

WORLDVIEW

Session Three

Family of Christ Lutheran Worldview Study

THEME

God created the material world and gives us its blessings to receive with thanksgiving and use in love and service. Yet material things cannot give us what only Christ can give. We live in the world, but our identity, security, and hope are found in Christ.

Key Verse

“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

— John 17:16

Materialism - In the World, But Not of the World

God's Creation and Our Idols

1. What Really Matters?

Read: John 17:11–19; Genesis 1:1, 31

Materialism can take two forms:

- **Philosophical materialism:** Only physical matter ultimately exists.
- **Practical materialism:** Money, possessions, comfort, and success become what matters most.

Christianity rejects both.

Discuss:

1. What does our culture tell us is most important in life?
2. How can someone believe in God but still live as a practical materialist?
3. What difference does believing in eternity make in the way we view possessions and success?

2. God's Gifts are Good - But They Can Become Idols

Read: 1 Timothy 4:4–5; Psalm 24:1

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God gives us good things:

Food • Work • Family • Homes • Money • Bodies • Abilities • Creation • Time

The problem isn't having things.

The problem is when things have us.

An idol is anything we trust, love, or fear more than God.

Ask:

- Where do I find security?
- Where do I find identity?
- What am I afraid to lose?
- What do I think I need in order to be happy?
- What do I constantly want more of?

Discuss:

1. Which material blessings are easiest to turn into idols?
2. Why can success be just as spiritually dangerous as poverty?
3. How can we enjoy God's gifts without making those gifts our gods?

3. The Law: Materialism Reveals the Heart

Read: Matthew 6:19–24; Matthew 16:26

Jesus asks:

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?”

The Law exposes our misplaced trust.

We may say we trust God while practically trusting:

- Our bank accounts
- Our careers
- Our possessions

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- Our retirement plans
- Our ability to provide for ourselves
- Our social position
- Our comfort

Materialism ultimately becomes a question of **faith and worship**.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Where am I tempted to believe:

“If I only had more _____, then I would finally be secure/happy/content.”

Discuss:

1. Why does Jesus connect possessions with the condition of the heart?
2. What is the difference between responsible financial planning and trusting money for ultimate security?
3. How does the Law confront both the wealthy and the poor?

4. Contentment: God is Our Provider

Read: 1 Timothy 6:6–10; Philippians 4:11–13

Discuss:

1. What makes contentment difficult in our culture?
2. How does gratitude fight materialism?
3. What are some practical habits that can help cultivate contentment?

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5. In the World, But Not of the World

Read: John 17:15–18

Discuss:

1. What does it mean practically to be “in the world, but not of the world”?
2. How should a Christian's attitude toward money differ from the world's?
3. What would it look like for our congregation to model faithful stewardship rather than materialism?

6. Everything That We Have Is Received From God

Read: James 1:17; Psalm 24:1

Everything ultimately belongs to God. Martin Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Creed reminds us that God gives and preserves: “body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members...” Our possessions are therefore not ultimately about **ownership**. They are about **stewardship**. God entrusts things to us so that we can use them according to His purposes.

Discuss:

1. How does seeing possessions as God's gifts change our attitude toward them?
2. What is the difference between **ownership** and **stewardship**?
3. How might this change the way we think about spending, saving, giving, and generosity?

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7. Vocation: Using God's Gifts to Love Our Neighbor

Read: Ephesians 4:28; 1 Peter 4:10

Discuss:

1. How can your ordinary job be an expression of Christian love?
2. What has God entrusted to you that could be used more intentionally to serve others?
3. How does vocation protect us from seeing work merely as a way to make money?

8. The Gospel: Christ is Our True Treasure

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 3:7-8

Discuss:

1. How does the Gospel address the insecurity underneath materialism?
2. Why does knowing that Christ has given Himself for us make generosity possible?
3. What does it mean to "treasure Christ above everything"?

9. The Means of Grace: Christ Gives Us What Money Cannot Buy

Discuss:

1. How does God's Word continually confront materialism?
2. How does Baptism remind us where our true identity is found?
3. How does the Lord's Supper redirect our hearts toward Christ and His gifts?
4. Why do we need the Means of Grace rather than simply trying harder to be generous?

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Final Discussion: Who Owns My Heart?

Consider these questions:

What do I fear losing? What do I constantly want more of? Where do I find security? Where do I find significance? What would be hardest for me to surrender to God?

Discuss

1. Where do you see materialism most clearly in our culture?
2. Where is materialism most difficult to recognize in yourself?
3. What is one material blessing for which you can thank God?
4. Where might God be calling you toward greater contentment or generosity?
5. How can our congregation encourage faithful stewardship without making financial giving a measure of someone's faith?

Takeaway

Creation - God created the material world and called it good.

Law - We turn God's gifts into idols and look to possessions for what only God can provide.

Gospel - Christ gave Himself for us and gives forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Baptism - Our deepest identity is that we belong to Christ.

Word & Sacrament - Christ continually gives His gifts and strengthens us in faith.

Vocation - God uses what He entrusts to us to love and serve our neighbors.

Stewardship - We receive God's gifts with thanksgiving, use them faithfully, and give generously.

The goal is not to have nothing. The goal is not to have everything. The goal is to have Christ at the center of everything.