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The Seventh Sunday After Epiphany  
Sermons  
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## MATTHEW 6:24-34 - "WHO IS YOUR MASTER?"

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Who is your master? To who or what do you belong? Who or what do you serve? Is your master wealth, prosperity, or is Jesus your Master? Are you a slave to things created or a slave of the Creator? Is your life, being, and existence defined by how many things you accumulate or is Christ Jesus crucified and risen your Life? Who is your master? The answer to this question is crucial, for you can only serve one master!

**Jesus says:** <sup>24</sup> No one is able to serve two masters; for he will either hate the one and he will love the other, or he will cling to one and he will despise the other. No one is able to serve God and wealth.

The idea of being a slave and serving a master may at first be a difficult concept for us to grasp, since slavery as an institution of our society has been nonexistent for some time; the 13th Amendment of the Constitution abolished slavery in 1865. Since then, the United States of America has been the land of the free. But in the ancient world slavery was a common and familiar manner of life. A slave always and only had one master to whom he was duty-bound to serve. A slave did the will of his master. Slaves were not free and hired workers who could decide to serve the master for a time or pick and choose the tasks that they wanted to do. A slave lived under the constant authority of his master; the master's word, will, and command were life and death to the slave. The very nature of slavery demanded that a slave could only serve one master. The prospect of having two masters at the same time was insane. Whose will would the slave fulfill and do if there be a conflict between the two masters?

Think of it this way: can someone serve as the President of the United States of America and at the same time serve as the President of Russia or the Chairman of China? Could someone serve as an executive of FedEx and UPS at the same time? Could someone play for the Steelers and Ravens or the Cowboys and Giants at the same time? The answer to all of these is an obvious and resounding NO! In this same way Jesus makes the point to His disciples that they can only have one Master.

Since the Fall, humanity has not served his proper Master, but served the devil. Instead of serving the One who created us, we have served things created. Instead of living according to God's Word, will, and command, we have acted according to the deceivers lies. Talents and tools like money, food, and clothing, which God gifted us with to serve our neighbor according to His will have instead come to possess and enslave us.

Wealth, money, food, clothing, and other created things are not bad or evil before God; He created them good, to meet the daily physical needs of people, His creatures. But when these gifts, these created things, possess us as master then there is a huge problem. When wealth, money, food, clothing, or any such thing become master, then worry and anxiety are sure to follow. Do I have enough? Do I really have enough? I need more and more and more!

Who is your master? What do you seek? What do you value? Where are your priorities in life? Where and upon what do you spend time, energy, and money upon? Is your house and life ordered according to God's Word, will, and command? Or, have the created things of this world come to possess you? Who is your master? Jesus says you can have only one!

For all of us our master was the devil. We came into this world under his dominion, conceived and born in the slavery of sin. All we could do was sin and please the devil; furthermore that is all we once wanted to do. But now you have been set free from the slavery of sin and the dominion of the devil in Christ Jesus. Jesus bought you from sin with His blood and delivered you by binding the devil and taking the spoils for Himself through His life, death, and resurrection, and through the Gospel Word that proclaims Him. You are no longer slaves to the devil, now you are slaves of Christ Jesus; you have received the mark of His death and resurrection in Baptism, God's name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit imprinted upon you! You are free from the devil, but you are not freeman to go and do as you please; you are a slave of Christ Jesus, bought with His body and shed blood! You have been called to serve a new Master, a good Master, who strangely laid His life down for you and serves you with His good gifts. You are a slave a disciple of Jesus and a son of the Father called through water and the Word. Now, listen to Jesus your Master:

25 On account of this I say to you; Do not worry concerning your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor concerning your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of heaven that they do not sow nor reap nor gather together into barns, and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than them? 27 And who from you is able by worrying to add one cubit to his journey of life? 28 And concerning clothing, why do you worry? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they do not labor nor spin; 29 but I say to you that neither Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these. 30 But if the grass of the field is here today and tomorrow it is cast into the furnace, will not God much more clothe you, o you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For all these things the Gentiles are seeking; for your heavenly Father knows that you have a need for all these things. 33 But seek first the reign of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Therefore do not worry for tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry for itself; sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Your Master and my Master who gave His life for our ransom, Jesus, tells you and me not to worry and be anxious about the necessities of life in this world. Jesus tells us not to worry about our life, not to worry about our bodies. Food and drink, clothing and shelter are in deed things that we and all people need, but you are not to worry about them and seek after them as if you are slaves to them, as if the accumulation of these things is the sum and substance of life, and as if the gathering, use, and enjoyment of these created things is completely dependent upon you.

Jesus knows that you are tempted to think this way and to worry about such things, thus He rebukes and teaches with gentle absurdity. Picture if you will birds in a field not eating seed but sowing it in rows to plant crops, then the same birds coming again at harvest time with sickles in their mouths to reap the crop, and last of all gathering all the good crop together to store in a barn or grain house. What a crazy picture! Birds don't sow, reap, and gather in order to eat; God provides them with food from the earth. Birds eat what the farmer sows, reaps, and gathers or what they find on the ground or in the air. And imagine flowers laboring and weaving together clothes to wear; how absurd! Flowers just grow, blossom, and are beautiful according to God's design. O you of little faith, you are far more important to God than birds and flowers or any other thing in creation. If God provides for things like birds and flowers, then He shall certainly provide for you, whom He has made in His image and redeemed through His Son Jesus!

Food and drink, clothing and shelter are basic bodily needs for all people, but in America today we have much more than we need. Owning your own home and vehicles are not basic needs. Having multiple sets of clothing and shoes is not a need. Eating out is not a need. TV, movies, computers, and smart phones are not needs. Horses, dogs, cats, and any other pets are not needs. The point is this, in this country God has provided us with way more than we need; historically we have had a robust economy driven by hard working folks which produces an abundance to enjoy and share with others who are in need! And even now when things seem economically down at the moment we still have been blessed with so much. Most of us have never had a time when we were truly needy for the necessities of life; none of us are naked, homeless, and starving; we are all blessed. And yet we still worry and even complain when we don't have all these other things. O you of little faith, the unbelievers in the world seek to gather and gain for themselves an abundance of stuff; they are slaves to created things, but God's reign in Christ has set you free!

Christ Jesus bought you with His body and blood. Christ Jesus has brought you into God's reign; He has forgiven you and promised you eternal life; He has crucified and buried you with Himself in Baptism given you new life in the power of His resurrection. God's reign has come to you in Christ, setting you free from sin and the devil and making you Christ's slave and a son of the Father. Christ Jesus is your life, being, and existence! Thus Jesus says, "but seek first the reign of God and His righteousness." Jesus' desire is that you whom He bought with His body and blood and you whom He marked in Baptism as belonging to Him would remain in Him, grow in Him, and bear much fruit in Him. Thus Jesus commands and invites that you seek Him where He may be found, that you seek Him where He has promised to be present to offer you His forgiveness, peace, and life; Jesus bids you to remember your baptism, to gather to hear the preaching of His Word, and to receive His body and blood, for there Jesus has brought God's reign for you!

As much as we need food and drink, clothing and shelter, we need Christ Jesus even more! We need the clothing that Jesus offers us, a robe of His righteousness that

covers our sinfulness. We need the food and drink that Jesus offers us, His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Indeed these are the true needs of all humanity. Thanks be to God, Christ our Master is eager to give them along with all our earthly needs!

With all this said, let me be clear on a few points:

1. Jesus' words here cannot be taken to preach a 'prosperity gospel!' Jesus is not saying that His disciples shall never ever experience a lack of bodily needs. Jesus is not promising worldly wealth and health for belonging to Him. All those who preach and teach the 'prosperity gospel' are false prophets spreading the lies of the devil.
2. Jesus' words here cannot be taken as an excuse to be lazy and expect that your daily needs will magically be provided or that someone else will do everything for you! Jesus expects His disciples to be diligent and hard working and seeking excellence according to the vocations that He called them to serve in. Slacking off is not an option. Be the best child, student, parent, teacher, husband, wife, business owner, salesman, computer tech, etc. that God has enabled you to be. If you don't work don't expect to eat!
3. Remember all the good things in your life are not your own, but gifts entrusted to your care from your Master Jesus to be used according to His Word, will, and command. Your life and existence; your abilities to think, speak, and do things; your family and friends; Food and drink; clothing and shelter; and all the abundance of stuff that you have all truly belong to the Master. Specifically since Jesus mentions that wealth should not be our master; is your house in order when it comes to finances and the distribution of money that God has given you? Are you giving a joyful and generous first-fruits offering (of which the tithe, 10% is the classic Old Testament example); are the needs of your family being met; are you saving another 10% for later in life; are you paying off your debts; and living wisely within your means? If not, then repent, receive the forgiveness of the Lord and begin to get your house in order. If you need help, don't be ashamed to ask; only be ashamed if you are unwilling to change and grow.
4. Seek Jesus where He has promised to be for you! That means being disciplined to get up every Sunday and gather for Worship; Jesus is not with you in your bed at home or in the woods or the boat or wherever else to forgive you and and renew your faith in Him. But Jesus is present in the preaching of His Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper to forgive and save; there He is truly Emmanuel, God with us!

Who is your master? To who or what do you belong? Who or what do you serve? Once your were slaves of the devil bound in sin. But Christ Jesus has freed you from the sin and the devil and bound you to Himself. You are not your own, but bought with a price, Jesus' body and blood. You have received the mark of Jesus' death and resurrection in Baptism; His name is upon you. You belong to Christ; He who died for you is your Master now, Amen!