**To Whom Do We Serve?**

**By Pedro Méndez**

*To whom do we serve?* This might be the question that the Prophet Amos and the author of the gospel of Luke are asking to their audiences and to us today. *To whom do we serve? Do we serve mammon or do we serve God?* The answer to this question seems simple; but it gets complicated if we reflect in the fact that we *serve when we are servants of a master.* A master is the one who influences our lives by leading us to make our decisions and to choose our destiny. *So, who is our master: God or mammon?*

It seems to me that Amos in the Old Testament and Luke in early Christianity display that a part of their audiences—God’s people—had made mammon the master of their lives by pursuing and achieving wealth in usurious ways. Usury is the excessive profit that a person gets in his/her business relationship. In this regard, Amos’ scenario is disgusting and even unhuman: “…you who trample upon the needy and *destroy* the poor of the land!” (Am 8:4). In the gospel of Luke, the “dishonest steward” also makes a profit for his master in very usurious ways. With his eminent dismissal (because he squandered his master’s property) and in order to ensure his future, the steward “forgives” his master’s debtors the usury profit of oil and wheat that belongs to his master (Biblical scholars affirm that there is no evidence the steward forgave his commission to his master’s debtors). There is no doubt that there is usury in the way this steward deals with his master’s property. Did the master know about the steward’s usurious way of doing business? We do not know that. Thus, a part of God’s people in both readings had made mammon the master of their lives.

The reading of the prophet Amos for today ends in a hopeless sentence: “Never will I (God) forget a thing (usury) they have done!” (Am 8:7b). However, Jesus, *the* face of God’s mercy, ends today’s gospel with a more hopeful affirmation: “You (disciples) cannot *serve* both God and mammon” (Lk 16:13). Jesus’ statement is an invitation that opens the possibility for his disciples’ conversion. Thus, *to whom do we serve: God or mammon?*

This is still an important question for us, followers of Jesus Christ, in today’s world. If we look attentively at the business world today, we might see that, sometimes, there is an excessive profit (usury) in some products. This usury, as in biblical times, dehumanizes us by making us “objects” or “means” of other’s unmeasurable wealth. Do not get me wrong; this is not something against free market. In the current business world and economic system, a profit should be made; but not an excessive usury profit in which we become *means* of getting wealth, instead of *human beings* whose needs are met. *Where does a usury heart come from? It comes from a person/society/nation whose heart has seen in wealth the greater treasure one can ever have at the point that dehumanizes the other*.

 *But, we, followers of Jesus Christ, know that there is something greater than wealth: God Himself*. We, followers of Jesus Christ have experienced the redeeming power of the Lamb of God and have come to know that nothing in the world can be compared with God’s free gift of salvation! We know who the Owner of everything is: *God*; who we are: *stewards*; and who the other is: a *human person* created in the image and likeness of God. Indeed, we know that our possessions are to be shared with others, especially the most needed. We, followers of Jesus Christ, have learned that we are called to help others to achieve the best of their humanity; instead of making them means of our usury hearts.

And yet, we are called, today, to renew our loyal commitment to God in Jesus Christ. God is inviting us today to allow our hearts, which might have usury, to be transformed in the humble and generous heart of Jesus Christ—“the mediator between God and man” (1 Tim 2:5)—who gave himself on the Cross for our salvation. God is also inviting us to let Jesus to be not only the Master of our lives; but, most importantly, our Lord so that He can lead us to what is true, good, and beautiful, including our mammon. *To whom do we serve*: God *or* mammon? I hope we all decide to serve God.