

In these difficult financial times do we put our trust in God or in the world system?

Berni Dymet throws out a challenge to us all to keep our eyes on Jesus and trust in him for all our needs

Global Financial Crisis

It is easy to yawn when we hear that term isn't it? The *Global Financial Crisis*—it is being splashed around with great abandon in the media. And increasingly, many of us are coming to the conclusion that it is all a bit of a beat up. That things are not going to be quite as bad as the media is making them out to be.

Yet in the recent May 13 budget, the Australian Government predicted an unemployment rate of 8.5 per cent—that is a million Australians out of work. A million families directly impacted. Around where I live, shops are closing at what seems to be an ever increasing rate of knots. People *are* losing their jobs. Businesses *are* struggling.

Have we bottomed out yet? Who knows! And so for many families, the uncertainty brings fear... and fear brings many a dark night of the soul.

It is scary. *What if I lose my job? Or for those who already have—how am I going to pay the mortgage? Is the bank going to repossess my house and sell it from underneath me?*

It is funny how quickly the brash confidence of more than a generation of economic growth can evaporate. Funny how all of a sudden we come to realise that actually, actually we have been putting our faith in the things of this world. And why wouldn't we? After all things were good!

It strikes me how easy it is in the good times, to *profess a faith* in Jesus on the one hand and yet in reality, to *put our trust* in economic and financial 'certainties' on the other. To *believe* in Jesus, but to *trust* in 'mammon'.

That may sound harsh, but for many, it is true.

A Huge Opportunity

These are sobering times and my hunch is that in these times, when the rug of economic certainty has been pulled out from beneath us, we have an opportunity—a huge opportunity—to reset our faith. And perhaps today, right now, is a good time to share that opportunity around.

Over and over and over again throughout his Word, God tells us, implores us, commands us with these words:

Do not be afraid—or, put another way—*do not worry*.

And my hunch is these are words so many of us need today. These are words—not just any words but God's Words—that can bring peace to many a heart. And if our confidence is found in the steadfast love of the God who spared not even his Son on your behalf and mine, then my hunch is—we *can* live a confident life in these uncertain times.

A Familiar Passage

There is every chance most of us have at least a passing familiarity with these words of Jesus that we are about to take a look at. And it seems the more familiar we are with a particular



passage of Scripture the more likely we are just to skim over it. *Oh, I've read that before, I'll skip to the next bit.*

But humour me; don't skip over it this time:

"No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and

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A Confident Life in Uncertain TIMES

all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Mat 6:24-34).

That's easy for him to say! I mean, he was and is and always will be the Son of God, the Maker of all things. Yeah—that's easy for him to say!

We tend not to think too much about the physical needs of Jesus during his public ministry. But we know that he had to fundraise—there's no record of him moonlighting as a carpenter after his baptism; Judas was, after all, his treasurer. And we know that whilst even foxes in those days had holes and birds of the air had nests, the Son of Man had no place to lay his head, (Mat 8:20).

So trusting in his Father to meet his needs is something Jesus actually lived out every day of his public ministry. He did not have a super fund, or an investment portfolio; not even a six month lease on a room, however humble, that he might have called 'home'. He had none of those things.

And it was from that place on the socio-economic scale that he proclaimed with boldness and confidence, "*Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink.*"

I remember a time not so long ago, when it looked as though we might lose our house. Stepping out into ministry can be a 'risky business'—or so it seems. I recall the gut-wrenching

fear that gripped every part of me. The thought of losing that for which my wife and I had worked so hard all our lives, was utterly inconceivable.

So I did the only thing that any sensible, reasonable man in my position would do—I panicked!

From Fear to Faith

After that, I prayed. I can tell you those words from Chapter 6 of Matthew's Gospel have a special significance for me—because through them, the Spirit of God turned my fear into faith.

What Jesus is striking at the heart of here, is who or what do we put our trust in? When times are good, the easiest thing in the world is to *believe* in Jesus, but *trust* in wealth. But it is when we are looking down the financial and economic barrel, that we discover where our trust really lies.

Maybe that is why Moses said to God's people, just as they were about to leave the wilderness and cross over into the Promised Land:

"When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery," (Deu 6:10-12).

In the midst of my panic, I realised how easy it had been for me, a minister of the gospel after all, to forget the God who brought me out of my slavery and through the wilderness and into the Promised Land.

This is exactly what Jesus is talking about. With each question he pokes his finger in our chest and asks us, "*Who or what are you really putting your trust in?*"

Big picture: if you or I were given the choice of losing our house or losing our God, which one would we choose? Well?

Big picture: in the scheme of eternity, what matters more—a roof over our head today, or a room in his house forever?

If fear or worry or panic is gripping your heart right now, do you feel the peace of God descending on your heart as you read and re-read the Lord's Words?

Here's the choice—a choice between a life of fear and a life of faith. On the one hand, we can run around, fretting and crying, "*What will I eat? What will I drink? What will I wear? Where will I live?*" This is no different really from those who have never trusted in this Jesus for their eternal salvation.

Or, we can turn our eyes to gaze upon the steadfast love of a God who never fails. The God who calls us simply first and foremost to seek him, to seek him with all our hearts—his kingdom, his righteousness—and to trust like a child that when we do that, all our physical needs will be met.

That's the choice. The question is—which one works for you? (A)

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