

The Command Cannot Be Kept Without Jesus

Luke 12:22-34

The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, August 7, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

And so Jesus commands you not to be anxious. Do not worry about the things of this life. Do not worry about what you will eat. Do not worry about what you will wear. Your heavenly Father knows that you need all of these things.

Such commands are impossible to keep.

Oh, we might be able to feign keeping these commandments because we are wealthy. Our wealth takes away our immediate concern for what we will eat and what we will wear. In other words in the ancient world what they would eat and wear was an immediate concern all of the time. In our day and age, it is not an immediate concern. When it comes to money, my anxiety is over whether or not I will be able to maintain the wealth that I have or will I lose it. I suspect I am not alone in this sin. For the fact that we are not worried about what we will eat and what we will drink in the sense that we might lose those things merely serves to magnify our condemnation. Even though our closets are full and many of us have never known hunger in the sense that we had no food to eat, we are still anxious about our wealth. At least the poor have a reason to be anxious. We have no reason to be anxious and yet our anxiety remains. As long as money is our God and we expect it to make us happy and give us some creature comforts that we enjoy and to solve our basic problems of life we will continue to experience anxiety. We will experience anxiety regarding those people who are running for office not because they may be amoral in their approach to governing but because we are worried that they will deprive us of our status. They will take our money from us and since money is our God we are anxious about those who would enter elected office and raise our taxes or make it more difficult for us to do business or whatever it is that they might do.

It is not simply that the commandment cannot be kept in the sense of, "Oh yeah, pastor we know that we are not perfect." No. No. This commandment literally cannot be kept. We cannot throw the switch in our heart from worry to confidence. The only one who can is Jesus.

The reason for this is given by Jesus Himself: where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

Your heart is going to be with your treasure no matter what. If you want your heart to be with Jesus, then your treasure must be with Him also.

Jesus has always been a God like this.

Jesus commands the leper to be purified from his leprosy. The leper cannot keep that commandment without Jesus. He cannot up and cure himself. If he could, he would have done it long before he encountered Jesus. It is only if Jesus is his God that he can be purified of his leprosy. And so Jesus gives the command to the leper, "Be cleansed," and then Jesus keeps the commandment for him. Jesus purifies him.

The leper cannot obey the commandments of Jesus. Jesus commanded him to get up, take his mat, and go home. He cannot keep that commandment. He is paralyzed for land's sake. But with Jesus as his God he could keep the command. Jesus issues the command to get up and walk and in the command itself is the power itself to keep it.

The widow at Nain cannot keep the commandment of Jesus. For Jesus went up to her at her only son's funeral and told her not to weep. She cannot keep that commandment. Her only son is dead. She is going to weep even if He commands her not to. It is only if Jesus is her God that she can keep the

command not to weep. And so Jesus goes up to the bier and touches it. The bearers stand still and Jesus commands her son to arise. Then when her son rises from the dead she is able to keep the commandment of the Lord and discontinue her weeping.

Furthermore the young man cannot obey the commandment of the Lord when the Lord tells him to arise. He is dead. He not only is unable to keep the commandment to arise, he cannot even hear the commandment to arise. Who can keep a command that they cannot hear?

But with Jesus as your God, even if you are dead, you can keep the commandments that He issues. If He tells you to arise, you will arise even if you are dead because He is your God.

This is the importance of maintaining the confession of faith that Jesus from Nazareth is God in the flesh. God has visited us on earth.

If Jesus is God, then He is the creator. He is the maker of heaven and earth. That is what the Nicene Creed is expressing when it says, "By Him all things were made."

That means that Jesus is the God who commanded the light to be and it was. In the beginning when Jesus said, "Let there be light." To whom was He speaking? He was not talking to Himself. "Let there be light," is an imperative way of speaking. He is giving a command. He is certainly not commanding Himself. But since it is the beginning and nothing is in existence as yet, He is talking out loud to no one when He says, "Let there be light." And even though the light does not yet exist, it comes into existence when Jesus commands it to exist. The light cannot do anything before receiving the divine command. The light cannot shine. It cannot illuminate. It cannot move from one object to another. It cannot give life to the earth or anything. It cannot do anything until it exists. It cannot exist until Jesus tells it to exist. Once Jesus tells it to exist, then it exists and it does all of the rest. Not even the creation can do what the creation does outside of the word of God. Jesus must issue His command and then it is done. When Jesus is your God you exist. When Jesus is not your God you do not exist and are unable to do anything. When Jesus is your God you can do what He says because He is the One who is commanding it.

And so when Jesus tells you not to worry He calls into existence those things which will take care of you such that you will not worry.

That is why our Lord bids us to consider the ravens and lilies of the field. He points out how the heavenly Father cares for them even though they do not engage in a trade or business. He points out that you are more valuable than they are. What He means by that is that you are made in the image of God and the ravens and the lilies are not. Then Jesus reasons from the lesser to the greater. If God will care for them even though they perish easily and are not in His image, He will surely care for you because you are made in His image and endure for longer and are therefore more valuable to God than they are.

If you are still anxious in spite of the Lord's command and His instruction, then Jesus is not your God.

If Jesus is your God, then it is easy to keep His commands.

He tells you to store up moneybags for yourselves that do not wear out. Unlike last Sunday, this time He tells you what He means. He tells you to give alms.

May I say that when the Lord talks about giving alms, He is talking about acts of mercy. Not every act of giving something to someone else is an act of mercy. It depends on the context. Sometimes giving your money away means that you have been duped by fraud. Sometimes giving your money away supports the person who receives your money in a destructive habit of some sort. When our Lord

command the giving of alms, the word He uses seems to indicate that you have some context for your giving to understand that it will be an act of mercy and not one that enables sin or represents you throwing your money away.

Now that I have said that beware of Satan's temptation. Remember what I told you last Sunday. Greed always has a justification that makes it look right. Greed is always able to appeal to your rights to justify itself. Don't listen to what I just said and say to yourself, "I am justified in not giving my money away. That way I am not throwing it away nor am I supporting someone in their sins."

The only way our Lord gives us for having moneybags that do not wear out is giving to the poor. When we give to the poor our heart will be with them. Once they have our treasure our heart will be with them and we will want them to succeed because we will not want our money to have gone to waste.

It is only if Jesus is your God that this command can be kept.

If Jesus is not our God, then we are seeking our life from some place else. Whatever that place is it may not allow us enough income to give to the poor. If someone or something else is your God and especially if money itself is your God, it does not allow us to give to the poor. We have to keep it for ourselves because we have to live on something. But if Jesus is our God He has commanded eternal life for us. Do you really think that if He has gone through all of the trouble of dying and rising again to give you everlasting life, that He will allow you to starve to death in this one? Did you not consider the ravens and the lilies? Do you not confess that Jesus is the Maker of all things? If all of that is true, not being anxious is easy and giving to the poor comes naturally. But if Jesus is not your God, then your anxiety will remain and giving the poor will take second place and even if you do give to the poor you will do it grudgingly out of simple obedience to the command and not out of cheerfulness because you know that Jesus will care for you.

If you want Jesus to be your God, then give Him your money. Give Him all of it.

Now I do not want you to misunderstand what I just said. When I say give Jesus your money I am not merely talking about the offering plate. I am talking about the offering plate because Jesus commands through His apostles that those who are taught should share all good things with those who teach. But Jesus has also commanded the fathers to raise their children, husbands to love and cherish and feed their wives and He has commanded you to give acts of mercy to the poor. When this is done you have given your money to Jesus.

And only His providence can enable you to do that without anxiety. But when it is done, He will be your God. After all where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.