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Ya Gotta Serve Somebody
Matthew 6:22-24

A man in New York City had a wife who had a cat. Actually the cat had her. She loved the cat. She stroked the cat, fed it, pampered it. The man however detested the cat. He was allergic to cat hair. He hated the smell of the kitty litter box. He couldn't stand the cat scratching on his furniture. He couldn't even get a decent nights sleep because the cat kept jumping on his bed at night. So one weekend when his wife was out of town...the man simply lost all sanity. He put the cat into a burlap sack along with some heavy rocks and dumped it into the Hudson River. It was pretty traumatic for the wife when she came home from her trip and could not find her cat. She was inconsolable and overwhelmed with grief. So the man faked great concern and told her "Look honey, I know how much that cat meant to you. I am going to put an ad in the paper and offer a reward of 500 dollars to anyone who finds the cat. Still several days later no cat. Not to the surprise of the man...he knew his money was very safe. So he said again to his wife, "Honey you mean more to me than anything in the world. Here's what I'll do. I'll buy another ad and increase the reward to 1000 dollars" The mans friend saw the ad and reward for 1000 bucks and told him, "you must be crazy, no cat is worth that much" To which the man replied, "When you know what I know, you can afford to be generous."

This very sick illustration breaks down pretty quick as far as application, but it makes a point about investing and giving generously based on what we know to be true. When you know what we believers know about heaven, we can afford to be generous here on earth. If we have any idea of what it means to be a part of God's kingdom, we can afford to be generous here on earth. Since we already know the outcome

we can instead afford to place our priorities and resources in places we know will matter. We can establish priorities by the way we live, by the way we give because we know the rest of the story of life.

How are you living your life? Do the things you are investing in reflect what you know to be true about God and heaven and life after death. I would hate to have us all wake up and realize we have been investing ourselves, our time, our lives and resources in the wrong investment plan. I would hate to wake up only to realize that I've been investing in Enron life insurance that is worthless. I want to challenge you this morning that to make a choice of whom to follow will be reflected in your behavior, actions, thoughts and sacrifice. For Whom you love will be what you follow after.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Matthew. That is the first book in the second half of the Bible often called the New Testament. These books of the Bible are divided into parts called chapters and they are all numbered so they are easy to reference and study. The numbering and chapters are just study tool, and were not originally written in by the authors like some legal document. When you get to Matthew, turn to the chapter numbered 6 and then scan down the verse numbers until you hit verse number 22. That is where we are going to begin our study this morning. This passage is right in the middle of Jesus Sermon on the Mount given to his disciples and others who were around listening. Given to describe the kind of behaviors, attitudes, values that reflected the kingdom of God. These are the values and actions of authentic followers of Christ. So lets read verses 22-24 (READ)

Setting up the context for these verse Jesus is speaking about treasure. He has challenged us to look around our life to see what it is we really treasure what kind of treasure we are storing up. Are we investing our lives in things that will outlast us? Things that will last for a minimum of 50 million years? Are we investing our lives in heavens

treasure or earth treasure? For whatever has capture our heart will be revealed by our treasure. For we always have time and money for whatever we truly treasure. Verse 21 is the lead in to 22 that says "for where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

Verse 22 The lamp of the body is the eye. If the eye is clear, then the whole body will be full of light. Jesus uses the lamp or lens of the eye as a word picture describing our spiritual perception, or spiritual responsiveness, receptivity. Our ability to receive, understand, obey spiritual truth depends on how clear the window of intake is. Take a lens or window; if it is all dirty, foggy cloudy or maybe has heavy curtains drawn across it. Maybe that window has been spray-painted with black paint...its going to be very difficult to get any light inside the room.

For us whatever we look at with our eyes is what will come into our minds. It is the eye lens that allows clear information to come into our minds so the rest of the body can live well. How clear we keep our spiritual lens and the direction, focus of our attention determines our direction. Our ability to respond spiritually will affect the whole rest of the body. Here's point number one this morning. **What interests your eye will determine your direction.** Verse 22 says, "If the eye is clear your whole body will be full of light." That word clear carries the idea of single-minded, simple, direct focused. That which the eye is focused on will determine your direction. To the degree that your spiritual window is clear and clean, to the degree that your spiritual eyes are focused on God's values will determine the amount of light, God's light that is let in your life and the direction you are heading.

Verse 23 is the bad news side. If your eye is bad, literally evil, ponoros. If your eye is focused on the wrong things, self-centered me stuff. If that is what your eye is attracted to, then your spiritual windows are going to get pretty dirty and the light of life is not going to get in and fill your life with joy. While the bad eye is not able to see the needs of

others and move to meet them, the good eye sees others from an eternal perspective, from heavens values. If our perspective is eternal then we are going to walk in the light as He, God is in the light. We are going to be more likely not to stumble because we are going to see things as they really are. If our spiritual eyes are dirty and cloudy. If our eyes are focused on ourselves, evil, the wrong things...then that is the way we are going to be directed and it is quite likely we will be tripping over every obstacle and temptation. You know that when your spiritual eyes are dirty and cloudy you are seeing things and responding to things in the Spirit and it can get pretty dark. How great is that darkness. Not a very fun place to be, stumbling around in darkness. The amount of light that is let in will be determined by the condition of the window? Is your window clean? Unclouded? Are the shades draw back, humble, teachable and open? Have you dealt in confession with that known sin in your life? Do you really want to see more light?

The Pharisees thought that the more blessed they were with material things, the more God loved them, so they were intent on building up their treasure on earth. But the treasure built up here is subject to decay and loss. The problem was their spiritual eyes were diseased with a greed and covetousness with money. So they continued to wander in spiritual darkness as slaves to greed. We tend to divide up the physical and material side of life and separate it from the spiritual part of life. But Jesus never split it up. Jesus never made such a distinction. True righteousness will lead to a proper attitude toward our stuff, our treasure.

So what is attracting your eye? What is capturing your focus and attention? What are you being drawn to? Do you find yourself increasingly drawn to the things of God or the enticements of evil? What interests your eye will determine your direction. If your eye, or spiritual responsiveness is properly focused on the light, then the rest of the body

can function well. If the eye is out of focus, if it is constantly seeing double. If it's trying to focus on two things at the same time its pretty difficult to make any progress while trying to look in two directions at one time. Where will you fix your eyes? Are we fixing our eyes on Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith, on Jesus who is the joy set before us? If we have physical eyesight we are going to be able to see where we are going. If we have spiritual vision then our life is going to be filled with purpose, significance and direction. For whatever your eyes are attracted to will decide your direction.

Isn't it true that wherever you have made an investment it follows that there is your greater interest? No investment, no energy, no sacrifice on your part then there is little interest or time or focus. Those who invest in the stock market know all about this. We daily check the newspaper for those stocks where we have invested money in. We want to see how they are doing. We don't look at every stock in on the exchange, but the ones where we have invested in...those are the ones we are looking at and focused on. That's where their concern lies. With every investment there is corresponding interest. Focused vision of the spiritual eye is enhanced when our investment is directed toward kingdom values, toward storing up our treasure in heaven, investing in things, in people, investments that last a minimum of 50 million years. Are you focused on investing in that which will far outlast us?

In between community college and the university, I did the tour Europe thing. We had planned when traveling through Italy to go down and see Rome. While we were seeing the various sights of Rome we met a History teacher from the states who was appalled that we dare think we could see all of Rome in just one day. I hadn't studied Roman history yet and so I didn't really know what was worth seeing. This teacher spent a few hours with us and gave us a cliff-notes history lesson about what we were looking at and whetted my appetite. Back at Washington State I

signed up for a year of Roman history. At the end of that class I was eager to go back to Rome because I knew what I was looking for and understood the significance of what I was looking at. Knowing about something, understanding something makes a huge difference in your interest level. The more you have invested in studying Rome, the more interesting place Rome is to visit. Studying art history makes a trip to an art museum far more enjoyable. An investment in heaven's treasure is going to make the trip and stay much more interesting. In fact, my guess is just like there are those here who would say a trip to the art museum is boring...because they know very little and appreciate very little about art, those who know very little about God and appreciate very little about God and have made very little investment in kingdom value treasure. They would probably agree with Cindy Lauper who was quoted in Rolling Stones magazine, "Why would I want to go to heaven...what a boring place. I want to go to hell and party for eternity, all my friends are going to be there anyway." Pretty sad. But again, with every investment there is a corresponding interest and whatever interests your eye will determine your direction...and ultimately your destiny.

Lets look at verse 24. "No one can serve two masters; either he will hate one and love the other or hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon, money, stuff, property, earth treasure. You can't serve both at the same time. Jesus is telling us that discipleship demands a choice. Ya gotta serve somebody. **For whatever bends your will, merits your sacrifice.** Whomever you choose to serve will drive your sacrifice. Discipleship demands a choice.

We tend to look at verse 24 and see no real reason why we couldn't have at least two different bosses. Many of us are used to working several jobs and moonlighting on the side. Don't miss the fact Jesus spoke this to a 1st century audience and used the word, Doulos, slave. The picture here is of a slave and a slave owner. Jesus was not condoning human

slavery; he was simply illustrating his point. A slave is not part time. They are a slave 24-7, every day of the week, 24 hours a day. One cannot have two masters and keep both of them satisfied. There will come a time when the interests of the two masters will come in conflict. One will ask for your allegiance and the other will too at the same time. One will want you to do one thing and the other will demand that same resource is used for another purpose. Anyone who has had the unfortunate experience of trying to please two different supervisors, or an immediate supervisor and then the boss above her knows what I'm saying. If you have two masters there will come a time when their desires for your time and resources and ability will come crashing together in conflict. No one can serve two masters. You must choose.

I read in last weeks sports section of the Columbian about a senior from Hudson Bay High School, Amanda Shannahan. Last year she qualified for the state championships in two sports; tennis and golf. But this year they have changed and scheduled both seasons to run at the same time of year...so she had to make a choice. She can't play both sports at the same time. When she choose to pursue golf over tennis she knew her tennis coach wouldn't be real happy with her. But she said it wasn't that she hated tennis or her coach, it was just she loved golf more then tennis.

That is the essence of the word hate in verse 24. We tend to think of hate as a loathsome, angry extreme dislike. But if you do a word study through the Bible on hate, it often means a priority of devotion. In the Old Testament love story, Rachael felt loved by Jacob but Leah felt hated. Jacob by no means hated Leah in the way we think of hatred, but his love for Rachael was so strong in comparison for his love for Leah that it probably felt like hatred to Leah. Love and hate is simply a priority of devotion. When Jesus calls us to discipleship He calls us to a love for His that is supreme and incomparable over all the other loves in our life.

And that includes our love for stuff, mammon, money. No one can serve two masters for there will come a time when they make opposing demands, there will come a time when they are both scheduled on the same season. Be assured there will probably be a time when your boss will want you work on Sunday morning. There will be a time when sport practice, drama practice, homework comes in conflict with youth group. There will be a time when your desire for sleep will come in conflict with the call to get up and read your Bible in devotions in the morning. There will be a time when feel like God is telling you to give that extra money in your bank account to help someone in need, and you want to keep it for one of your own projects or desires.

Jesus cuts right to our hearts desires when He says you can't serve God and money, because the two will at sometime conflict with each other. One will have your highest love and honor. Do you want a little test at whether God is God or money is God? Ask yourself; was I just a little bit offended that this pastor brought up the subject of my money? Do I inwardly cringe if money stewardship is talked about even occasionally in church? Do you serve God and use money or do you serve money and use God? Convicting question.

Some people have decided that they can try and serve both God and mammon. They try to serve God on Sundays and Mammon the rest of the week not caring how they gain their money. If you want to know if you've been mastered by money instead of mastered by God, ask yourself. 1) How are we getting the money we have? Did I have to sacrifice something eternal to get it? Did I try to crush my competitors, make them look bad so that I could get the sale?

2) What do I do with the money I earn? To put it bluntly, is the cause of Christ in the world better off because of the money that God has entrusted to our care? Or does God only get the spare change that happens to be in our pocket leftover after a weekend of spending? Ask

yourself when we suffer financial downturns, is it God's work that is the first to get axed? When I go on vacation does that give me a break on giving to God? Do I try to fit God into my priorities when God is convenient? Folks this is blunt because it hits us where we live. Do we serve God and use money or do we serve money and use God?

Choose this day Whom you will serve...ya gotta serve someone, either God or money. As a Christian we will be the shame and contempt of the world unless we live focused, single-minded on one purpose for our Master. If the people of our church would live in single-minded, clear-eyed focus for God as a right living people it would shake this little valley and they would sit up and take notice. We must as a people get our love for Jesus solely on our minds and live for Him. We may be abused by the world for our priority choices, but we will be respected. Divided allegiance is worthless and weak. Do not dare hold out a white flag of truce to the world and its love of stuff. For the Christian must follow another flag as we fix our eyes on Jesus the one who begins and will complete our faith who for the joy set before us endured the cross, despised the shame.

In the game of monopoly, players buy land and collect money. When one player has enough money and a monopoly of property, she can buy houses and hotels and collect rent and eventually force the other players into bankruptcy, thus ending the game. The Parker Brothers Monopoly makers take for granted the one final instruction we must remind our boys when they play. When the game is over, put all the pieces back in the box. People who live for the present and whose master is money and earth treasures are spending their strength and resource on that which cannot last. They are like children who think monopoly money is real and the game of monopoly were reality. In the end however, we are all put in the box and we are gone. What matters is what remains when the game on earth is over. If you know what we know you can afford to be generous on this earth. What are you investing in that lasts?

