

DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT TOMORROW – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM

Mt 6.24-34

At that time Jesus said to his disciples, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 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? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?"

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

In this passage of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus confirms what He announced in the beatitudes. Who takes care of others and of the well being of his own brother, will permit the Father to take care of him. For this the passage begins in Matthew chapter 6,24, with an warning from Jesus *"You cannot serve God and money."*

For 'money' the Aramaic expression 'mammona' is used, that indicates the patrimony, the capital, that is what mankind puts his own trust in. Mammona comes from a root that is the same as that from where the word amen comes from, that is something true, something secure. Well then mankind puts the security in the goods that he has accumulated.

Jesus invites us to put our own security not in that which one has kept for oneself, but in that which one gives and share with the others. Therefore Jesus invites us to make this choice. And, confirms Jesus, that if there is this choice the Father will take care of his children. In fact, Jesus says, “«. *do not be anxious..* »”, and this invitation of not being anxious will be repeated three times, and, according to the literary technique of the evangelists, it means something complete, definite, secure.

Therefore Jesus invites us to not be preoccupied of the essential elements of life, that are to eat, to drink or to dress, and brings an example. He says “«*Look at the birds of the air:* »”. Why this example of the birds in the air? Because they were regarded useless and harmless animals, animals for which the Lord had not blessed. Even in Luke’s Gospel it speaks of crows, that were considered impure animals. Therefore the elements most useless and insignificant of the creation.

Well then, says Jesus “«*Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them* »”. This is not an invitation from Jesus in which one waits for providence to do everything. No! Jesus says “ If God feeds the birds of the air that do not sow, nor reap, nor gather how much more will He do for you, who sow, reap and gather” therefore it is not an invitation to do nothing, but to work positively without preoccupation.

And then Jesus gives an example that no one can lengthen their own lives or a garment and then says: “«*Consider the lilies of the field,* »”. The most common flowers, those that lasted only a day. And Jesus assures that “«.....*even Solomon in all his glory...*»” that is his vanity, “«..*was not arrayed like one of these*»”. So then the teaching of Jesus: “«*But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you....*»” and here there is a reprimand from Jesus, “«..*you of little faith?* »”

Little faith does not mean that one does not believe, but the lack of trust. Therefore Jesus invites us to have full trust. If you work for the good of others, the Father will take care of you, and all benefits of mankind! So Jesus for the second time says: “*Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*” and makes a very strong comparison.

“« *For the Gentiles seek after all these things* »”, those that do not believe in the Father. Therefore if you preoccupy yourselves with life, of what you have, etc. you are people that do not know the Father. And assures Jesus: “«..*your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.*»” The assurance of Jesus is that there is no need to ask the Father because He proceeds the requests of mankind, He knows the needs of mankind, therefore the actions of the Father always proceed the request of His children.

And here the final invitation “«..*seek..*»”, that is get moving, begin to search, “«.. *first the kingdom of God* »”, that is the new alternative community of society, where in place of what one has there is sharing, in the place of commanding there is service, “«..*and his righteousness*»”. Righteousness meaning faith. Therefore Jesus invites this faith as announced in the beatitudes to create an alternative society. “«..*all these things..*»”, that is to eat, to drink and to cloth oneself, “«..*will be added to you*»” not in the measure of necessity, but more. The generosity of God is immense and gives life to who communicates life to others.

For the third time, here is the last invitation to not be preoccupied, “*«Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow»*”. And here an old translation makes the preoccupation rise up again; the old translation was “ ..because tomorrow will have its own anxieties”, that is do not to be preoccupied for tomorrow because there are already enough troubles today, who knows of tomorrow. Nothing of all this. the translation, that has been brought exactly from the last edition is: “*«Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself »*”.

It is the full faith, the full serenity. As today you have experienced the heaven sent actions of the Father that has taken care of you, also tomorrow this will happen. And Jesus concludes: “*«Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. »*” that is the problem, the anxiety, the preoccupation, must not be taken into the future, but each day the Lord replies to the needs of His children.