandments as the Jewish leaders were preaching.

The command to love God with our whole heart and soul is much more important than loving our possessions and striving for more.

In conclusion, Matthew 6:25-33 carries forward the main theme of the preceding paragraphs namely the necessity for exclusive engagement with serving God. Because to seek God’s Kingdom and righteousness is to be concerned with His Will, more than any desire for our money or wealth. Jesus teaches first and foremost an intimate relationship of trust and confidence between God and each one of us, modelled on the relationship between God and Jesus Himself.

What is the first on our mind; greed and making money and indulging in something which never satisfies? Or getting our priorities right and first seek God’s righteousness. God’s righteousness is available free for all through putting faith and trust in God through Jesus Christ before all else.

God’s peace, His shalom, is freely available in Christ Jesus for each one of us, we only have to accept it.

Hans Taling