

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's sermon

11/15/09 **"One Cannot Serve Two Masters" Matt. 6: 19-21, 24**

Jesus said, "You cannot serve two masters."

Who are the two masters? They are God and wealth.

God is the Holy One who does not allow us to box him into our own limited estimation of what God ought to be like.

Wealth symbolizes this world where social status, the power to lord over others, and how much money one makes define the worth of human life.

Jesus commanded his people to choose God over this world in terms of ultimate loyalty.

Jesus emphasized the same point in another interesting aphorism. "Store up treasures in heaven, not on earth."

Storing up treasures in heaven means to be faithful to the only and true God. It is the only way to make our human life truly human.

Storing up treasures on earth means pursuit of egocentric ways. It inevitably leads us to a life that is unfulfilled and devoid of meaning. It corrodes our conscience and our human integrity.

So Jesus said that we are to choose God over the world. Now what is the nature of this God whom Jesus commands us to choose?

For one thing, Jesus' idea of God was radically different from the one held by the people of his time.

For the Jews in Jesus' time, God was a God who would help restore the glory and splendor of king David. God would give the nation Israel the power to lord over neighboring nations.

For Jesus, on the other hand, God was a God of all nations and all people. In him there was neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free. God destroyed the dividing walls of hostility that separate people from people and nations from nations.

Jesus' God was a universal God whose love was absolute and unbounded. He called this God "our Father."

Let me give you an illustration from a recent human event to help us understand what Jesus meant by God the Father.

Many of you may have watched the funeral service of Senator Edward Kennedy on TV this past summer. For me, the most powerful testimony came from his oldest son, Teddy.

Teddy became a cancer patient at the age of twelve. Fortunately, he survived, but his right leg had to be amputated at the knee.

Senator Kennedy, his father, helped Teddy every morning to practice walking with the prosthesis.

One winter morning stands out quite vividly in the son's memory. It had snowed the night before. The snow made it impossible for Teddy to balance himself. He kept falling. Lying in the snow, Teddy cried out, "I can't do it, Daddy. I can't do it."

At that point, Senator Kennedy sat down with his son in the snow, held him tightly and said, "Yes, you can. Yes, you can. I will help you until you can."

This episode helps us understand God the Father whom Jesus proclaimed.

No matter what horrors we face or hells we descend to, God comes with us. God bears our pain and experiences our sorrow with us as his own. "Yes, you can. Yes, you can. I will help you until you can."

Can we think of grace more precious than this?

