

One Master
Matthew 6:24
Halifax: 11 July 2004

Introduction

For the last two weeks we have been looking at Jesus' instruction in the Sermon on the Mount about treasure.

In verses 19-21, He counselled us to stop laying up treasure on earth, and start laying up treasure in heaven.

- The problem is not with earthly riches themselves, but when we make earthly riches our reward as if they are able to bless us...
- Earthly treasure will not last, but what counts is heavenly treasure—
 - the things we do for Jesus Christ and the fruits of the Spirit that we are called to cultivate before we get there...
 - I pointed out to you that now is your opportunity to sow and plant and bring forth fruit for God's kingdom!
 - When the harvest day comes, the opportunity will be over.
 - Only a fool would squander such an opportunity that will reap eternal dividends!—
 - When we stop to consider this we can only conclude that we are not nearly as diligent about laying up heavenly treasure as we should be.

In verses 22-23, Jesus tells us what our problem is—why it is that we are not more diligent to lay up heavenly treasure...

- It is because we have bad eyes.
 - We don't **see** clearly the exceeding superiority of heavenly treasures,
 - and because the earthly treasures **look** so good to us,
 - we often pursue them and think we are doing something very worth while!
- The only way to correct our problem is to look at everything under the light of God's Word.
 - Then we will see clearly the excellence of Jesus Christ and of His way.

But still, even after we see His way, we still have to get on with actually serving Him.

- It will do you no good to see His way if you do not actually begin to walk in it.
- In verse 24, Jesus reminds you that you can't sit on the fence,
 - You can't be undecided about serving Him.

The very obvious application of this verse is “Don’t sit on the fence.”

- Jump over onto God’s side and serve Him with your whole heart, with single-minded dedication.
- Plunge yourself wholly into His service alone and don’t allow yourself to serve any other.

This morning, I want to look at three reasons why you should not sit on the fence:

1. First, because you can only **serve** one master, not two.
2. Second, because you **belong** to only one master, not two.
3. Third, because only one master can **bless** you, not two.

Let’s begin with the first...

I. Don’t sit on the fence, you can only serve *one* master, not two.

A. Jesus states the axiom, “No one can serve two masters.”

1. This is something that many people try to do...
 - a. If they put it into words (which they usually don’t):
 - One would say, “I will serve God on Sunday, and on the other days, I will serve other things.”
 - Another says, “I will serve God whenever I can.”
 - Yet another says, “I will serve Him outwardly, but not with the heart.”
 - b. The faulty idea here is that life can be (and even should be) divided up into different compartments.
 - The problem here is that God is seen,
 - perhaps even as the one who has done certain things for us and that we ought to pay homage too...
 - I will have my devotions and worship Him at church...
 - But He is not seen as the One who is at the centre of life and the one to whom every single act is to be performed.
 - He is not the one before whom we continually live and more and have our being, and who has a right to our every thought and action.
 - How far we come short of this standard!
2. Jesus words here: “no man can serve two masters” are a wake up call to reality.

- a. The word serve (δουλεύω) that He uses here is the strongest of six or seven Greek words that He might have chosen for service.
 - He speaks of a **slave** who had no rights of his own...
 - He had no property, everything belonged to his master.
 - He had no vote, his master was the one who decided everything.
 - Even his children did not belong to him, they belonged to his master.
 - And this was no temporary arrangement, it was a permanent relationship.
- b. By using this word, Jesus makes it clear that the kind of service we are to render to God is absolute.
 - It is obvious that such service is not something you can do on Sunday only—that is just the time your master has appointed to hold a meeting with you!
 - It is obvious that such service is not something you can do whenever you get the time—all of your time belongs to Him!
 - With this kind of service, everything you have belongs to your master and is to be used for His purposes according to His instruction—
 - even your children belong to Him.
 - You are only a steward who holds everything that your Master has given you for His sake, to be used for His purposes.
- c. With these words, Jesus is putting to rest once and for all the notion that you can do part time service to God!
 - With the kind of service He is talking about here, you can only serve one master.

B. Jesus further explains that with this kind of master-servant relationship,

- you will always violate the relationship if you should attempt to serve another.
1. If all your time belongs to your master, as soon as you go to serve the other, you are rejecting your relationship with the first one.
 - a. Jesus uses very strong terms—
 - “you will hate the one and love the other...”
 - “you will loyal to the one and despise the other.”
 - He is not talking so much about your feelings (of bitterness or anger), but He is talking about the rejection of the relationship...
 - the relationship of servant to master in which you belong wholly to the master...

- You must tear yourself away from that when you go to serve another.
- b. It is like adultery.
- A married person despises and hates his or her spouse when adultery is committed...
 - even though the adulterer may claim to love both partners in different ways and be fond of both...
 - The truth is that there has been a breach in the marriage relationship so that ones spouse has been hated and despised.
 - You can't have two one flesh relationships—and that is what marriage is.
 - The adulterous union has violently severed that relationship.

TRANS> You see, it is only possible to have one servant master relationship because of what the servant master relationship is...

- just as it is only possible to have one marriage relationship because of what the marriage relationship is.
- There is no way you can be wholly devoted to two because as soon as there is a second, you are no longer wholly devoted to the first.

2. It all boils down to a question of ultimate loyalty.

- a. Your whole life is to be about serving Jesus Christ and doing His will.
- There is no choice to make about whom you are going to obey.
 - If He is your master, that is already decided.
- b. The question is not whom to obey or if I should obey, but how can I please Him.
- 1) Your goal is to find out what He wants and then do it.
 - You are to learn to observe all things that He has commanded in His word.
 - Find out what the Master wants and do it—that is a servant's task.
 - 2) This does not mean that He tells you all the details—
 - a) A master may ask his servant to go and invest a sum of money for him, but he may not tell him where to invest it—
 - he wants the servant to decide—that is part of the work he wants the servant to do...
 - Yet, the servant should know his master's principles and avoid those investments that would be displeasing to him.

TRANS> Jesus does not tell us all the details, but Jesus tells us all that we need to know to please Him.

- b) For example, He does not tell you which woman you are to marry...
 - He rather tells you what kind of woman you are to marry...
 - How you are to treat her in ways that please Him,
 - And the work that you are called to do together as husband and wife.

- c) But as soon as you willingly reject the guidelines that He has given you,
 - you are no longer His servant—you are serving another.
 - Something from outside your relationship to God has come in and you are following that thing...
 - You are obeying someone or something else.
 - You have rejected God,
 - You cannot serve two masters.

TRANS> But there is something in all this that you need to be clear about or you will be tripped up.

C. As your supreme master, God does call you to serve masters for His sake.

- This is not serving two masters in the way that Jesus is forbidding, but this is rendering the service to others that your Master has commanded.

- 1. You will be called to serve those that He places over you—even to obey them and devote yourself to them.
 - a. There are many whom Christ places over you...
 - Children, Christ commands you to honour and obey your parents!
 - Wives, Christ commands you to honour and obey your husbands.
 - Citizens, Christ commands you to honour and obey the governing authorities.
 - Employees, Christ commands you to obey your superiors at work.
 - Church members, Christ commands you to honour and obey the elders in the church.
 - And if you think about it,
 - You are even called by Him to serve the earth,

- to till the ground and cause it to bring forth fruit,
 - You have to do certain things that it requires, or it will not yield you its benefit...
- To refuse to obey these masters that your master has placed over you would be to dishonour and disobey Him.
- b. But obeying the masters that your master has placed over you in no way means that He is no longer your Master.
- 1) Just as a labourer shows his loyalty to the owner of company by obeying the foreman that the owner has placed over him,
- so you show your loyalty to Christ by obeying all those He has placed over you in their respective spheres of authority.
 - Likewise, if any of these authorities call you to do something that is contrary to your master's will,
 - You show your loyalty to Him by refusing to obey, even it means you have to suffer for it.
 - If the foreman wants you to act contrary to company policy, you are to refuse for the sake of the owner.
 - If the government demands that you as a citizen renounce Christ, or even one of His commandments, you are called to refuse to obey...
 - Peter and John were in that situation when they were told not to preach in the name of Jesus, and they said,
 - Acts 5:27-32: And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so* also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."
- 2) They showed that Christ was their master by first obeying these authorities in whatever ways they could,
- but they never forgot that Christ was their master who had appointed these over them...
 - They were serving others for His sake.

2. Now it is very important that you don't get this backwards and put Christ under one of these secondary masters!
 - That is a danger that is all too easy for us to fall into.
 - a. This is the situation in the parable of the sower.
 - In that parable, there are three types of persons that receive the word of God and take Christ as their master.
 - 1) But it seems that two of these receive Christ as a secondary master instead of **the** Master.
 - a) The stony ground hearer, it seems, was committed to peace and acceptance.
 - He was willing to do anything for peace and acceptance—
 - He was excited about Christ because he thought Christ would further his service to peace and acceptance...
 - but as soon as persecution arose on account of Christ,
 - The true master became evident—
 - Christ was no longer useful to that master, so Christ was immediately rejected.
 - Christ was not in this one's life as absolute master,
 - but only as a subordinate master to be served under the master peace and acceptance.
 - b) The thorny ground hearer was likewise not committed to Christ, but rather to the riches of this world.
 - Things started out okay,
 - Perhaps it seemed that this one who could feed five thousand could do quite a lot in his devotion to worldly success...
 - but when the demands of the world interfered with the call of Christ, the demands of the world won out.
 - This is where the true loyalties were, so Christ was hated and despised.
 - 2) The third soil that received the word continued in Christ.
 - In this case, He was truly master,
 - The same persecutions and temptations came,
 - but peace and safety as well as prosperity were gladly released when they were no longer facilitating service to Christ.

TRANS> But sometimes it is difficult to tell just where your loyalties really are!

b. Many have been deceived because it can **look** like you are serving Christ when you are really serving another master.

1) For example, look at how similar many of the goals of parents are for their children who are serving mammon and those who are serving Christ.

- Incidentally, mammon simply refers to the things in this world that people trust—especially wealth.

a) A parent who is trusting in mammon and looking to mammon wants his children to be:

- well disciplined and hard working, because they will not be successful if they are not.
- he wants them to be respectable, courteous, and obedient to authority.
- He does not want them to be involved in drugs or drunkenness, or to fall in with the wrong crowd.
- Outwardly, these goals seem to correspond quite well with those of a Christian parent.

b) There was a time when Christian parents very naively concluded that we basically have the same goals for our children as the world does and so can educate them all together.

- But this misses the most important distinction of all!
- If Christ is our Master,
 - our goals are entirely different because at the root of everything, our lives are about serving Christ and Christ alone.
 - And theirs are about serving mammon!
- Everything we do is to be done for Him,
 - and that is the thing that we should be more concerned about instilling into our children than anything else!
 - If this is not done, everything is out of joint even if there are no drugs and a lot of hard work and respect for authority and all the rest.
 - In fact, these things become worse than living in the gutter because they are so deceitful...
 - “We have been successful in training up our kids because they don’t...”

- c) Not only is the whole foundation and purpose different,
 - but our goal is to give thanks to Christ in all things...
 - Our goal is to uphold His laws in everything we do
 - Instead of avoiding lying because it will tarnish our reputation, we avoid it because Christ says it is wrong...
 - Instead of taking a day off because everybody needs a break, we observe the Lord's Day because Jesus calls us to do it.
 - And if anything gets in the way of our service to Christ, that thing must be abandoned—Our whole purpose is to serve Him...
 - For those who serve mammon, anything that gets in the way of mammon is likewise abandoned.
 - If prayer seems to help, it will be retained, but if not, it will be rejected.
- 2) Jesus is teaching here that your loyalties will always become evident in time...
- If you are serving Christ because that seems to agree with your pursuit of mammon...
 - The day will come when His demands will get in the way of your pursuit of mammon and then your loyalty to mammon will be seen.
 - All along, you were serving mammon, but it will become clear when there is a conflict.
 - You cannot serve God and mammon.
 - Education of children is just one example—there are many others.

TRANS> So don't think you can sit on the fence—you can only serve one master, not two.

- That is the first point, the second is like it...

II. Don't sit on the fence, you belong to only one master, not two.

A. By right of creation, every one of you belongs to God.

1. That's right, every member of the human race is a servant of God.
 - a. You were not designed to govern yourself, but to be governed by God.
 - He made you with the capacity to understand and receive His counsel.
 - He made you so that you could consciously and actively serve Him.

- b. But notice that I did not say that everyone is an **obedient** servant.
 - Just because everyone is a servant it does not mean that any of us are obedient servants.
 - The very reason the human race is in trouble with God is not because we are not His servants,
 - but because being His servants, we do not serve Him.
 - We would be much better off if we were not servants at all,
 - but as it stands now,
 - we are servants who are continually displeasing Him!
- 2. That is the case for everyone except Jesus Christ!
 - a. From all eternity Jesus, as the Son of God, did nothing else but serve the Father with perfect dedication.
 - For all eternity, the Trinity has continued in perfect unity and perfect harmony, moving together with one purpose and one will and one action.
 - Together, Father, Son and Holy Spirit created the world...
 - Together, Father, Son and Holy Spirit redeemed sinners.
 - b. And so it was that when the Son of God came to earth,
 - He came in full obedience to the Father's command and became man.
 - And in the form of man, He also served God with absolute commitment and perfect dedication.
 - His very food and drink was to do the will of God and nothing other.
 - He said, "I have come, O God, to do your will."
 - c. And so the result was that in Jesus Christ, we see man as He ought to be.
 - the perfect image of God living in perfect conformity to God,
 - moving in perfect harmony with His will,
 - and shining as the light of the world.
 - Jesus is the ideal man.
 - He is the exact representation of God, the perfect image of God.
 - In Him, there is no flaw or blemish.
 - He is the servant of God.
 - He is what every man ought to be, but what no other man is...

- For the Bible declares that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
 - We are not good servants even though we are by creation God's servants.
3. What all this means is that you ought to serve God as your only master because you were created to serve Him as your only master.
- You ought to be like Jesus.
 - It is your purpose as a human being to serve Him and so to live in that perfect harmony with Him in all our ways.
 - Get off the fence—God is your only rightful master by creation...
 - Why do you serve another?

TRANS> But alas, serving God with this perfect allegiance is something you cannot do on your own for all the effort in the world.

- To begin with, because you have already been ruined by rebellion and fallen under His condemnation...
 - And secondly, because though you try, you still continue to come short of His glory.
 - Satan is now your master and you are in bondage to sin
- But there is very good news!

B. The good news is that through faith in Jesus Christ, you who believe have been restored to God's service.

1. I told you before that when He became man, He became a perfect man—without spot or blemish.
- a. But the most wonderful thing of all about this is that Jesus came as our priest.
- And as our priest, this ideal man came to represent us all before God.
 - God in effect said to Him—
 - If you represent these people, they are sinners and you will have to offer sacrifices for them to take away their sins...
 - And the only sacrifice I will accept is your own blood.
 - And He called upon His only Son to shed His blood for us, and Jesus obeyed.
 - He had to bear God's wrath and curse for us.
 - And by that, this perfect man took away all our sins.

- b. What that means is that all the guilt you incurred for your breach of God's service has been taken away!
 - Jesus Christ has paid the penalty the God justly demanded...
 - And now all of you who are trusting in Him are completely forgiven!
 - You have this ideal man with this most precious sacrifice representing you before God's majestic throne...
 - And God is pleased with what He has done and God accepts you again as His servants without condemnation!
2. But that is not all Jesus does to restore us to God's service!
- a. If that was all He did, we would be completely forgiven,
 - but we would still not be serving God.
 - b. And so to complete the work of restoring us to God's service,
 - Jesus also gives us the Holy Spirit.
 - And His promise is that by the Holy Spirit,
 - He will put God's law in our hearts, and write it in our minds so that we will do it!
 - He will enable us to serve God again!
 - The work of the Spirit—a work that He does over time—is to restore us to God's perfect image...
 - To make us like Jesus, the man who always does God's will!
 - The change is so radical that it is called a new birth!
 - So radical that it is called being raised from the dead!
 - So radical that it is called being transformed by the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead.
3. And so this means that for you who believe, God is your master not only by right of creation, but also now by redemption.
- It is through redemption that you are restored to be God's servant when you had gone to serve another that was not your rightful master.
 - a. In the Bible, there are four ways by which a person could be redeemed to become a slave...
 - 1) First, by conquest, if he was captured in battle and made a slave to his captors.

- Jesus has redeemed us by conquering Satan who held us in captivity. Satan tried to bring Him down by the sweetest offers and enticements, and also by the most severe trials, but Jesus overcame Him.
- 2) Second, by purchase, if he was bought from a family or from another master, he became a slave.
 - Jesus had to purchase us from the courts of God's justice. He had to pay the full penalty of our sin which cost Him His life, and brought Him under the curse of God.
 - 3) Third, by birth, if he was born to a slave, then he was also a slave in the master's house.
 - Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit so that we were born again to be God's people—His own people who serve Him.
 - 4) Fourth, by voluntary choice, a person could become a slave of a master for economic security.
 - In our effectual calling, we are made to see our need of Christ and to come willingly to serve Him and to serve God.

TRANS> And so you see that as a believer,

- you are God's servants not only by creation, but also by redemption.
- b. Now it is to His disciples—to those who have come professing to be His own—that our Saviour says:
 - 1) Matthew 6:24: "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."
 - 2) Do you see?
 - Jesus says this to you He has redeemed!
 - Truly, you belong to God.
 - You have been bought with a price to serve God alone...
 - How can you now sit on the fence?
 - You belong to one master, not two!

TRANS> And so we have seen now two reasons to not sit on the fence...

- Because you can only serve one master, not two...
- And because you can only belong to one master, not two.
 - Now we come to the third reason not to sit on the fence:

III. Don't sit on the fence, only one master will bless you, not two.

A. One of our greatest deceptions—

- I have talked about it in previous sermons—
 - is to suppose that something or someone other than God can bless you and make you happy.
- 1. When Augustine saw all the gods that the pagans were worshipping, he asked them this simple question...
 - Why do you worship all these Gods when you have one God that is the God of happiness?
 - If you have riches from the god of riches without happiness, what good are the riches?
 - If you have safety and protection from the gods that provide that, but you are miserable, what have you gained?
 - The only wise thing to do is give up all these many gods and worship only the God who can give you happiness...
 - Then you will have everything and lack nothing.

2. Here is the folly of trying to serve two masters!

- a. The only reason for doing it is because you do not think one of them is adequate to meet all your needs!
 - And so you will reject something God says because you want to get something in this world and God's will is in the way!
 - And you think that by doing that you will make yourself happy and blessed.
 - But as I have told you before, riches do not have some independent power to bless you—
 - If you reject God service to obtain them, they will end up cursing you because God will make them a curse to you.
- b. God alone is sufficient to bless you.
 - You don't need to go following after something else.
 - If you are His slave, you will lack nothing.

B. And the problem is, when you attempt to serve all these other masters, you dilute your service to God—who alone is able to bless you.

- 1. Your heart is torn and divided so that you are not able to receive His instruction that makes you beautiful...

- You are following these other things, and they divert you from the training that He has for you.
 - You don't receive the full benefit of His counsel.
2. In addition to that, you set your hope on these other masters—that they will make you happy and blessed...
- and in doing so you set yourself up for disappointment because they cannot do it.
 - If you had been looking for the blessing that God gives instead of the blessing that good health gives,
 - you would have found blessing in sickness or in health.
 - If you have been looking for the blessing that God gives instead of the blessing that riches give,
 - You would have found His blessing with great riches, with moderate wealth, and with extreme poverty.
 - Do you see what I am saying?
 - If there is something you feel you must have to be blessed,
 - then you are not prepared to find that blessing that God has when that other thing is taken away.
 - You need to go through life looking for what He has provided for you as your gracious master instead of deciding what you must have.
 - You can't look to two masters at the same time.
 - Only one master can bless you.

So the message today is get off the fence!

- Get off on God's side and give yourself completely to be His servant.
 - 1) because you can only serve one master, not two.
 - 2) because you belong to only one master, not two.
 - 3) because only one master will take care of you, not two.