

declares: *If I have rejoiced over my great riches, and because my hand had gotten much (Job. xxxi. 25)?* And so he did not grieve when he lost them. But the rich now are not like this, but rather in a state worse



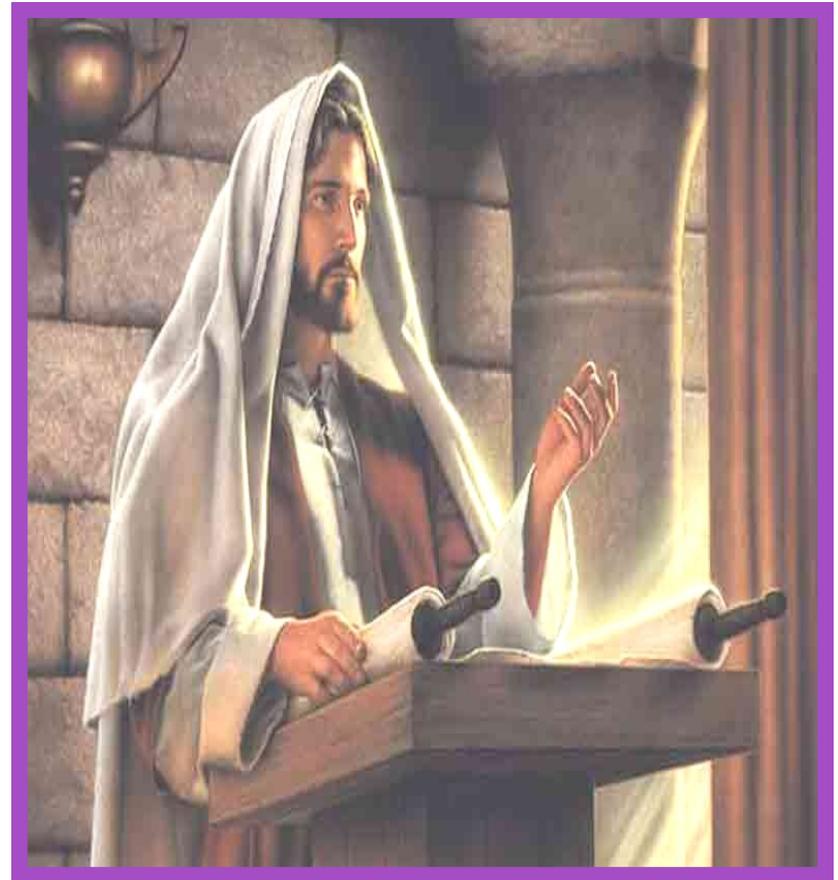
than any slave, and as though paying tribute to some tyrant. For the minds of such men become a sort of stronghold, held by money; and from each day money sends out its commands, commands that are fulfilled by the violation of justice, and decency; and there is no one who does not obey. There is no need here to philosophize. For God once and for all has declared that it is not possible for the service of mammon to accord with the

service of God. Therefore do not say it is possible. For when the one master commands you to plunder, the Other to give away what is yours; the One commands you to be chaste, the other to commit fornication; the one invites you to drunkenness and gluttony, the Other to restrain our appetites; again, when the One counsels you to think little of present things, the other to hold fast to them; the one tells you to adore rich marbles and gilded walls and paneled ceilings, the Other not to esteem them, but to honor virtue only; how can there be concord between them?



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**SERMON ON**  
**NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS**  
**FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH**  
**# 109 - 1**



**JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!**

**14<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

## Based on the Divine Office-Douay-Rheims Version

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Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew 6: 24-33

by: Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop and Doctor

*To be the slave of money is the greatest evil; to despise it the greatest good. Christ provides what is necessary for us; taking from us what is contrary to our need.*

See how the Lord detaches us gradually from the love of earthly things, and instructs us in various ways concerning contempt of riches, to drive out from us the tyranny of the love of money. He was not content with the things He had spoken earlier (in the Sermon on the Mount), many and great though they were; but goes on to add others yet more terrible. For what can be more fearful than what He now teaches us: that through the love of money we are in danger of being banished from the service of Christ? And what more desirable than that through contempt of it, we shall come to receive His love and will? I now say again to you, what I am always saying: that Christ urges His hearers to obedience to His words, both by means of what is profitable to them, and by what is painful; like a good physician, pointing out the disease that comes through neglect, and the good health that will come through obedience to His directions.

See here then how He again points out what gain there is for us in this life; how He prepares for us things that are useful, and takes from us what is a danger to us. It is not for this only that wealth is harmful to you, He says: because it arms robbers against you, or because it can wholly darken your mind; but also because it drives you from the service of God, and makes you slaves of soulless riches; harming you as much by making you slaves of what you should rule, as by driving you from the service of God. Whom before all others you must serve... He shows us that the harm is twofold; namely, laying up treasure where rust consumes it, and not laying it up where no thief can break in; so here also He shows us that our loss is twofold: To be turned away from serving God, and to be made slaves of mammon (money).

He does not state this at once, but first prepares the way for it by a general reasoning, saying: *No man can serve two masters*; that is, two masters who command us to do contrary things. For unless this were so, there would not be two masters. For the *multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul* (Acts iv. 32): for though divided into many bodies, yet all being of one mind, the many made one. Then enlarging on this, He says: Not only will he not serve, he will also hate and turn from: *For either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one and despise the other.* And He seems to say the same thing twice. Yet not without a purpose, but to show how simple it is to change to what is better. So that you might not say, 'I am enslaved once and for all; I am dominated by riches'. He shows that you have the power to change your way of life; and just as you went from this life to that, so you can go from that life to this.

After He had spoken in this general way, so as to lead His hearers to make a careful judgment on the words He had spoken to them, and not be led away from the true nature of things, and when he had secured their agreement with Him, then He lets us see what He has in mind. For He goes on to say: *You cannot serve God and mammon.* We shudder to think of what we have compelled Christ to say; to place God side by side with mammon. And if this is a horrifying thing, it is still more horrifying to do this by our own acts: to prefer the tyranny of gold, to the fear and love of God.

'But why not? Did not this happen among the ancients?' Far from it. 'How then,' you may say, 'was Abraham, was Job, so honored?' I am not speaking of riches; I am speaking of those who are the slaves of riches. Job was indeed rich. But he was no slave of mammon. He possessed riches and ruled them, as a master, not as a slave. He held all he had as though he were the steward of another man's riches. And not only did he not rob others of what belonged to them, he gave what was his to those in need. And what was greater, he took no delight in present things, as he himself