

## Two Masters (Matthew 6:24) - Sermon by Kelly Larsen

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<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” (Matthew 6:24 NASB)

Our culture places the highest value on personal autonomy, personal freedoms, and individual rights. The master/slave relationship is a repugnant thought to many of us: the ultimate suppression of self-determination. Much of this outlook comes from the cultural shame of our nation’s historical involvement in the slave trade and slave ownership. With many of those in Jesus’s time themselves being enslaved, the issue of slavery would have been contentious in His culture too. It is in this context that Jesus uses the master/slave relationship to teach his hearers that we all belong to someone else, implicitly inviting us to examine who that master is. Read Matthew 6:24.

### 1. To whom do you belong?

- Scripture teaches that we either belong to God . . .
  - Read Psalm 119:94. Who is the Psalmist crying out to? What in this passage implies that the Psalmist believes God is his master or owner?
  - Read Job 33:6. To whom does Job believe he belongs? In what way is our creation by God linked to our belonging to Him?
  - Read John 1:12. In what way does becoming “children of God” imply belonging?
  - Read Romans 14:7, 8. How does this passage relate to the idea of belonging to Christ?
- . . . or we belong to Satan
  - Read John 8:44. In this passage, Jesus spoke not only to the Pharisees, but to any religious person who thought they could be right with God by obedience to the law.
    - How does this passage contrast with John 1:12, in which those who received Christ were referred to as “children of God?”
    - Mammon could be described as “all the pleasures of the world that money in particular achieves for us.” How does serving wealth or “mammon” relate to, as John 8:44 says, wanting to “do the desires of your father” (the devil)?

- Read Acts 26:17-18. Recounting his conversion to King Agrippa, the Apostle Paul speaks of God using him to deliver people from the dominion of Satan to the dominion of God. With only two choices of “belonging” (to Satan or to God), what does this say to those who believe they are their own master? How does living for ourselves (rebellious against God) actually result in service to Satan and his purposes?

## 2. How will you know?

- We can know who our master is because we will love our true master and hate the other. Jesus says that those who have two masters will “. . . hate the one and love the other . . .”
  - Read Luke 14:26 and the parallel passage in Matthew 10:37. While Luke 14:26, at first glance, might seem to be teaching that we cannot come to Jesus without hating our families, Matthew 10:37 helps to clarify that Jesus is speaking of degrees of love: our love and devotion to Him should be so all-consuming that our love and devotion to our families might seem like hatred in comparison.
    - When we lose things or people precious to us or even when these things are merely threatened, what kinds of responses might show that we are treasuring them above Christ?
    - What responses would show that we treasure Christ above our “precious things”?
- We can know who our master is because we will devote ourselves to our true master and despise the other. Jesus says that those who have two masters will “. . . be devoted to one and despise the other . . .” To devote yourself to someone in service is manifested in obedience. To despise a master is to dismiss his authority with contempt.
  - In 1 Timothy 4:11-12, Paul uses the same word for “despise” as did Jesus. This helps us see what it would mean to “despise” someone.
  - Why might some in the church have been tempted to “despise” Timothy’s youthfulness?
  - How might this have manifested itself when Timothy tried to exercise his authority?
  - In what ways might you be tempted to “despise” Christ?
- If we are devoted to Christ as our master, we will gladly obey Him no matter the cost. On the other hand, if we are devoted to our precious things, we will disobey Christ to keep them.
  - What does it mean to say that our actions, attitudes, and emotions will betray (expose) our idols? What kinds of “good gifts” which God has given us can we become idolatrously devoted to?

**3. How can you change masters?**

- **To change masters, you must want to. You must be convinced that it is not possible to serve two masters. To change masters, you must choose to. You must purpose in your heart to turn from the wrong master. What would a prayer of repentance in this area look/sound like?**
  
- **To change masters, you must keep choosing to. You must make the choice, moment by moment, to serve Christ instead of Satan.**
  - **Is it possible to gladly serve Christ if we see Him as a heavy taskmaster or a cruel slave-owner? If no, why not?**
  
  - **How will seeing Christ's goodness, power, and beauty help us to choose Him as master each moment, rather than Satan?**
  
  - **Read James 4:4. Is it possible to be a friend of Jesus and a friend of the world at the same time? Why or why not?**

**Personal Reflection:**

**In the context of people and things which compete for our affections: what does it mean to say "If you love Christ more, you will be willing to forsake your precious things for Him"?**

**What or whom, if taken from you, would ruin your life? Is it anything other than Christ? If yes, pray that God would help you to see the goodness, beauty, and power of Christ so that you will treasure Him and His approval above all.**

**Are you trying to convince Jesus to "shake hands" with your idols? If yes, in what area or areas of your life is this a struggle?**