

PLEASE LET US ALLOW GOD TO BE OUR MASTER

According to Britannica Dictionary, "Master is someone who has control or power over others." Whoever or whatever influences one's thoughts or actions most of the time is the person's master. In the Gospel reading today, Jesus stated categorically that "no servant can serve two masters" (Luke 16:13). Jesus went further in the Gospel reading to name God and Mammon as the masters. What is Mammon? Mammon is anything that is not GOD in which a person places his or her hope or faith. Whomever or whatever we try to please and displease God with is our Mammon. Mammon can be either material or spiritual. According to Jesus, God and Mammon cannot have absolute power or control over us at the same time. Our first reading today (Amos 8:4-7) presented us with Prophet Amos who served God by prioritizing Him more than his means of livelihood and the Northern Israelites who served Mammon by prioritizing their wealth more than God. Through Amos, God preached judgment to the rich Northern Israelites who oppressed their poor southern neighbors because they saw themselves as better than them. The Northern Israelites who prioritized their wealth were arrogant, proud, and not loyal to God. These Northern Israelite traders were only interested in making money and had little or no interest in the things of God. IN OUR WORLD TODAY, WE HAVE PEOPLE LIKE THESE ANCIENT NORTHERN ISRAELITES WHO DO NOT CONSIDER GOD'S WILL IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH OTHERS. Jesus, in His time, criticized the rich as if having wealth was not good because of how the rich were so attached to their wealth, disregarded God, and neglected and oppressed the poor. If material riches were intrinsically evil or bad, Jesus would not have gone to eat at the house of a rich public sinner, Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2-10). His visit to Zacchaeus made Zacchaeus use his wealth to win God's favor and that of the people. Zacchaeus's encounter with Jesus helped him detach himself from his wealth to attach himself to Jesus and His will. Unlike the young man in the Gospel according to Luke 18 who asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life but when Jesus told him to sell everything he had and distribute the money to the poor, he became sad because he was very rich. This young man was so attached to his riches, was not ready to sacrifice his riches for the welfare of others, and his riches were his obstacle to being obedient to Jesus. His riches became his Mammon. FOR ONE TO SERVE GOD FAITHFULLY, THE PERSON MUST PRIORITIZE GOD AND HIS WILL. People like this young man who find it difficult to sacrifice their possessions to please God and for the welfare of others were the reason why in today's Gospel reading Jesus advised us, His listeners, to use our dishonest wealth to make friends for ourselves as the steward did in today's Gospel reading.

The steward used his master's wealth to win friendships or favor from his master's debtors. The steward's dishonesty lies in using what does not belong to him to win favor for himself. Our own dishonesty lies in using all the gifts we received from God including our lives to win favor from God and others. Since we are still alive, let us make friends with those who will pray for us when we are dead. JESUS WANTS US TO USE WHAT IS IN OUR POSSESSION NOW TO WIN GOD'S FAVOR AND THAT OF OTHERS. Do you know that Jesus used what was in His possession to win God's glorification and people's loyalty? "Throughout His ministry, Jesus squanders the riches of God's mercy on tax collectors, prostitutes, sinners and others" (Fr. Jerry). When we ask God to forgive our sins, He lavishes His mercy and graces on us to win our souls. Placing our hope in Mammon will bring bitterness and disappointment in our lives. People who see their material possessions as their masters easily suffer depression or emotional breakdowns when they lose their material possessions. "Love and forgiveness are the true riches in this world and in the next-not money" (Fr. Jerry). In one way or another, we have been affected badly by the death of our beloved ones, loss of possessions or abilities, and lack of peace in the world. Everything in the world except God and His will can disappoint us or bring us pain one day. This is the reason why Jesus does not want us to attach ourselves to the things of this world. MAY GOD HELP US TO USE OUR TIME, POSSESSIONS, AND CAPABILITIES TO WIN HIS FAVOR AND THAT OF OTHERS. MAY HE HELP US DETACH OURSELVES FROM THE THINGS THAT CLOSE US OFF FROM HIM AND DIMINISHES OUR FAITH, AMEN.