

Sunday, September 20 – Matthew 6:33

A middle-aged man with a smug look of gratification said to his friend, “I’ve got all I want – a comfortable home, the kids are doing well in college, and my wife and I are happy in our careers. We worked hard, and now – we’ve got it made. What more could anyone ask for?” Where does God fit in? A young man, facing harsh reality, cried out, “What’s the use? I lost my job. No one will hire me. My wife and kids think I’m a failure. Wouldn’t I be better off dead?” Where does God fit in? A teenager insisted, “It’s my life, and I’m going to live it my way. No one can tell me what to do. Don’t lay your religious hang-ups on me!” Where does God fit in?

When God gave the Ten Commandments, He let people know where He fits in. “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me!” He was in effect saying, “I am your Savior, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt, who has promised to send a Messiah to deliver the world from sin. Now where do I fit in? First!”

From Israel’s history we read that whenever Israel put the Lord first, He did indeed keep His promises. He gave them victory over their enemies. He granted them the Promised Land. He took His children to heaven when they died. And when they bought in to the devil’s lie that you can worship any god you want, the Lord’s anger burned against them. Their land was cursed and they went into captivity. And those who died in unbelief are condemned forever.

Still a remnant of believers remained, and the Christ was born as God has promised. He taught His followers, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things – food, clothing, shelter, will be given to you as well.” Jesus fulfilled all the ancient promises. As true Man He was born under the Law. As true God He kept it perfectly, earning holiness for us all. As true Man, He bled, suffered and died. As true God, He paid the eternal punishment for all our sins, earning forgiveness for us all. Through the gospel in Word and Sacrament His Spirit gives us faith, bringing us into and keeping us in Christ’s kingdom where He rules in our hearts, minds, and lives! He promises to keep us in faith until we see Him face to face in His eternal kingdom of heaven. Where does He fit in? First!

Yet temptations still confront us today. Changing the meaning of Scriptures to tolerate sinful behavior. Where does God fit in? Being a member of a Christ-confessing congregation, yet pursuing pleasure first, indulging in sinful passions without repentance, knowing more about the sports stats than the doctrines of the Bible. Where does God fit in? Being embarrassed when others challenge you because you study and believe the truth of God as we still confess it in our church. Where does God fit in? Reading the Bible, attending worship, volunteering in the church – only if I don’t have something else going on – where does God fit in? Planning my offerings – only after I’ve considered all my other expenses first – where does God fit in? Greed, the Bible says, is idolatry. Can you imagine reaching old age and having only money and a desire still to somehow get more? Is that success in life? Better die a pauper in purse than a pauper in soul. Better fail to get money than to allow money to get you.

Luther's large catechism reminds us, "That upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god." And since Jesus has saved us from sin, hell, and slavery to Satan, believe in Him. Trust His promises. Christ's love compels us to seek His kingdom first.

How can I show God is first? Fear God. Hold Him in awe and respect so you put His Word and command above that of anyone else. Love God above all. Give Him first place in your heart and life. We gladly give up all those other Sunday activities so we can worship our Lord and hear Him speak to us through His Word. We gladly serve God at home, at work, and through His church. We gladly set aside our offering in keeping with our income as the first use of our money. Then trust in God above all, for He is your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Everything – your food, clothing shelter, job, Bible, freedom, heaven – all comes from Him. He will never break His Word. He will work out all for your good through Jesus Christ.

God will put up with a great many things in the human heart. But there is one thing He won't put up with – second place. So remember all the Lord has done to save you. Continue in His powerful Word. Where does God fit in? First! Amen.