

**(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 46 Sunday 18 November\_2018.**

**Marks of a human: ANXIETY and WEALTH.**

Some weeks ago, we returned to JESUS talking to his Disciples – his Followers about: -

**(PP2) Supreme blessedness: *Matthew 5: 1. Jesus climbed the mountain, separated himself from the crowds and gave his attention to teaching his followers – disciples.***

He spoke about what it really meant to follow him and please him by the way we live our lives in community and in the world. We began the service with the call of JESUS to FOCUS **Matthew 6: 22, 23** – the eye of our heart - our human being is to be upon light – upon God so that our whole being is enlightened, and we are not still living in the dark.

**Matthew 6: 22, 23 (Luke 11: 34 – 36).** Jesus starts talking about **eyes**, light for the body and darkness. *Matthew and Luke* record this in the middle of Jesus' teaching about how we, his followers are to live. **This is a call to have a different vision and focus** than the strictly Religious or the strictly Materialistic. (Caricatures of the Pharisees and the Pagans).

Text Matthew 6: 24 - 34. READ. Here JESUS calls us not to have double vision – but rather to focus on God and God's Kingdom. **No one can be a slave of 2 masters; he will hate one and love the other; he will be loyal (hold on) to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.** (mammon – an Aramaic word for wealth/money). JESUS uses hyperbole to make his point strongly about the need for priority and single vision as we live our lives. He is realistically in this section acknowledging our **very real human ANXIETIES and concern for security – especially as we look into the future.**

JESUS has already declared: **Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully. (v6)**

We have I hope established the fact that **JESUS calls us to live prophetically. Jesus is describing a way of being and living in community – in relationship. Matthew 6: 8 "Do not be like them"**. Be different from the Pagans but also the Scribes and the Pharisees. (Asked you consider last week in what way God wants you to be different).

**(PP3) Our relationship to wealth:** last week looked at

Verse 21 **"For your heart will always be where your riches are"**. (Eye = heart). What do you really value and seek after?

Jesus has already taught that we need to **share our money** with those who are in need and to do this discreetly not as a performance. (6:2) He has also taught in the Lord's Prayer that we are to **release those** who "are in debt to us" because God has forgiven our debt (6:12). So, we know that a degree of loving cheerfully to be generous is called for. My goods, my wealth is NOT just for me and my family. Jesus has also argued that we need a forward vision – v19 riches and rewards are to be **"banked"** in heaven and they are of a spiritual kind not just material wealth here on earth – banked in high deposit accounts doing nothing. These are core understandings in the Christian Gospel of what it means to be human and in the image of God.

And here Jesus focuses us even more by addressing particularly **HUMAN ANXIETY** which can fill our thinking space and make us want to accumulate money and possessions, but also to be free of worry. These sorts of anxieties will always threaten our security and peace in God and demote God. The key to reducing our anxiety is our **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**. If we seek God's Kingdom – everything else, we need, and value will stay in its rightful place. (**Put together vv31 and 33**). We will be in good balance and human being rather than human doing!

**Human Struggle:** You can't have 2 masters or lords. Choose God or money or you will literally be torn apart – emotionally resenting one or the other. We have to choose what we will hold onto cos it will hold on to us (v24 ANTHEZETA). *Our possessions will possess us. (35 years ago sermon at QRW)*

God knows what we need. We are body – corporeal beings with basic requirements of food, water, clothing, shelter. In common sense we should recognise that worry/ anxiety will not increase how long we live or how tall we grow. (*Die if you worry, die if you don't. So why worry*).

Human faith or trust in God (v30) tends to be small. Indeed, through life we can learn to trust that God does not fail us. V32 The pagans/ people of the nations ALWAYS worry – obsessively about “provision” for basic needs. (Temptation to BREXIT hoard).

**Jesus' alternative (more than distraction therapy) is to be concerned about God's Kingdom and doing what his right.** Secondly but linked he argues that his followers should focus on living in the **NOW - the TODAY**. (*Spiritual Direction: sit with the anxiety rather than wrestle with it. Boundaries – proportion come into place*).

**Human ambition:** (does this change with aging?)

*“Where we fix our eyes and hearts affects our whole life”, John Stott, p157 BST Sermon on the Mount”.*

### **Am I fixed on my relationship with God or Money?**

Some people may try to serve God on SUNDAYS and Mammon Monday to Friday. Probably sleep through Saturday! But no SLAVE (DOULOS) can be the property of 2 owners. Concept of God as boss/ lord/ master. (Financial services – *money makes the world go around?* No God makes the world orbit). We are guilty of idolatry if we place anything before God. We are all guilty at various stages of loving other things before God. Context – what is your eye focussed on? What do you value – your relationship with God or your earthly possessions.

### **V25 This is why I tell you not to be worried...**

Even rich people (not just poorer people) can be obsessed/ pre-occupied with food, drink, clothing, houses, cars. See magazines, programmes – house refurb, escape to country – not just seeking a better quality of life but to be regarded as successful and prestigious. Prayer, “*Give us this day our daily bread*”... **In emergency famine conditions then we will need to be concerned about food, drink, and clothing and shelter** but not so much

in conditions where we have more than enough. As Jesus says **the human life is more important than food, drink and clothing.**

**Not a new issue. I've always been impressed with Francis of Assisi.**

Born in Assisi in 1181 or 1182 to Pietro and Pica Bernardone, Francis was born into a world of wealth and opulence. *His father was a cloth merchant, supplying cloth to Medieval versions of Ralph Lauren.*

Francis went to war at age 20 and was taken prisoner for almost a year. He was released and became seriously ill, which began a major turn in his life. His conversion took some time and involved numerous moments.

The culmination of his conversion, perhaps, could be said to have happened when Francis' father, Pietro, questioned his son's generosity and servitude to the poor. While standing before the bishop of Assisi, Francis stripped off his clothes and renounced his paternal inheritance.

St. Francis understood that his conversion required him to change his relationship with everything, even his clothes. As we continue [our campaign with Macy's and Kohl's](#), the example of St. Francis gives us much to consider.

Tags: [Francis of Assisi](#), [Saint Francis of Assisi](#), [Saints for Garment Justice](#)

<https://www.humanthreadcampaign.org/blog/st-francis-of-assisi-a-saint-for-garment-justice/>

**JESUS is speaking against anxious thoughts** - not against thinking and not against some forward planning. He has already taught in the *parable of the sower* that anxiety and worry can stifle and strangle us from hearing and doing what God's word says to us. Obsessional worry e.g. domestic responsibilities of Martha can stop us from living life to the full in Jesus. God cares about our body rather than the clothes we wear. Jesus calls us to meditate upon the examples of God's care of the planet. (Birds, plants insects). Here in the world of nature our anxiety and greedy consumption has caused us to put at threat even the future of humanity's existence. Recent findings should certainly cause us to consider God's priorities.

**JESUS Christ lived in the shadow of the Cross, but he still advocates that we seek God's priorities – God's Kingdom and being free from anxiety.**

*"So, then God's children are promised freedom neither from work, nor responsibility, nor from trouble, but only from worry." John Stott, *ibid*, p168.*

The World's peoples/pagans are ambitious to possess things and to have power. It should not be so among us who say we follow Jesus. God has not given us a Spirit of fear...but rather a growing trust that God will provide: *Luke 11: 11 – 13 Would any of you who are fathers give your son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or would you give your daughter a scorpion when she asks for an egg? Bad as you are you know how to give good things to your children. How much more then will the Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

**Jesus doesn't just tell us not to be anxious.** He reassures us that God knows our human needs. But he directs us as he did to **FOCUS upon God and pleasing God.** Humans have the facility – the God given gift and ability to **seek God** and to keep other things in their rightful place.