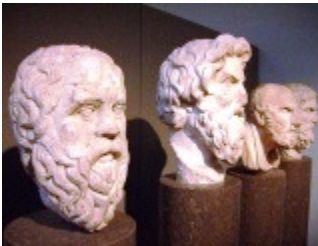




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God and Mammon?

by: Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio



In the ancient world, most peoples believed in a universe that had many gods. But even without the help of biblical revelation, Greek philosophers figured something out. There could only be one Supreme Being, only one almighty and omnipotent Ruler of all, only one God.



In the twelfth chapter of Luke, Jesus asks a question. Whom do you serve? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or that god called “mammon.” You can only have one God.

We all know mammon has something to do with money. But the word he uses here is not the common word for money. Mammon means unjust gain, greed, or money made an end in itself, an ultimate value, a controlling force. Some people use money to provide for their family. Others sell out their family, their country, their integrity . . . for money. This is where money becomes mammon, a relentless god that demands that all bow before it and offer sacrifice.

If you review all the Old and New Testament texts that deal with wealth, you find a recurring theme. Woe is the man who trusts in his great wealth. Riches are not a reliable foundation to build on when it comes to present or eternal security. America was once wise enough to put “in God we trust” on its money. Only the fool puts his trust *in* his money.



When Jesus points to the lilies of the field who neither toil nor spin, don't get him wrong. He is not encouraging us to quit toiling and spinning. St. Paul berates those in Thessalonika who used trust in God as an excuse for laziness, idleness and irresponsibility. He says that he offers an example to the faithful by his work day and night to support himself so

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he is not a burden on anyone else. Those who do not work should not eat he says (2 Thes 3:10).

So Jesus is not trying to get us to stop working. He is telling us to stop worrying. Worry is a kind of recurring fear. And the most frequent command of Jesus in the four gospels is "Do not be afraid!" more literally translated "Stop fearing!"



We are more precious to God than the lilies of the field. If He will provide for them, how much more will he provide for us! There are times that he will provide manna. Other times, he will provide work. We should gratefully accept what he provides and work hard. But we must labor in confidence, not in anxiety. And for the love of God, not the love of money. And for His glory, not for ours.

This reflection was originally offered as a reflection on the scripture readings for the 8th Sunday in ordinary time, cycle A (Isaiah 49: 14-15; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; Matthew 6:24-34) and appears here by permission of the author.

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"Love that Lasts: A Vision for Christian Marriage" is the fruit of years of both study and experience. Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio is an internationally known Catholic speaker, author, and media personality. But he is also a husband and father of five children who illustrates his teaching with an abundance of practical tips and humorous examples from his own family life. This trilogy of talks, originally given as a marriage retreat at the world famous Cooper Clinic in Dallas, is a perfect gift for engaged couples and newlyweds seeking to lay a solid foundation for the marriage and family. But it is also a superb tool to help refresh and renew married couples who have been together for many years.

