

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

SERVING TWO MASTERS

"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." (Matt. vi. 24.)

We have one master—God. He does not wish us to be called His slaves, however, for we are not undergoing a servitude even bordering on slavery. We are His children, and God, while our Master, is also our Father. He treats us as a father treats his children, and He expects us to look upon Him and respect and serve Him as our Father. Being children of His, we have a right—granted by Himself—to a share in His kingdom, unless by our sinful conduct we render ourselves unworthy of it. We reasonably could not wish to have a better master—a more fatherly one—than is God. As a consequence, we should strive to serve Him as He wishes, and render ourselves His worthy children.

God, having supreme and full right over us, is naturally, as we would say, jealous of our service and recognition. He wishes us to give all to Him, either as the immediate or the ultimate end of whatever we do. There is not an action we perform, no matter how menial, if it be not sinful, that we ultimately can not offer to God. If we fail to do so, we either commit sin or deprive ourselves of many graces that otherwise would come to us.

While doing something for any one other than God, or for any end other than to offer God the service and recognition due to Him, we are erecting to ourselves false gods and serving masters of our own making. These gods being false, and these masters being unjust, naturally no true gain can come to us from serving them. They rather seize hold of us and make us their slaves, offering nothing in return for our services and recognition save some fleeting reward or even a recompense lasting a lifetime, but not extending into the world beyond the grave. No wonder, then, that God has told us we can not serve two masters, or serve any master other than Himself.

Among the many rulers that men have set up for themselves, mammon holds the first place. That mammon is a god for many, no one will doubt; that it is a master many serve, is beyond all question. The many harmful revolutions—whether social, diplomatic or economic—that have come about among men since the beginning of the human race, have had money as their origin in almost every case. It is money that has kept in existence the new conditions resulting from these disintegrations: it is money that may change them again. The great inequality in the world is due more to this mammon of iniquity than to anything else. It is not always upright conduct and sterling character that distinguish men of one class from those of another; it is not always special gifts from their Maker that set some men on a plane above others in this world; it is not always untiring labor and scrupulous honesty that make certain men hold a special place in their town or country. All of these distinctions, from a generally adopted worldly point of view, come from money. There are many of the rich who are dishonest and in practically no way loyal to the rest of humanity, but who hold a distinctive place among their fellow-men. Money is their master.

Some of the most ignorant men of the world hold sway over thousands of other men; their illogical opinions and wandering imaginations obtain publicity by pen and by word of mouth. Their voice is listened to by the ear that rejects the wisdom of the truly educated and the wisely gifted. But why is all this so? Because they have money. In these days a fortune will win an admirer quicker than will natural gifts or an exceedingly talented mind. Why? Because these people reflect the fascinating sparkle of their money, which by its brightness dazzles the eyes of men and women and wins them.

How many men there are also who seem to have escaped God's curse—that man shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow—as much as it can be escaped, and yet who are given every attention by their fellow-beings! We do not speak of those who, per se, have inherited fortunes, and who use their wealth in such a way as to benefit others—namely, by financing gigantic projects that afford honest employment for thousands of men, or by placing their money in just circulation. It is of the idle, selfish rich we speak, who as a rule lead luxurious lives and place themselves, because of the money, above their fellow-beings. It is surprising to note how many will truckle to them—all in the hope of getting a little of the lucre from their hands. They are money-made masters to thousands upon thousands of human slaves. Did they not have this mammon, they would be despised and looked down upon; but since they possess it, they are gods and goddesses.

Money itself, though dangerous for an individual, necessarily need not be the cause of this slavery. It can become a great blessing to an individual or a community, when

rightly used. However, even when money is not a man's master, it often cunningly leads him astray. This is done principally by the circumstances that wealth can bring about. How often, for instance, the poor suffer because they can not reach the level of the rich, in what concerns their common and public welfare! To give an example, are not many parents, honest and good, though poor, greatly embarrassed at sending their children to schools where the rich are better clothed? Are not the children themselves placed a little lower than their richer companions? Money has created this condition, as it has brought about many others of a similar nature.

Happy and fortunate the Christian who possesses riches and yet uses them rightly. Ordinarily they are great occasions of sin; but if rightly used, riches will become occasions of great blessings.

A METHODIST TRIBUTE

In a recent number of the Methodist Epworth Herald Mr. W. E. Hutchinson gives his impressions of a visit to one of the old California missions, whose memory has been recalled again these days. Guided by one of the padres, he went to the old historic shrine at Santa Barbara, of which he says:

"This mission was founded in 1786, and is the best preserved of all the old shrines. For more than a century its altar lights have never dimmed, and its stately old towers with deep-voiced bells have looked out upon the blue waters of the Pacific, and their brazen tongues have echoed across the valley and called the neophyte to prayers. A feeling of awe and veneration came over me as I passed from room to room, treading the worn tiled floor, deep-rutted by the sandaled feet of those ancient men of God that have long since gone to their reward."

"Room after room we entered filled with relics of bygone days, the air redolent with that musty odor that pervades old sanctuaries, where hand-lettered books of sheep-skin reposed side by side with costly vestments, and crude instruments fashioned by the Indians. At last we were ushered through a doorway into the cemetery where repose the dust of the faithful padres sleeping side by side with their Indian converts, where the mocking bird sings his vespers hymn above their graves in the moonlight."

Mammon was not, as he moved amid these surroundings by the sudden view of a life-size figure of Christ upon the Cross against a background of green vines. "I stood like one in a trance," and so, though not a Catholic, he tells us that he left, slowly, sorrowfully, "with greater love for the Son of Man than I had ever known."—The Monitor.

RELIGIOUS PICTURES

Pictures that hang motionless upon the walls of the homes of the country have exercised a most potent influence on the thought and action of our people. The movie is seen and forgotten, but the picture on the wall remains for years deepening its impression with the passing of time, arousing new thoughts and richer inspirations, and often acting as a perpetual monitor and guide. It may be the picture of a father or a mother, it may be a beautiful reproduction of some great artist, or better still, it may be a religious picture carrying its irresistible appeal to piety and goodness.

Many a zealous priest or holy nun can trace the germ of vocation to some pious picture that adorned their home in childhood. A saintly missionary once declared that a picture of the Last Judgment, which he gazed on from early childhood, decided his vocation. Many a boy or girl has derived from the religious pictures on the walls of their bedrooms the seeds of piety that blossomed later into ripe fruits of sanctity, and many a wanderer has been moved to retrace his steps to the fold by the recollection of a pious print or religious picture.

The Catholic home has always been distinguished from the non-Catholic home by the presence of religious pictures. In this matter the poor set the shining example. It is rare to visit the homes of Catholics in humble circumstances without seeing evidences of Catholicity in the pictures on the walls.

Their more fortunate brothers too often prefer reproductions of great secular artists to the saintly

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madonnas and Holy Families, and Sacred Hearts. The poor may be destitute of artistic susceptibilities, but they have something better, the innocence of heart and childlike faith that prompt them to surround every sleeping and waking moment with holy pictures of God and His angels and saints.

In these days when good reproductions of religious masterpieces

can be obtained at moderate prices, there is no excuse for any Catholic home being without them. The good influence of the religious picture on the wall will counteract to some extent the evil influence of the bad moving picture on the screen, and will plant seeds of faith and piety in children that will bring forth abundant fruit in later years.—The Pilot.

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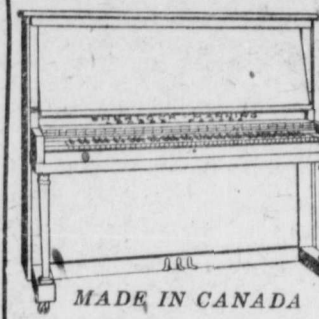
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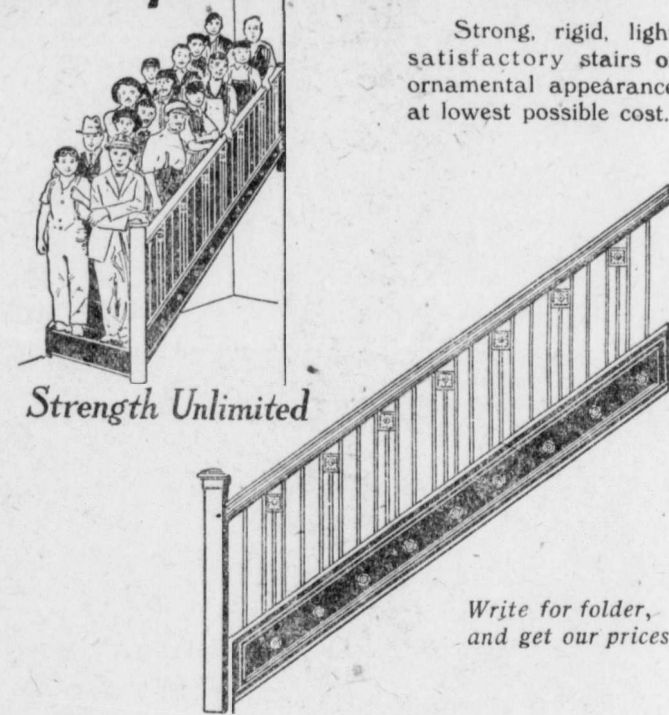
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