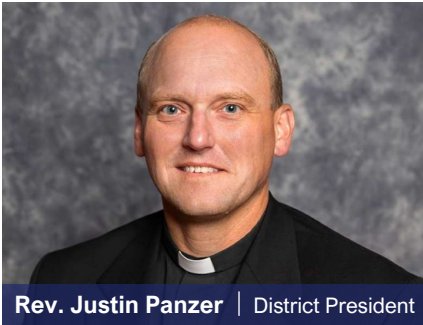


PRESIDENT'S OFFICE



Rev. Justin Panzer | District President



“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt. 6:19-21)

God forbids us to become slaves to our possessions. We become slaves to perishable things when our heart is set on money, wealth, and the stuff that comes with it. One of the world's richest men, now deceased, Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart, was asked what he thought about the enormous losses his stock portfolio suffered after one of those precipitous drops in the stock market in the 1980s. He gave this reply: *“It was paper before. It's still paper.”* He then got back into his old pickup truck and drove away. Although he had mountains of it, money was not his god.

Mark Twain famously doubted the reality of this slavery when he offered the opinion that it is not the love of money that is the root of all evil, but “the lack of it.” Twain had lost possession of his heart, for it was greedily chasing the things of this world and he was impoverished of the divine blessings of God's Word. Yes, Twain mastered many words, but he declined to be mastered by God's Word. His mastery of words made him much money, which merely enslaved him to Master Greed.

The Christian may be rich or poor according to the ways of the world, but what makes him different than those who worship possessions is that he has not set his heart upon the treasures of the world. Yes, he may work hard for his daily bread, which the Lord commands (*2 Thessalonians 3:10*). But daily bread remains a gift from God for which we pray, and upon which we cannot set our hearts as the thing most needful to us (*Luke 10:42*).

Only the Word of God, with all of its great spiritual blessings, must be paramount in our lives. Christ Jesus came to give His life fully and completely for you, so that you and I and the entire world might have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life with Him. There is simply no greater gift than this.

The Christian response is to not only live in this gracious forgiveness, but also to give back generously of what He entrusts to our care.

We are completely “rich” in the sight of God. Still, the degree of our earthly possessions will vary. No matter what, give generously in response to what God has given to you in Christ. Confess that your wealth is the Lord's gift to you. Do not be possessed by your possessions.

Finally, like everything else, this is about the First Commandment; either your God is the Lord, or greed is your god. Either God is your Lord and Master, or money is. Given God's track record, we would be far better off with God as the Lord, who in Christ offers all the vast riches of His grace. He has offered Himself as the substitute for sinners and “redeemed us not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.” (*ref. Luther's Small Catechism, The Second Article: Redemption*)

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