

March 18,2018 – Cum Sancto Spiritu
By Wayne J. Schneider

Are You Redeemed?
St. Matthew 6:9-13

Narcissus is a hunter in Greek mythology. His father was a river God and his mother a nymph. He was extraordinarily proud and Nemesis, the god of revenge, noticed this and caused Narcissus to notice a pool of water. In this pool he saw his reflection and fell in love with it, not understanding the reflection was just an image. Unwilling and unable to leave the beauty of himself, he died. From this story of Narcissus comes narcissism, a fixation with oneself.

Sociologists have noted that American culture increasingly encourages narcissism and self-centeredness. There is a trend towards focusing on our own desires and comforts, instead of being aware of the needs of others. Workers have become more interested in what the company can do for them, than what they **can do for the company. The world has changed from “One for all and all for one,” to “every woman or man for herself or himself.”**

It is in this environment that we, the “*Followers of the Way,*” find ourselves. There has rarely been a time when our culture has been more at odds with the teachings of Jesus Christ. This is not because of the diverse elements that have entered our society, but rather, **because of the world’s influences on our perspective. As** disciples of Jesus Christ, we are challenged to live out our faith as people who are marching to the beat of a different drummer. How do we do that?

God’s goal for this world is liberation, the freeing of creation

from it's bondage. God's methodology is not some cosmic slight-of-hand. Rather, God has decided to use you and me.

My wife Sylvia is a consummate coupon clipper. I believe she has saved our family many bushels of dollars throughout our 52 years together. Although these vouchers appear to be free, they come with a price. There are countless hours invested in hunting for them, cutting them out, organizing them, and choosing those with the best savings.

If I were preaching about financial matters today, which I am not, I might say that coupon **clipping is one way of being a 'good steward.'** **Jesus does not use this term in what we call "The Lord's Prayer,"** but stewardship is a by-product of God redeeming the world. Now, how does that work?

Redemption means exchanging something for something else. **As a child, my tongue was often 'sticky,' because of licking page-after-page of S & H Green Stamps for my mother. We see the same formula in Jesus' life. He** traded teaching for changes in human behavior.

Zacchaeus is an example. When it dawned upon this tax collector that he was a sinner, **as he sat under Jesus' teaching at dinner,** he chose to change his lifestyle. He changed because of who Jesus was, and what Jesus said and did to reestablish relationships in his community. As it turned out, Zacchaeus gave back four-fold for the hurt he had caused. (St. Luke 19:8) The Law required only three times, but Zac was moved to give more than the minimum required. We could say that Zacchaeus acted as one **of God's** coupons.

I wonder what would happen, if You and I would take every selfish act and offer them to God. By so doing, we would be adapting our lives to the teaching of Jesus, and reversing the effects of selfish behavior. We will be a part of setting the world right through our acts of right doing.

If you think this is not possible, spend some time the Book of Acts. There you discover how the life and teaching of Jesus affected the lives of those he touched. It can, and does, still happen. When you next go into IGA or Safeway, you can decide to help others by changing your selfish actions into acts of kindness and right doing.

In living this way we become partners with God in the redemption of our world. We can together operate as **God's** coupons.

One way of modeling the Lord's Prayer, is upon awakening each morning, we intentionally look over our schedules for the day, and see if there are occasions where we may assist God in making the world right again.

Perhaps, we could include in our prayers the thought of asking God to help us turn the temptations to be selfish, into opportunities to be kind and gentle. Pray, help me God, to help someone today, not to receive something, but that by this action it will help you set things right in the world.

It is a truth that the life and teachings of Jesus are being used by God to set things right. Not by some out-of-this-world way, but by the everyday actions of you and me. Alleluia. Amen.