

Holy Family Radio

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Solemnity of Sts. Peter & Paul

Dear Fellow Catholic:

Why can't you serve both God and mammon? *Christianity Today* had an article a few years ago (2013) asserting that you can. Surely you can do well doing good, right? And aren't we called to be stewards of the wealth God gives us? Is there a problem with that?

St. Augustine wrote,
"...what is mammon? For it is not a Latin word. It is a Hebrew word, and cognate to the Punic [Carthaginian] language. For these languages are allied to one another by a kind of nearness of signification. What the Punic call mammon, is called in Latin, lucre. What the Hebrews call mammon, is called in Latin, riches. That we may express the whole then in Latin, our Lord Jesus Christ says this, 'Make to yourselves friends of the riches of iniquity.' Some, by a bad understanding of this, plunder the goods of others, and bestow some of that upon the poor, and so think that they do what is enjoined them."

Commentators seem to agree that "Mammon" cannot mean ill-gotten riches, for ill-gotten riches would be required in justice to be restored and could never remain a master to be served. If the word derives, as some scholars claim, from Old Testament Aramaic, it likely means "riches in which men trust." "Mammon" is not mere wealth or money, it is wealth made into an idol. Saint Augustine is pointing out the mistake of justifying evil by good works with the plunder.

On the other hand what does "riches in which men trust" really mean? Seriously, who doesn't have a savings account? Dave Ramsey requires it. Who doesn't have several insurance policies? Don't many church groups build up multi-million dollar foundations against the time of dearth so they can continue to do good works without being deprived themselves?

Jesus said,
"No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat: and the body more than the raiment?"

Does this mean that we talk like we trust God but live like we don't? In modern society risk is routinely covered by insurance and having a savings account against unexpected needs is just being prudent. You are serving both God and mammon in everything you do, right? Jesus continued,

"Be not solicitous therefore, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knows that

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you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore solicitous for tomorrow; for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Matthew 6:24-34

Is there a difference between be a good steward of the wealth that comes to you and being a person who trusts more in his wealth than he does in God? What constitutes justice in earning or acquiring wealth? Are there multiple levels of analysis here? When does a sharp business deal become unjust? How much wealth is too much to store up while your neighbor can't afford to send his kids to Catholic schools? Do you have to help your neighbor when the government takes your money to create helping programs? Shouldn't the neighbor have to stand in the government bread line to get his just deserts? In a storm, can I sell my extra generator to my neighbor for ~~two three~~ five times what I paid for it? Maybe I should stop asking questions.

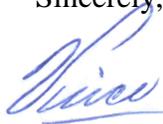
So there are two levels of analysis here. First, is the specific transaction just? Am I exploiting the vulnerability of my neighbor? While there can be uncertainty in this, absent government or monopoly manipulation, the market provides some protection from this. Second, am I using my justly acquired wealth in a proper way? Does my accumulation of earthly wealth keep me from storing up treasure in heaven? Do I have twenty more years to live, but enough non-working capital saved up for a century? Am I hoarding rather than stewarding?

These are not terribly profound questions, really. You can discern the answer if you are emotionally connected to other people and open to the question when you pray. This does not mean that you have to give money to every panhandler you come across, but it does mean having solicitude for the frugal relative or neighbor having trouble making ends meet. It might mean having Masses said for the souls in purgatory, helping a young father buy tools to provide for his family or taking your grandchildren, or that family at church, out to breakfast or dinner. In other words, money is a tool and not something to be worshipped. Use it to store up treasure in Heaven where there are no moths or rust. Be not afraid, but use your resources to do good in the world while you are in it. Be not afraid.

As to our translator, we are still trying to find a small plot, an acre or less, in the area of eastern Jefferson County between Seatonville and Wilsonville, along Old Heady Road, east of Routt Road. Any hilltop within a mile or so should work. Let us know if you know someone!

As you ponder your charitable giving and stewardship, keep Holy Family Radio in your thoughts and prayers. The spiritual works of mercy precede the corporal works. People must be inspired to do the good that Our Lord calls us to do. Join us in the effort to teach and inspire! Through radio, your prayers and financial support can reach many souls! May God reward you!

Sincerely,


for Holy Family Radio