

MATTHEW 6:19 – 24

YOU ARE A SLAVE, BUT YOU CAN CHOOSE YOUR MASTER

Relevance: Having significant or demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand...

I hear from time to time that the Bible is no longer relevant to our times. I strongly disagree. We do have a tendency to think in terms of modern vs. “bible times” but that is not in any way correct. The snares of the enemy are the same today as they have been since the Garden of Eden. They may be flashier or come in a more modern context, but they are the same snares.

Today, we are looking at a portion of scripture where Jesus returns to the subject of finances. Why would He do that if this weren't a relevant topic to first century Judeans? It is most certainly a relevant topic in 21st century America. We live in what may be the most materialistic country and the most materialistic age in the world has ever known.

“Normal is getting dressed in clothes that you buy for work and driving through traffic in a car that you are still paying for - in order to get to the job you need to pay for the clothes and the car, and the house you leave vacant all day so you can afford to live in it.”

– Ellen Goodman

The overall context of Jesus' sermon vs. this immediate one.

Jesus has already dealt with the ostentatious outer forms of religion and condemned them. He is now speaking, for the most part in the affirmative regarding the inward man and his focus. There is a commitment “factor” here. **We cannot have dual allegiances.**

In the next six verses, we will see three comparisons. Jesus juxtaposes three pairs. Each pair deals with the enslavement in which materialism holds over a particular facet of life. Did you hear me say, “materialism?” Now, there is no way anyone can say that is not relevant to us today. Materialism is the water in

which we swim. I won't say that it has never been problems in the past - for people have always coveted more and nicer things to their detriment. But I will say that there are more things out there from which to choose and that they are easier to acquire in this place at this time. This is also timely in that we are coming upon the Christmas season. This has become a time in which people go into debt in order to acquire things they believe will make them happy. However, as we will all admit, if we're honest, that once the "new" wears off, we find ourselves back in the life in which lived prior to our spending frenzy.

“The reality of loving God is loving him like he's a Superhero who actually saved you from stuff rather than a Santa Claus who merely gave you some stuff.”

– Criss Jami, Killosophy

Jesus nowhere elevated poverty or criticize the acquisition of wealth, for He made all things, including precious metals. **“He has given us all things richly to enjoy.” 1 Timothy 6:17**

But He does speak to the priority of these things and the motives we have for massing them.

We tend to neatly divide things into the “spiritual” and “material” but Jesus made no such division. In many of His parables He made it clear that a right attitude toward wealth is a mark of true spirituality. If we have the true righteousness of Christ in our lives, then we will have the proper attitude toward material wealth.

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- Converting currency in a foreign country. In many places your American dollars are no good.

Luke 16:1 - 8

1 He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. 2 So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’

3 “Then the steward said within himself, ‘What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. 4 I

have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'

5 "So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' 7 Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' 8 So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.

Now, you may ask, "Why is the master commending him for being a crook?" He isn't so much commending him for being a crook. He is commending him for realizing that he needs to invest in his future.

The steward knew that upon being relieved of his position, that he would need a place to stay. So he cut massive portions of debt for his master's debtors so they would take him in once he was put on the street. The master commended him for his wise use of opportunity.

"Money is an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except Heaven, and as a universal provider of everything except happiness."
Wall Street Journal

The point is that we, as believers, should make wise use of our opportunities to invest in the things of Heaven, not simply to amass things down here.

- Life before mothballs.
- Rust/ deterioration
- The Pink Cadillac... What a way to live.
- The rich man's funeral. What/ how much did he leave? Everything!!!

Here, Jesus contrasts investing in Heaven with investing in the world.

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Materialism will enslave our hearts.

22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

You Cannot Serve God and Riches.

We tend to think of a window as something OUT of which we look. We tend to think of alight as something that illuminates outwardly. But here the idea is that of a window through which you peer into the body, a light that illuminates inwardly. It speaks of what is coming in through our eyes rather than just what we see outwardly.

The Bible often uses the eye as a symbol for attitude of the mind. William Shakespeare said that the eye was the window to the soul. Jesus often speaks of the eye in the same way.

- Eye – good, rather than single/undivided loyalty/ focused.
- If the eye is single in its focus, if our minds and souls are undivided in our loyalty, then we can move through this life with the proper perspective of wealth, which is to honor and glorify God as good stewards.
- A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.
- **“An evil eye was a phrase in use, among the ancient Jews, to denote an envious, covetous man or disposition; a man who repined at his neighbour’s prosperity, loved his own money, and would do nothing in the way of charity for God’s sake.” (Clarke)**

Materialism and wealth can enslave our minds.

The final pair Jesus compares/ contrasts is that of two masters.

Materialism can enslave our will.

24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Having two masters is not like working two jobs. Jesus had the master and slave relationship in mind, and no slave could serve two masters.

“In the natural sphere it is impossible for a slave to serve two masters, for each claims him as his property, and the slave must respond to one or other of the claims with entire devotion, either from love or from interest.” (Bruce)

It can be simply said: Don’t serve your money. Let your money serve the Lord and it will serve you.

According to France, the idea of mammon itself was morally neutral. The word was used in some ancient Jewish texts that showed this, translating [Proverbs 3:9](#) as *Honor God with your mammon* and [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) as *You shall love the Lord your God with...all your mammon*. Therefore mammon itself represents material things we possess or want, and those things can be used for God's kingdom and glory or as idols.

Questions: But what about my responsibilities to my family? How can I focus only on God and still hold down a job, be a husband and father? These are moot points. What Jesus is referring to is not so much a matter of time as it is a matter of focus and/ or priority.

Certainly, Jesus is talking about the *heart* here. Many people would *say* they love God, but their service of money shows that in fact they do not. How can we tell who or what we are serving? One way is by remembering this principle: *you will sacrifice for your God*. If you will sacrifice for the sake of money, but will not sacrifice for the sake of Jesus, don't deceive yourself: money is your God.

We must remember that we don't have to be rich to serve mammon (money and material things); the poor can be just as greedy and covetous as the rich can be.

1 Timothy 6:6 – 10

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

- So we can choose between two types of treasure: temporary or eternal.
- We can choose between two types of eyes: single-minded and focused or dark and evil.
- And we can choose between two masters: God or money/ materialism.

We are all slaves to something or someone. Which master will you choose?

“Money is a great servant but a bad master.”
– Francis Bacon

The Lamp of the Body