

## You cannot serve both God and Money

Our wives are right about one thing. They instantly know when we husbands have put our jobs before them. Many a wife, longing to have first place in her husband's heart, senses with dismay and anger that her husband's primary loyalty is to his job. (Actually, if the truth were known, the husband's heart is not so much given to his job as it is to his ambition, to fear of losing his job, or both.) But our wives are wrong about what is wrong with their husbands' hearts being given to the job. The husband is not to replace one idol, ambition or fear, with another idol, the wife. God and God only is to have first place in our heart.

Jesus Christ is the smartest man who ever lived. He pointed out that the human being is designed so as to have only one supreme loyalty at a time. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (Mt 6:24) Jesus was not saying we SHOULD not serve God and money. No, He was making simple the profound truth that we CANNOT serve both God and money. Or God and wife. Or God and ambition. Or God and fear. Or God and lust. Or God and greed. It just is not possible. One thing, and only one thing, will call the shots in the human heart. We must decide what that will be.

Unfortunately for the human being, that decision was already made for us by Adam. Since Adam and Eve, each one of us has entered life with our inner choice already having been made. The first place in our heart, by nature, is our Self. We assume that we are our own "god," in that we reserve the right to do what we want. (We still want there to be a God who will always rescue us from stupidity or calamity and wink at our sins and bring us to heaven anyway. We just don't want Him telling us what to do, especially if it crosses our planned



*Scott  
Hilborn*  

---

*Guest  
Columnist*

pleasures.) Later we find out that our will has been captured, not by what is best for us, but by tyrants such as fear, lust, greed, chemical addiction, anxiety over reputation, etc. In this sense, the human Self is no longer free to even choose self-it has become a slave to sin.

The disciple of Jesus Christ has been born again and is no longer a slave to sin. At the inner-most core of our being lives a new impulse-that of freely choosing God. Our spirit has been made alive by the Holy Spirit. We now have the ability, like no one else on the planet, to freely choose God and exalt Him in our decisions. We no longer need to be run by the tyranny of haste, or comfort-seeking, or the approval of others. Frankly, we no longer need to sin. (That we still do is not because we must, but because of habit and deception. Transformation of our mind and body takes time. We are constantly forgiven, but over much time, inwardly transformed through a process of our use of spiritual disciplines and the action of the Holy Spirit renewing our character by perseverance in faith through our troubles and suffering.)

Remember that the Sermon on the Mount is directed to Jesus' disciples. He is reminding His disciples of the truth-that we cannot serve both God and money. As we continue following His lead, drawing our real life from the kingdom of God surrounding us in the heavens, our affection and loyalty will be increasingly drawn to God. Nothing

else, not money, not family, not even the most basic instinct to preserve one's physical life from death, will come close to the supreme loyalty of loving God.

It is common in our culture for people to be led to salvation in Christ with the unspoken (or spoken!) assumption that we can be a disciple of Jesus AND strive to be a success in the worldly way that we Americans view success. That is a lie. At some point our loyalty will be demanded of us. Every disciple of Jesus will sooner or later be forced to a point of decision. Will I remain loyal to Jesus or will I cave-in and compromise my loyalty to Jesus? We cannot serve two masters.

My life was changed as a young man by a simple sentence spoken by my father. At the time, I was a very ambitious sales representative for the Dow Chemical Company. My heart was set on moving up in the company, with the strong desire to one day become president of the Dow Chemical Company. Concurrently though, was a desire in me to become a Christian. I had read through Chuck Colson's book, "Born Again," and C.S. Lewis' book, "Mere Christianity," and knew that I really did want Jesus. But I also wanted to become president of Dow Chemical! So I asked my Dad, "Can't I become a Christian and also try to become president of Dow Chemical?" What my Dad then said changed the course of my life. He said, "Scott, God may want you to become president of the Dow Chemical Company. But that is for Him to decide. You need to follow Christ." So I did.

What enables the disciple to turn loose of all other competing claims for his loyalty? Is it strength of will, or great virtue, or nobility of soul? No. It is just simple faith. It is the God-given insight into reality. God is everything. Money and ambition are nothing. I was reminded this week of how much God loves me. I took some time in silence,

with no agenda other than to hear from God if He might choose to speak to me. And He did, in the quiet of my heart. The content of what He said to me is personal. But the result was a renewed certainty that I belong to God forever and that I am completely safe in Him.

New believers can easily become discouraged when they fall back into some kind of sin. They had SO hoped to live faithfully-and now look! Well, join the club. We must always remember that God has saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of His mercy. (Titus 3:5) Consider this. God loved you when He entered into your life, knowing full well your sinful condition. If He loved you then, when you were not in the least interested in being faithful, would He love you less now that you desire to be faithful? Certainly not. He is not surprised or taken aback by the fact that you and I are not yet like Jesus! Follower of Jesus, you and I are the objects of His loving choice. And God does not change His mind about us. His gifts and calling toward us are irrevocable. (Rom 11:29)

Each one of us will exist forever. But in what condition? Are we becoming the kind of person who can be happy in heaven? Those who give themselves to God by becoming disciples of Jesus Christ are indeed becoming the sorts of people who love divine Love. We are developing a taste for it. We look forward to living without anger, contempt, lust, retaliation, and greed. We yearn to be caught up in the full freedom of peaceful, energetic, self-sacrificing love that is at the heart of the universe. And praise God, we are confident that one day we will be. God has saved us. He has chosen us to belong to Him forever. And so we will.

*Scott Hilborn is the pastor of the  
Banks Presbyterian Church in Marvin.*