

Is Money Your Servant or Your Master?

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24). The word, "mammon" in this verse is from an Aramaic word that meant, "riches, treasure." Obviously in the context Jesus is telling us that we must make a choice between exalting God or exalting materialism in our lives. Based on the reasoning of verses 19 and 20, the correct choice is to exalt God.

Does having money mean that we are servants of mammon? That's a good question that begs an answer but, more importantly, begs clarification. What exactly does it mean to "have money"? What does it mean to be "rich"? In the eyes of a great number of people in this world, Americans who earn minimum wage are "rich" and anyone with a positive balance in a bank account "has money." Warren Buffett, Bill Gates and their like notwithstanding, "wealth" is a relative term.

That being the case, the discussion should not be so much about what we have as it is about what we do with what we have. James addressed some who had a great deal but hoarded it (James 5:1-5) while Luke 19:1-10 tells us about prosperous Zacchaeus who freely and willingly shared his material blessings with others.

If money is your master, then you will do whatever you have to do to get all that you can get so that you can have all that you think you could ever want. Friends, family and the Lord will all be pushed aside in your pursuit of it all. The trouble is that you'll never have it all and, with the attitude that money is your master, you will never get everything you want. You'll be like the greedy man who defined the word, "enough" as, "One dollar more than I have." You will never be satisfied.

On the other hand, if money is your servant, then you will realize that you are merely a steward and not the owner of your material blessings. You will view your dollars and cents as tools that you can use to provide your needs and help provide for those who are in need.

The Gospel according to Luke contains several parables that reference money. The rich fool reminds us that *"a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."* (Luke 12:15). The unjust steward brings to mind the fact that we are to be good stewards regardless of how much or how little we have, for *"he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."* (Luke 16:10).

Along with the material blessings we enjoy comes the responsibility to exercise sound judgment regarding their use. We're only borrowing these things for a little while during our earthly journey so let's be sure that we use what we have to the glory of God. *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* (I Corinthians 10:31).

An All Too Familiar Prayer

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray that I will safely keep
All the things that I have got.
(You know that I don't have a lot.)

This little, bitty garage of ours
Can barely hold our four new cars.
With our house in the hills and two boats at the lake,
Just to survive takes all we make.

Lord, when tomorrow's day is here
Just spare me from the pleas to share
My tiny sum with those in need,
'Cause no one is worse off than me.

And while I'm praying, by the way,
I have one other thing to say.
The church is not growing in this land.
Why, Lord? I do not understand.

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