

SERMON FOR SEPTEMBER 18, 2022

TEXT: LUKE 16: 13

THEME: WHOM WILL YOU SERVE?

No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

In the name of Jesus:

The Davidson family, like many families who have their roots in Great Britain, has a motto on their family crest. The family crest can also be called the coat of arms, and it consists of the head of a male deer against the backdrop of the family Scottish tartan, or family colors. Underneath this figure of the deer and tartan is a phrase: "Wisely if sincerely."

There are, of course, other families who have mottos as well. Just above the front doors of High Clear Castle in southern England is a saying etched in stone. The same saying appears over every first floor window as well as in other places in the castle. It is the family motto of the Earls of Carnarvon, who resided at the castle for centuries. The saying is written in old French, but when translated means: Only one will I serve. The family could not live a day in that castle without being reminded of it. Who exactly is the one they serve? Well, they would serve the present king or queen of England! But that would change, periodically, depending upon who the king or queen was. If the

present monarch would die, then the allegiance of the family would switch to the new monarch, the new king or queen.

Only one will I serve could serve as the motto for the Christian today as well. We don't have to concern ourselves with who the king or queen is, and we are tempted to serve a monarch above God. But there are other things, other lords that compete for our interest and for our loyalty. So it is fitting to remember and consider Jesus' words when He says that you can't serve two masters.

The one master that the Lord speaks of that competes for our loyalty and interest is the lord or god called money. The Old Testament lesson for today has some interesting and noteworthy things to say about money, as it was the lord which the people of God sought to serve back in the days of Amos.

Amos was a prophet from the Southern Kingdom, and the Lord sent him north to speak to the nation of Israel. The Israelites had forsaken their love for the One True God and devoted themselves to the god called money and materialism. The leaders of the nation were caught up with those things which demand our attention today: materialism and consumerism. Because the people were so interested in getting all they could get for themselves, they neglected to show love and care for their neighbor. The poor, the needy, and the outcasts suffered as people lived for themselves and lived as if they alone

mattered most and others mattered the least. Back in Amos' day, leaders and merchants sought to take advantage of others, sellers of goods looked to make a quick buck at the expense of those who were less fortunate. People were overcharged at the market, they didn't get what they paid for, while others cheated to get ahead. Does this sound at all familiar? The same problems we have today were the issues that Amos preached against in his day. Then, as today, the Lord God is not pleased when you look out for yourself to take advantage of others.

The crying shame of it all is that the Lord is the One who delivered His people from this very thing that they were now doing to their kin. The people of God were once oppressed in Egypt, set free to serve the Lord in love. But instead of living lives in thanks to God, they now became oppressors of their own countrymen. They were set free for the purpose of serving others, but instead they got it all backwards, they were now living to have others serve their own needs. And God, just as He did back in the days of Amos, condemned the people for loving their lifestyle more than Him, so too today the Lord takes aim at us and tells us that we can't serve two masters. Either you will love money and materialism more than God, or you will love the Lord your God first and foremost, and this then will show in how you treat others.

God calls us to repent. To turn to Him, for He is a loving and gracious God, slow to anger and abundant in love, mercy, and forgiveness. God has already shown that He is the One who remembers the lowly, the poor, the needy, the outcast, God loves sinners to the point of sending His Son Jesus Christ to save those and free you from the lords of this life.

Jesus came for those who feel trampled and overwhelmed by the deceits and cares of the world. He came, not for those who have, but rather He came for the havenots. Jesus reached out in love to those who were deaf and dumb, to those who were unloved and the unloveable. Jesus came to those who were in despair over their sinful state, so that by His death and resurrection sinners would be forgiven and set free to serve God by loving those around them, especially the less fortunate.

You probably have heard about the designation called flyover country. It is a term that is used today to describe the area that we live in here in the state of Ohio. The people who live in New York or Los Angeles fly over Ohio and other parts of the midwest. For some, this way of travel symbolizes how people live. There are large parts of the country that some people choose to ignore. They fly over them, considering the flyover states and people who live in them of no importance or consequence. They are something to be flown over rather than visited.

Jesus, though, did something different. He didn't ignore people, He took an interest in them. When the rulers of Rome were hobnobbing among the rich and important people of the day, Jesus chose to be born in Bethlehem, in a stable, surrounded by sheep and cows, placed in a horse feeder, a manger, filled with straw. He was raised by His parents, not in Rome, but in Nazareth, and Jesus chose this way of life because in the Kingdom of God there is no flyover country. Each and every person is valued and important in His sight.

God desires to save all people. That is why He sent Jesus. But the price of our salvation comes at a cost, the cost of Jesus, leaving heaven, to become flesh, and blood, and bone just like you and me. He is given the name Emaunuel, which means God is with us. Jesus, in His own words, came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. Jesus came to save sinners. He came to save you. He came to live for you, to die for you, and to rise again to the newness of life, all so that you could be His child and live for Him and with Him forever.

You are important to God. And so is everyone around you. Jesus came to be the Savior for the rich and poor, the high and mighty and the lowly. Jesus came in love to live for you, so that you in thanks to Him can live your life for others. In service to others. To the glory of God and in Jesus' name

Amen