

General Topics :: [revival] The FIGHT AGAINST MAMMON

[revival] The FIGHT AGAINST MAMMON - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/6/22 13:41

"The FIGHT AGAINST MAMMON"

PLEASE READ FIRST! - by Marc White:

If Jesus preached against anything, He preached against mammon. Estimates of the New Testament record tell us that the single most recorded topic of our Savior is, you guessed it, money. The most challenging issue to Christian community worldwide in our time is the love of mammon and the fierce independent spirit it breeds like a runaway deadly cancer. Jesus said it is impossible to serve both Him and money. Impossible. No way. Although more than a few of us are trying to do both. Let us repent of that idolatry.

Remember that story He told of counting the cost of discipleship? Let's look again at the "context" of the story, that is, what the "big idea" Jesus was trying to get us to see:

Luke 14:25-33~

Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and CALCULATE THE COST to see if he has enough to complete it? "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to RIDICULE him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. "SO THEN, NONE OF YOU CAN BE MY DISCIPLE WHO DOES NOT GIVE UP ALL HIS OWN POSSESSIONS."

What?

He didn't really mean that, did He? As I've wrestled with this over the years, it's dawned on me and others who have pondered His words here that it means SOMETHING. And that something is something we need to deal with, to radically obey in order to love Him and please Him as He commands.

The following piece by Eberhard Arnold is profound, and quite unsettling to those who really care about what God cares about. I find it both encouraging and disturbing to my life. To those in the body chasing more and more personal significance and "purpose," it will most likely be dismissed as an old, out of date theology. But Brother Arnold, who was a part of the non-resistant, love-your-

enemy Bruderhof, knew the secret of the strength when he penned this almost a 100 years ago – Jesus in His simplicity of life in order to care fully for those who needed the most care: the poor, blind, lame, crippled, widows, and orphans.

Note I don't advocate all of us living together on the same piece of land, but let us not be too quick to discount the New Testament value of close, daily contact, prayer, and servanthood. We see so little of it in affluent Christian circles.

I submit this article to your heart for consideration. Let us not be those ruled by the materialistic, aggressive, and demonic American gospel. But in contrast like the rich, young ruler, obeying Jesus by selling all to follow Him who saved us from His wrath.

If some of you vehemently disagree with this as you might, please read and pray earnestly through the words of Jesus and Paul about money before you respond.

"The FIGHT AGAINST MAMMON"
-Extracts by Eberhard Arnold.

Two powers are at work in the world: the power of love that leads people to associate with each other, and the power of death that separates people and destroys the fellowship of love. This power of death poisons the organism of humanity, making it sick and corrupt. It murders and kills. It covets and isolates. It attacks all that holds life together. It destroys the coherence of all living things. But alongside this power that murders and enslaves, a constructive and creative power is still at work.

Not all who call themselves Christians are connected to the same center, nor are they motivated by the same thing. The religion of many who confess to the name of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with God or the coming kingdom...

Is not the great world organization that names itself after Christ serving a god other than the God whom Jesus confessed? Has not the institutional church sided with wealth and protected it; sanctified mammon, christened warships, and blessed soldiers going to war? Has not this church in essence denied him whom it confesses? Is not the Christian state the most ungodly institution that ever existed? And are not the state and the organized church, which protect privilege and wealth, diametrically opposed to what is to come: God's new order?

Nobody can serve two masters. Nobody can serve God and mammon. The message of Christ had to do with the "trans-valuation of all values" - the coming kingdom of God. His first witnesses testified to a radically new order, an order concealed from those blinded by the god of this world. This god - the god of greed and murderous possessiveness - stands opposed to the kingdom of justice, unity, and love.

Mammon is the rule of money over people. It means dependence on income and finances instead of on God. We recognize that mammon is the enemy of God, but we cannot apply the lever that

lifts it off its hinges: we ourselves are so dominated by it that we lack the strength to rebel.

The deepest human relationships are based not on mammon, but the spirit. No one of us can live in isolation; we are all interdependent. All of us are interrelated in groups, families, classes, and trade unions; in nations, states, churches, and all kinds of associations. And through our humanity we are interrelated in an even deeper way: through the love of God that flows from spirit to spirit and heart to heart, leading to organic, constructive fellowship.

But there is a devilish means that seeks to rob us of heart and spirit and God. This means is money. Money reduces human relationships to materialistic associations. It destroys the highest human goals. At first it may be just a means of barter, but later it becomes a commodity in itself. It becomes power. In the end, it destroys all true fellowship.

Money and love are mutually exclusive. Where mammon rules, the possessive will is stronger than the will to community. The struggle to survive becomes stronger than the spirit of mutual help. Where mammon rules, matter is stronger than spirit, and self-assertion stronger than solidarity. Mammon never motivates people to work in a creative way for a life of fellowship. Instead, it engenders the enslavement of the soul to circumstance. It is the spirit of lying, impurity, and murder, the spirit of weakness and death.

Jesus, the prince of life, declared war on this spirit, and we must declare war on it too. When our inmost eye has been opened to his light, it can no longer respond to what mammon demands. When our hearts are set on the future - when we expect God's kingdom - we can no longer accumulate property. We will turn our backs on everything present and live instead for freedom, unity, and peace.

Jesus entered the temple with a whip not to strike people, but to show his contempt for money: his father's house belonged to God, not to mammon. In the Gospel of Matthew, he exhorted the otherwise blameless rich youth to confirm his love by selling everything: "Give all you have to the poor, and come follow me." And when he was shown the coin of the emperor, he answered, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God."

This attack on the order of mammon resulted in his death. Yet life had the final victory. The men and women who had gathered around him in life waited for something new after his death. They waited for the Spirit. They knew that the spirit of love, order, and freedom was the spirit of God's kingdom. And this Spirit came upon them, bringing about a church: a fellowship of work and goods in which everything belonged to all, in which all were active to the full extent of their powers and gifts.

This church succumbed to the process that destroys life. Just as individuals die, so this church also died. But in the course of the centuries a new church rose. Time and again small communities were formed in which men and women declared war on mammon and took upon themselves the poverty of generosity. In choosing this poverty, they chose the richest way.

It is self-deception to think we can overcome mammon by violence, for violence is of the same evil spirit as mammon. We cannot drive out poison by means of poison. The new can be born only of the new; only out of life comes life; only of love can love be born. Only out of the will to community can community arise.

And community is alive wherever small bands of people meet, ready to work for the one great goal, to belong to the one true future. Already now we can live in the power of this future; already now we can shape our lives in accordance with God and his kingdom. The kingdom of love, which is free of mammon, is drawing near. Change your thinking radically so that you will be ready for the coming order! .

Re: [revival] The FIGHT AGAINST MAMMON - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/6/22 14:48

PART 2 - "The FIGHT AGAINST MAMMON"
-by Marc White.

It has often struck me lately that with the advent of electronic media, email, and all the other modern marvels, we now have a responsibility second to none. We affluent folks have the ability to see the poverty and injustices in the whole world. What, therefore, is the command to help?

1 John 3:16-17~

"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his BROTHER in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

The rhetorical answer is we don't love God if we bypass the obvious need in lieu of our comfort and convenience. One billion people in the world (3 times the population of the USA) live on \$1 a day or less. How much is that cup of coffee we buy on the way to work? Two billion others live on \$750 a year or less. Why do we need a closet full of clothes when our brethren in Asia only have the clothes on their back?

I once visited with a pastor and his wife in central Russia for an afternoon. They were most generous with their meager food supplies, and the sausage and bread tasted like a banquet. Their income was \$25 a month, or \$1 a day.

We're so quick to quote the "Love Chapter" of 1 Corinthians 13. And a wonderful passage it is. But look at how Paul frames the ultimate sacrifice:

1 Cor. 13:3~

"And if I give ALL MY POSSESSIONS TO FEED THE POOR, and if I SURRENDER MY BODY TO BE BURNED, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

If you're like me, you've probably encountered numerous saints who have made all sorts of theological gyrations to get around, under, or through the plain meaning. Notice he said is WAS the

ultimate sacrifice to give ALL possessions and/or our very life. But the method must be in love. And if in love, it profits GREATLY. That's his point, I believe. Let us not miss it, or we miss the life of Jesus, and perhaps eternity. Remember, he who seeks to save his life....

And Jesus Himself once again gives a general command to all his followers:

Luke 12:33-34~

"SELL YOUR POSSESSIONS AND GIVE TO CHARITY; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Next, we begin a story of how this is flushed out day by day by those of us living in affluent places, or even poor places where poor people can be every bit as covetous as the rich. We don't want to succumb to the poverty of affluence. Only by His amazing grace will any of us make it through the needle's eye.

STORY of a MODERN FAMILY

"Money and love are mutually exclusive. Where mammon rules, the possessive will is stronger than the will to community... Jesus, the prince of life, declared war on this spirit, and we must declare war on it too. When our inmost eye has been opened to his light... we can no longer accumulate property. We will turn our backs on everything present and live instead for freedom, unity, and peace."

Jordan Hogan read the quote for the third time, swallowing hard, wondering to himself if it was just him who felt butterflies in his stomach over this article. I'm certain, he mused, that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. I'm dying to know what Kristie is feeling.

Kristie, his wife, was really the instigator of this most holy work of God. She had been reading a series of Christian articles entitled "The Fight Against Mammon" that were given to her by a disgruntled fellow saint in her home group that actually despised these writings. The articles proclaimed that the love of money was so widespread in the assemblies of Jesus in the west that this demonic influence must be broken for ordinary people to truly love Jesus and inherit His kingdom. Kristie had been gripped in her heart of hearts because the articles described both her and Jordan, her husband of 15 years. And she was the one who broached the subject with her husband, and had left the articles in conspicuous places around their lavish home in hope he would read them. Her prayer was answered. But now, it became more than she bargained for with her heavenly Father.

Jordan was even under more conviction than Kristie, it appeared. They were having very spirited discussions on what to do with all their stuff, their investments, their newer vehicles, even their fancy home that they had fooled themselves into believing they'd use it for real "ministry" to the poor. Their talks were often turning into arguments as Jordan was now ready for action, a bold action he declared to his wife.

They both were troubled over the last few years of their faith walk that the fruit in their lives was minuscule. There was an emptiness

and lack of joy in their hearts that they had valiantly tried to fill with many, many things. Home school activities for their children Seth, age 12, and Ashley, age 9, didn't cut it. Their recent entrance into small group home ministry in the last two years soon proved to be Christianity "light" with almost all participants talking about themselves, their "ministries," and even sensing a void of fellowship around how to serve the crippled, lame, poor, blind, widows, orphans, and prisoners. Jordan even picked up an acrostic to help him remember all the categories of the "least of these." It was called the "CLPB - WOP," pronounced Clipped Whop.

Kristie tried the local church ladies group, taking Ashley with her. But, alas and alack. Ashley had befriended a couple of people as only the younger children can do. Her salvation in the last year was real to all around her, and even her parents now knew that there was something more to the Way than just a Sunday meeting, a Wednesday night home group, and a ladies group once a month. Ashley was asking to spend time with Quisha, a young black girl she had met at a hotel pool a few miles away while her cousins were in town. Not only that, but Quisha introduced the family to her dirt-poor Grandma, Stephanie, who was raising her, and to another black single mom in their run down apartment complex, Lisa, who was recently abandoned and then saved, doggedly trying to raise four kids under 8 years of age on \$18,000 a year.

Ashley and Quisha were now talking by phone frequently, and the details of her economically hopeless life were being related at the dinner table and in the car to her folks. Jordan and Kristie would turn and look at each other, their hearts hurting for these souls, wondering what they might do practically. More than once, Kristie had cried herself to sleep softly with this burden not wanting to disturb Jordan in the other side of their king size bed.

It was Jordan who first felt the direct leading on the Holy Spirit to sacrificial action, or so he thought. As he approached Kristie, she knew that look. The last time he had displayed that look to her was when he was describing the greed and avarice of the owners of the company he worked for as they ignored the desperate economic plight of many of his female co-workers. She thought she was ready for him now. But she had no idea.

He took her hand and began praying to Jesus. His voice became a bit more loud than normal, then it began cracking with emotion as he pleaded with the Spirit to give them courage to enter into the battle for peoples souls. He pleaded with God the Father for grace to stand strong. Kristie had never heard him pray like that before. Never. The prayer went on for some time, a lot longer than Kristie anticipated. Even when he was done and peered back into her face, the look was still there. The kids were silently in the next room listening to every word.

Things need to change big time, he declared. They were trapped in the American gospel of affluence and had been seduced, he went on. The kids were becoming yuppies, and the desire for more and more was subtly out of control. Jordan proclaimed that they couldn't compare themselves by their fellow church goers for almost all were rich by the worlds standards. Kristie asked what

they should do, her heart racing now.

Jordan gushed over with a number of ideas. John the Baptist said give your extra clothes away. Paul said be content with what you have which means daily bread and basic housing. So we have to deal with our investments, this fancy house, and these vehicles. How can we, he said, store up these treasures on earth when Quisha, Stephanie, and Lisa are all very close to being evicted from their apartments since rent had gone up 30% in the last year due to the "gambling" in the housing market. To top it all off, he lamented, the girl's teeth are rotting out of their heads from poor nutrition.

Our clothes, \$150,000 in investments, \$200,000 in home equity and excess furniture, and no time for outside ministry due to too much time at work were all things that needed to fall under the obedience of Jesus, he said.

Kristie was speechless. Was he going to do something stupid? Do I need to call my dad the long time elder in the AOG mega church to talk some sense into Jordan? What about the kids education? Their vacations? The list in her head multiplied as she added up what they would lose.

She went to bed wondering what the next day would bring. Oh, more grace dear Lord. She felt like her whole world might just spin right out of control. She wondered silently and yet shamefully why she ever married Jordan in the first place. Why did she have to read that article about the fight against mammon in the first place? I can see now why my friend despised the article, she mused.

And a voice through the ages echoed faintly through her heart that very moment, "And what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul?"