
Our Heavenly Father

(Third Sunday of Advent)

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 34:4-7; Psalm 103:1-5, 10-14; Isaiah 40:27-31; Matthew 6:24-34; John 3:3-6; 4:20-24; 8:40-47; Romans 2:2-11; 8:14-17; 1 John 4:7-16

Focus Scripture: Matthew 6:24-34

Key Verse: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." Matthew 6:34

MATTHEW 6:24-34(NRSV UE)

24 "No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

25 Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?

28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin,

29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'

32 For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

MATTHEW 6:24-34(KJV)

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Where-withal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

KEY TERMS

- **Mammon** – Wealth or material possessions; often personified as a competing master.
- **Anxious/Worry** – Mental unrest or preoccupation over what may happen, especially regarding daily needs.
- **Kingdom of God** – God's reign manifested in justice, love, mercy, and daily life.
- **Materialism** – The value placed on acquiring wealth or possessions rather than seeking God.
- **Provision** – God's faithful care to meet human needs.
- **Capitalism (as referenced in case study)** – An economic system emphasizing private ownership and profit, sometimes linked to materialistic greed.

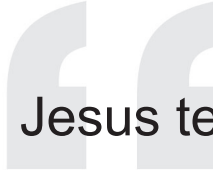
INTRODUCTION

Advent is a season of preparation and hope. During this time, Christians reflect on God's faithfulness and the promise of Christ's coming. Yet, even in hope, worry often creeps in – about bills, jobs, health, or family. In Matthew 6:24-34, Jesus teaches that God knows our

needs and calls us to trust God rather than be enslaved by anxiety or materialism. This passage reminds us that worry does not add a single hour to our lives, but faith in God provides peace, guidance, and perspective. As we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, we are invited to lay

down the burdens that weigh us down and embrace the freedom God offers.


In today's fast-paced world, many people live under the constant tension between scarcity and abundance. We often worry about our daily needs, striving



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to secure enough for ourselves and our families, while simultaneously being tempted by consumer culture to pursue more than we truly need. Matthew 6:24-34 speaks directly to this tension, inviting us to trust God rather than money.

The passage reminds believers that “no one can serve two masters,” highlighting the impossibility of serving both God and wealth. By teaching us to prioritize the kingdom of God and to rely on divine providence for our daily needs, Jesus challenges a culture dominated by materialism and anxiety. This lesson not only addresses individual worry but also encourages communities to foster generosity, resilience, and mutual support.



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TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Matthew 6:24-34 is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Jesus begins by stating a truth that challenges every believer: no one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and wealth (mammon). Loyalty divided

between God and material things leads to spiritual unrest. Jesus goes on with a second lesson: we should not worry excessively about our daily needs. He illustrates this with examples from nature: birds of the air and lilies of the field, which do not toil or spin yet are cared for by God. Jesus' teaching is practical as well as spiritual; it calls us to notice God's everyday provision and to live one day at

a time. By comparing God's care for the smallest creatures to God's care for us, Jesus assures us that nothing is too small or too large for God's attention.

This story underscores the principle that **faith entails trust and surrender**. By observing God's care for creation, believers

learn that their own needs will not be neglected if they prioritize God's kingdom. In teaching these lessons, Jesus addresses both **spiritual priorities and practical human anxieties**, showing that reliance on God transforms how we view material resources.

SANKOFA

The AME Church has a history of trusting God amid struggle. During slavery and Reconstruction, African Americans faced systemic poverty and oppression. Yet, black churches nurtured faith in God's provision, emphasizing education, mutual aid, and stewardship.

In the modern era, our communities still wrestle with financial insecurity, health disparities, and social injustice. Jesus' teaching calls us to trust God while actively engaging in our communities, using the resources and gifts God has given to build God's kingdom.

Looking back through a **Sankofa** lens, we see that our ancestors relied on faith to survive and thrive. By remembering their resilience, we gain courage to face today's challenges with hope, knowing that God's care transcends generations.

CASE STUDY

Faith, Poverty, and the Temptation of Greed

In the United States, economic inequality has reached historically high levels. Research from the Pew Research Center (2020) indicates that the wealthiest 10% of Americans control 70% of the nation's wealth, while nearly 40 million people live below the poverty line (Semega et al., 2020). In such a climate, two dangers arise: first, desperation due to scarcity, which can fuel anxiety and hopelessness; second, the lure of

excessive accumulation, encouraged by consumer culture and capitalist pressures.

Matthew 6:24-34 addresses both dangers. By calling believers to trust God for daily needs and to "seek first the kingdom of God," the passage resists both fear-driven scarcity behaviors and greed-

driven overconsumption. Sociological research supports this approach: communities with strong religious participation report higher levels of charitable giving, mutual aid, and financial resilience, even in low-income populations (Regnerus, 2003; Krause, 2006).

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For example, a study by Krause (2006) found that regular churchgoers in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods were more likely to engage in cooperative economic practices, share resources, and experience lower levels of anxiety about finances. These practices align with Jesus' teaching: rather than hoarding wealth or succumbing to worry, faith fosters trust, generosity, and community-oriented problem-solving.

References

Krause, N. (2006). Social relationships in late life: Their structure and impact on health and well-being. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 61B(2), S123–S134.

Regnerus, M. D. (2003). Religion and positive adolescent outcomes: A review of research and theory. *Review of Religious Research*, 44(4), 394–413.

Semega, J., Kollar, M., Creamer, J., & Mohanty, A. (2020). *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2019. U.S. Census*

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Pew Research Center. (2020). Trends in Income and Wealth Inequality. <https://www.pewresearch.org>

LIFE APPLICATION

The message of Matthew 6:24-34 remains deeply relevant today. In a culture dominated by advertising, debt, and wealth inequality, individuals are constantly pressured to pursue more – whether money, possessions, or status. Faith challenges these pressures by encouraging trust in God's provision **and** focus on kingdom-oriented priorities, rather than accumulation for its own sake.

Practically, believers can apply this passage by cultivating daily gratitude, reducing unnecessary consumption, and engaging in community support systems. Churches and faith communities can foster financial literacy programs,

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cooperative ventures, and charitable giving, emphasizing that life's fulfillment comes from relationship, purpose, and service, not wealth alone.

QUESTIONS

1. How does trusting God for daily needs help individuals and communities resist the anxiety of poverty? Please share some personal examples.
2. How can the church model a healthy response to wealth and consumption in a capitalist society?
3. What practical steps can faith communities take to reduce inequality and build mutual support systems?

SUMMARY

Faith in God should take priority

over wealth and worry. Faith can foster resilience against poverty and resist the greed encouraged by contemporary capitalism. Gratitude, generosity, and community support are encouraged for every believer, demonstrating that trust in God leads to both personal peace and collective well-being.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Hymn: "I Trust in God," AMECH #453

Prayer: Gracious God, we release our worries into your hands. Teach us to seek your kingdom first, to trust your provision, and to live faithfully in every moment. Strengthen our hearts with peace, and help us support one another in love. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 15-21

Monday	Psalm 110 (The Messiah Sits at God's Side)
Tuesday	Romans 5:1-11 (Christ Died for the Ungodly)
Wednesday	John 3:14-21 (Christ Offers Eternal Life)
Thursday	John 10:9-16 (Christ Cares for the Sheep)
Friday	Isaiah 9:3-7 (Welcome the Davidic Heir)
Saturday	Psalm 2 (The Messiah Reigns Victoriously)
Sunday	Luke 15:1-7 (Christ Rejoices When Sinners Repent)