

We Cannot Serve Two Masters

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[0 : 00] Our God, we are your people because you've laid claim to us. We have to acknowledge that claim. We are your people because you have spoken to us and we have to obey your word.

We are your people because you have shed abroad in our hearts your Holy Spirit. So we have to acknowledge that you indeed are Father and that these things may be true for each of us as we spend these moments in worship and under the hearing of your word.

In Christ's name, amen. Amen.

Just picture it to yourself, 352. All our knowledge, sense, and sight lie in deepest darkness shrouded till your spirit breaks our night with your beams of truth unclouded.

You alone to God can win us. You must work all good within us. That's the ministry that Jesus has for each of you as you turn to his word today.

[1 : 54] We sit before him, our knowledge, sense, and sight enshrouded. We're caught in night.

It is a full, full darkness. We need light. And only Jesus can break through and bring us light.

So my prayer is, as we turn to the words of Jesus, that he will use them to break through to our night and to bring light, and that we may obey him, knowledge that we are his, and that from our hearts might come the cry, Abba, Father.

It's a short gospel that was read today. The focus of it that I want you to look at is just one verse.

You cannot serve two masters. And it's not a moral exhortation to you who are serving two masters.

[3 : 05] It's simply a declaration that it's quite impossible to serve two masters. But in other words, you can't have two mistresses.

You can't have two husbands. You can't live in that kind of relationship with two people. And if you are living in relationship to God, then that's all there is.

And if you're not living in relationship to God, but to mammon, then that's all there is. You can't do both.

Somehow, way back in history, a lot of people got the impression that the chief function of the Anglican Church was to allow you to do both.

That's why it's been called the conservative party at prayer, that you can serve at least two masters.

[4 : 11] Well, you can't. And that's the categorical statement that it makes. And the reason that you can't is because the relationship that is spoken of here, look will you at the verse so you've got it firmly fixed in your mind.

chapter 16, verse 13. No servant can serve two masters.

And it means no household slave can take orders from two people. He's got to take his orders from one person.

And when you look up the origin of these words, then it says categorically that it is a relationship between a household slave and his master of total mutual dependence.

The master depends. The master depends on that servant to do for him what needs to be done.

And the servant depends on the master to do for him what needs to be done.

[5 : 38] And so the master and servant are locked in that kind of relationship. And if you want to see an example of that and were to turn to Matthew 8, you will see the kind of relationship that's spoken of.

Page 7 in the New Testament section and verse 9, where the Roman centurion says, page 7, verse 9, chapter 8, I am a man under authority with soldiers under me and I say to one, go and he goes and to another, come and he comes and to my slave, do this and he does it.

Remember that that master had gone on a journey to see Jesus and fallen before him and pleaded with him to come and look after his servant and heal him.

So there was a mutual relationship and you can't have more than one such mutual relationship.

It's the relationship that is implied here as being a double relationship because we're taking the little thing, which is our human experience, you know, when you have to be faithful in the little thing in order that you will be given much.

[7 : 18] The little thing is in the ordering of our earthly life, we cannot serve two masters. So in the great thing, and that is our relationship to God, we cannot serve God and mammon.

Well, what happens, he says, if you try to do this is you develop a love-hate relationship. Now I meet, I would say, hundreds of people who have a love-hate relationship with God. They're enthusiastic one moment and they are despising and scornful the next. And they keep moving between these two.

Now Jesus says that that is symptomatic of a love-hate relationship, that that is symptomatic of trying to serve two masters.

[8 : 23] That's when you get into that kind of trouble. And if any of you wives have been in a relationship of unfaithfulness to your husband, you will know that your life is characterized by love and hate.

And husbands similar. It's characterized by love and hate. When you get into a try-and-live a double relationship, you can't do it.

Jesus says, now as that is true for us here, it's even more true in relationship to God. Because you are called through Jesus Christ to live in a relationship of total dependence upon him.

and he has made himself totally committed to you. So it's that kind of mutual relationship.

What happens, you see, is you're caught. You either have to serve mammon and use God or serve God and use mammon.

[9 : 51] Now the perfect picture of serving mammon and using God is kneeling down and praying that you'll win a lottery.

that's, and we want to use God for the fact that we are serving mammon, that we are, that that's the one we are really interested in.

So you can't serve two masters. If you're an alcoholic, you will have found a master which is going to ravage you.

Paul talks about his life before he was a Christian. He said that he served and Titus served, it was just traditional, at least this, trying to do this, is to serve divers lusts and passions.

You were caught trying to serve two masters and your life wouldn't come together because of it. You lived in this love-hate all the time.

[11 : 07] Self-interest is another master that demands that you serve him with all that you have and submit and in our society you're commended for doing that.

That's what life is all about. but if you can't be faithful in that area and you can't enter into that area where you are called upon to recognize that you can't serve God and man.

Now, let me just take you from there to show you some of the implications of that. First, in the colleagues when it says when you are the servant of Jesus Christ you are in the service of him whose service is perfect freedom.

Now, the reason that it's perfect freedom is that a slave does not have to worry where his next meal is coming from. His master has committed himself to look after him.

He doesn't have to worry about that. all he has to worry about is doing what his master commands him to do. That's all. Everything else is looked after.

[12 : 32] And that's why when we move from the little things to the great things and we begin to experience what it means to be a servant of Jesus Christ, you find a great freedom because you're not caught.

You have one who is looking after you, who is totally committed to you. freedom. And that's what gives you freedom.

Freedom that was spoken of in the scriptures this morning. Freedom of being unilaterally the servant of God.

the next thing I want to tell you about it is to be a servant of one master as far as this life is concerned is to be the servant of Jesus Christ in the life of another.

Lots of marriages go back and forth all the time because they're trying to figure out who's boss. And one is prepared to submit to the other for a while but then that gets burdensome and then they try and reverse and it goes that way and then it goes that way and then it goes that way and relationships humanly speaking tend to be that.

[14:14] Who's boss? Who's in charge? But once you have recognized who's in charge then you recognize that in your marriage you are called to be the servant of Jesus Christ with respect to that other person.

Your relationship to your husband or wife or your friend or companion or boss or working mate or whoever it is your job is to be the servant of Jesus Christ in the life of that person.

That's how you're to do it. If you were to accept an invitation to be a Sunday school teacher you'd be accepting an invitation to be the servant of Jesus Christ in the life of six ten year olds.

That's an onerous task. But you are serving Jesus Christ in their lives. If you're asked to be the chairman of the board of Komenko you are called to be the servant of Jesus Christ as the chairman to the board of Komenko and to the company and to the people of that firm.

You have no other choice because you have only one master. That's why you're not liable to be invited so don't worry about that one for a long time. Because it's a very difficult position to be in.

[16:02] but it undoubtedly is the position that in a society such as ours we are to be the servants of Jesus Christ in the life of other people.

That's why probably the most important part of this Sunday morning service now this isn't really a guilt trip on all of you but it'd be nice to respond a little bit.

One of them is the coffee hour because you have the opportunity to be the servant of Jesus Christ in the life of somebody else who may have questions to ask who may have problems who may have difficulties who may be lonely who may be looking for friendship and you're called to be the servant of Jesus Christ in their life.

the picture of this comes in John 13 13 and you'll see it you'll recognize it I know but let me read it to you John chapter 13 and verse 13 you call me teacher and lord and you are right for so I am if I then your lord and teacher have washed your feet you also ought to wash one another's feet you also ought to be the servant of Jesus Christ to one another well then what's at the center of your life and mine well it's obedience to Jesus Christ whose servant we are we know we can't serve two masters we know that it is our heart's desire to be the servant of

Jesus Christ how do we do that well we do it by reading his word in the scriptures allowing him to speak to you through his word written that may not be mystical enough an experience for you but I assure you it's a very practical experience that you simply open the book and read the words of Jesus Christ and those who witness to him second thing you do is to spend time in prayer because when you see somebody else claiming authority in your life you need to say Lord Jesus you are master and you are Lord and I want to serve you in this situation and that's the only way I think you can get sorted out is in that way third thing you can do is spend time with the people who are the servants of

[19:13] Jesus Christ in your life and that means simply that you are surrounded by a fellowship of Christians they are Christians and as such their commitment is to be the servant of Jesus Christ in your life that's why you need to spend time because they can do things for you that you can't do for yourself they can minister to you and you need to spend time with them for that reason I sometimes wander around the parish looking for one of you almost any one of you because I need somebody who is a servant to Jesus Christ to minister to me I know that if that's true for me must very often be true for you and I'm always surprised by the person that

Jesus chooses to minister to me very often somebody I would never have chosen that person ministers to me as a servant of Jesus Christ so when Luke writes this and tells you this that's all he means when he tells you these words of Jesus I can't say that it's all he means because there's so much involved in it you see it's the recognition that I think you and I both have to come to we all have to come to this and that is who am I serving and if your life is a seesaw of love hate relationships with the church with religion with business with partners with family always back and forth it's because you're trying to serve two masters and you can only serve one there is only one master to whom you can make a total commitment of yourself because there is only one master who has made a total commitment of himself to you and to your eternal well-being that's that's the invitation that belongs to all of us to acknowledge who is our one master we may not serve him well we may not serve him as faithfully as we'd like to we may not serve him as brilliantly as we'd like to what he's saying is that you must know who your master is you can't serve two no matter how clever you are only one ultimate

I think the impact of this passage is why waste so many of the valuable years of your life trying to serve two why waste your resources trying to serve two you can in fact only serve one one who has

made a total commitment to you of himself I if I your master and Lord you call me that you're right because I am Jesus says because I am and if I wash your feet you in my name ought to wash one another's feet amen