

Epiphany 8A, 2011

Text: Matthew 6:24-34

Title: Who do you work for?

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Who do you work for? Who's your boss? Who's in charge?

Jesus gives two options: There's God and there's money. One or the other. You can't serve both.

So who do you serve? Who do you work for? God or money?

These two bosses are very different. They are complete opposites.

On the one hand, there's money. Working for money seems to be the better option. Money promises you everything you could ever want.

If you have money, you can be comfortable. You can enjoy life. You can travel and see the world. You can spend time with your kids and grandkids. You can eat out. You can get a big screen TV and the best cable package. You can buy a nice car. You can attract a beautiful wife. You can give your family whatever you want. You can pay people to do things for you, to serve you, to clean up after you, to wait on you hand and foot. All these things can be yours.

Money makes many promises. Some of the time money even delivers on those promises. You may experience happiness and comfort as a result of making money.

But there are times that money falls short. There are times when money fails to keep its promises.

Money cannot buy you true love. You may find friends or lovers because you have money, but they will love your money, and not you. You may be able to give your family more with money, but they really need time and love and attention and not more things.

Money cannot buy you comfort or contentment. There will always be someone else with more money. There will always be just one more thing that you've got to have. Money is a very demanding boss. The more you have the more you want.

And ultimately, your money will outlive you. No matter how much or how little you have, you can't take it with you. Even the best doctors and hospitals money can buy won't be able to keep you from death forever.

If you serve money, your life will be dominated by worry. Worry is a form of fear.

We are afraid of what our life will be like without money. We are afraid that if we are poor we will suffer. We are afraid that if we are poor, our friends will abandon us and people will look

down on us. We are afraid that if we are poor we won't be able have a nice place to live. We are afraid that if we are poor, we won't be able to get good medical care.

And because we are afraid of all these things that could possibly happen to us if we ran out of money, we worry.

Worry and fear is unhelpful and unproductive. It won't make you live longer. It won't make your problems go away.

Worry and fear are bad for you, both physically and spiritually. And they never accomplish anything. Which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?

Worry and fear. That's what your life looks like if you serve money.

Serving God is completely different.

Compared to serving money, serving God looks unappealing. No fun. We've been hearing about it the past three weeks.

Serving God means that you will be poor in spirit, you will mourn, you will be meek, you will hunger and thirst, you will be merciful, pure in heart, a peacemaker, and persecuted.

Serving God means being salt and light.

Serving God means no anger or harsh words, no divorce, no lust, and no oaths.

Serving God means giving everything away, and praying for those who take it from you.

Serving God means being perfect- and trusting God to make you perfect.

Serving God means living a life of faith, not fear and worry. Fear and faith are opposites. Fear comes from a doubtful and uncertain future. If you don't know what lies ahead, you imagine the worst. You imagine all the bad things that could possibly happen, which is worry.

Faith comes from a sure and certain future. Because you know the future, you can live in hope and confidence, rather than fear and worry.

You know what the future holds. You may not know every detail, but there are certain things that you know for sure.

You know that the kingdom of God is yours. You know that you belong to God and He will take care of you. In the reading from Isaiah you heard, "I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." Every week this Epiphany we have sung, "For great is His steadfast love towards us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever." Jesus says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be yours as well."

When God is your boss, when you serve Him, He takes care of you. He does all the work. God is the best boss ever.

Think of all the people that you've worked for, all the people that you've served over the years. Maybe you've had kind bosses who have treated you well and respected you and paid you what you deserved. Maybe you've had poor bosses who have mistreated you, not trusted you, cheated you or bullied you.

God doesn't rule by force or compulsion. God doesn't use threats. God uses love. God just loves you. He gives you what you need and you receive it gladly. You don't work for God's love. You don't earn it. You just receive it.

God gives you His entire kingdom. Everything that's God is yours. He gave you His own Son, what more could He give you?

That's all that faith is- receiving the good things from God. Looking to Him to take care of you. Seeking His kingdom and His righteousness.

Faith does not come naturally. You can't just work it up in yourself. If you try to believe on your own, you will only fall prey to fear and worry.

Do I believe strongly enough? Do I really trust in God? If I really had faith, why do I fall short so many times? Why do I keep worrying?

Faith does not come naturally. Faith is a gift. Faith is looking to God for all things, even faith itself. Faith is what happens when you're at the end of your rope, you realize that you just can't make it on your own, and that you need help.

Faith is that cry to God, "Help me. Save me."

And God does. He sends you His Son. He sends you His Holy Spirit. He takes care of the birds and the flowers, and he won't forget about you. He has your name engraved on the palm of His hand.

Serving God, then, comes naturally. He loves you, he cares for you, why wouldn't you want to love and serve Him?

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life^[e]?

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.