

Thesis: **Your Master matters!**

On July 18, 2009, at 6 AM, Debbie and I left Springfield with a mission team which included two other members of our Leadership Team (Carl Rees and P.K. Hinkle); two of our elders (Jim Lauderdale and his wife Hazel; Rex McMillan with his wife Sheila and daughter, Lynsey); one of our deacons (Chris Rees, with his wife Robin), and Geoff Steele, who heads up the management company that oversees our Remington's facility. Our destination was Zambia in Southern Africa. Our mission was to work with our IMB missionaries in Zambia (Wes and Laurie Wilcox) in conducting a leadership conference for Zambian pastors and their wives (along with some other church leaders who are with an independent Baptist Mission), and to tour some of the work being done by IMB missionaries Troy and Tracie Lewis in Lusaka, Zambia. On Friday, July 31, we left Lusaka and returned to Springfield 42 hours later. Today I am not worried about you going to sleep during my sermon as much as I am worried about me going to sleep during my sermon!

One word captures my reflections on this mission trip: Wonderful! To travel with 11 others over 14 days without any airline delays, without any lost luggage, with no flight problems, and with no sickness was wonderful! To see Victoria Falls, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, over 5600 feet wide and 360 feet high, was wonderful! To travel to Botswana on a land and boat safari, seeing baboons; hippopotamuses; impala; water buffalo; and elephants as big as a building, a few feet from you, was wonderful! To spend several days pouring ourselves into the lives of African pastors and their wives through teaching and sharing in small group breakout sessions was wonderful! To see the hope represented by the response of so many courageous Africans who are creatively working to make a difference in a nation devastated by AIDS, many who are caregivers who travel many miles on foot or bicycle to provide care for 20-25 children who are vulnerable because of the loss of parents or because they have a parent or parents with AIDS, was wonderful! To have testimonies already coming in that our mission – to increase the joy of the servants of the Lord – was accomplished, was wonderful. To have 3 ladies profess their faith in Christ was wonderful!

As wonderful as all that was, when Sheila asked me what was my favorite part of the mission trip, I did not hesitate: It was our worship time with our brothers and sisters in Africa! We went to school on participatory worship! I believe it was a foretaste of heaven. I taught them a song (*Victory is Mine*) and they taught us the English form of a wonderful song (*There's No One Like Jesus*). I hope to give you a glimpse of their worship and let you hear and see a portion of that song in the near future. It was wonderful!

How is it that the worship could be so delightful when we were so different? Culturally we were different. Ethnically we were different. Our languages were different. It shouldn't have worked, but it did. Why? How could believers with two cultures, two ethnic backgrounds, and two languages come together in glorious worship? **We had one Master!** One Lord, one God, one Master! Worship is sweet when you have the same Master!

Who is your Master? Whom do you serve? Does it matter?

Jesus speaks to the issue of what masters us and what matters to us in Matthew 6:19 and following. If you listen, you will be able to understand why **your Master matters!**

Matt 6:19-34

"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. 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! 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.

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not 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 after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. NKJV

These verses are held together by an emphasis on money, or the stuff money can buy or do. At the heart of the text are these strong words: *No one can serve two masters* (v. 24). Feel the force of those words! Jesus does not say we **should not** serve two masters; or that it would be best if we **did not** serve two masters; He said we **can not** serve two masters. At any given moment in time (including this moment) we are serving one master. By the way, no one can serve "no master" either! We will be mastered by someone or something!

Jesus also wants us to understand how this issue is critically important. **Your Master Matters!** It makes a difference now and forever! So I ask you again: Who is your master?

Let's take a brief walk back through our text and look for why it matters which master we serve. Notice again verses 19-21 where Jesus talks about our treasure. It is clear that we have a choice: we can lay up treasure on earth or we can lay up treasures in heaven. Which do you think makes the most sense? Treasures on earth are temporary; treasures in heaven are eternal. Missionary Jim Elliott, who died young at the hands of the Auca Indians, said: *He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose*. Listen, my friend: if you choose to serve an earthly master, your treasure will fail; if you choose Christ as your Master, your treasure will last. I would suggest to you that these verses speak to the truth that **your master matters** and serve to remind us that whom we serve determines our **purpose in life**. If we serve money, stuff, or any other master our purpose is limited and finite. If we serve Jesus Christ as our Master, our lives are filled with an eternal purpose. No Christian need ever say, "I have no purpose in

life.” That’s a lie from Satan or your own wounded emotions. If Jesus is your Master, you matter and your life has purpose! You are an ambassador for Christ! You are a servant of the most high God! You wake up every day and live every day to glorify God before a watching world. What a purpose! Oh, by the way, you can choose your master, you can choose where you place your treasure, but you cannot choose where your heart goes – it always follows your treasure! You cannot choose to invest your treasure in earthly things and simultaneously have your heart set on heavenly things. That is not reality! *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Your Master matters, then, because your master determines your **purpose in life**. But that’s not all. In verses 21 and 22, Jesus speaks of the *eye as the lamp of the body*. He wants us to know that walking in darkness is a dangerous business! I remember one time when I came very close to knocking myself out, and it was because of being disoriented in darkness. Debbie and I were living in Boaz at the time, and one of the children woke up in the night. I did not turn on the light; I knew right where my clothes were. I bent down in the dark with great confidence, and hit my head on the dresser – hard! I saw the light! The stars were dancing that night! Walking in darkness can be dangerous!

Let me suggest another answer to our question (Why does your master matter?): **Your master matters because your Master determines your perspective on life**. When you have any other master than Jesus, your perspective, your vision, your seeing is cloudy; when Jesus is your Master, your perspective is clear, your vision is accurate, you are walking in the light! Listen to Paul as he describes his life after meeting His Master: *Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.* (2 Corinthians 5:16 NKJV)

We now have two answers to our question (Why does your Master matter?): **Your Master matters because your Master determines your purpose and your perspective**. But we are not through. Look at verse 25-32. It is immediately noteworthy that Jesus is speaking here of the worthlessness of worry. By the way, worry is one indicator that we have the wrong Master! Worry and worship seldom coexist! But if you have any other Master than Jesus, expect to have worry as a constant companion. If money is your master, the economic outlook can eat your lunch every day. But if Jesus is your Master, peace can be yours. Here, then, is our third answer to the

question (Why does your master matter?): **Your master matters because your Master determines the peace in your life!** If we know Jesus, if he is our Master, we can trust Him to meet our needs in His way and in His time. We can have peace even when the storms rise around us and Satan rises against us! **Our Master matters!**

Let's end our journey through the text with one of my favorite verses (verse 33). I remember sharing these words with graduating seniors at Nixa the year one of our members, Tina Pennington, was graduating. I told them these were ten words to live by: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness* (KJV). I still believe that today! Here is our fourth and final answer to our question (Why does your master matter?): **Your master matters because your master determines your priorities!** Who's first in your life? How do you determine what to do and what to leave undone? These are the questions that define our lives. We all have the same amount of time every day. We cannot save it; we cannot even manage it. But we can manage ourselves by determining our priorities. Jesus makes it clear: *Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. . .* When Jesus is our Master, the rule and righteousness of God is our number one priority, and pursuing that priority puts our lives in order before God. Then we can rest assured He will take care of the "stuff" that we need.

So I am back to this question: Who is your Master? Right now, today. It matters! My prayer is that you would say with Joshua of old: *As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.* (Joshua 24:15 NKJV)