

EPHESIANS

LIVING (THE) GOSPEL

Sermon 11 - Ephesians 6:5-9 "Slaves-masters"

1. Introduction

- a. What are some of the unique challenges of the work place in the 21st century?
- b. Why do many people think that taking sickies or slacking off or some other way of ripping off their boss at work is quite acceptable?
- c. Is it valid to apply the instructions to slaves and masters, to employees and employers and the modern day work place?
- d. OPTIONAL EXTRA - why doesn't Paul critique slavery? See last week's reading notes Day 4 for some assistance.

2. Slaves/workers

- a. Why was it surprising that slaves are even addressed in this passage?
- b. *Obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.* How can we adopt that mindset?
- c. How can we avoid 'eyeservice'?
- d. Why were Christian slaves considered more valuable than those who weren't?
- e. '*Earthly*' masters - indicates respect but an understanding that there is another Master who is in charge of everything. How will this change the way we see our bosses?
- f. What if our bosses want us to do something immoral/illegal?

3. Masters/bosses

- a. Bosses are to treat their workers knowing that they too have a master in heaven and that there is no favouritism with Him just because they have been bosses! How should this change the way Christian employers treat their workers?
- b. Discuss the positive good a Christian boss can bring to his work situation.

4. Conclusion

- a. There's no sacred/secular divide. Discuss.
- b. True greatness is not found in being able to boss people around, but in the way of sacrificial service. Why is this a hard concept for people to grasp?

Jesus on the cross is our pattern for sacrificial service. Pray that servanthood may mark all our relationships as we follow the way of Jesus. Pray that workers and bosses may wrestle with what it means to put this passage into practice.

Have you bought tickets to either the Maroochydore or Noosa screening of "For the Love of God". Follow the links here: <http://anglicanchurchnoosa.org/2018/06/10/for-the-love-of-god/>

Date: 17 June 2018
Services: 730, 930 Peregrin, Tewantin (via video)
Series: Ephesians: Living (the) Gospel
Passage: Ephesians 6:5-9
Title: Slaves-masters

INTRODUCTION

- I read an article recently all about cyber-bludging... where researchers found that workers were spending up to a **quarter** of their time at their desk surfing the internet and using social media!
- We also read of sick days being taken at a higher rate
- People taking longer at breaks than is indicated
- And people stealing things like stationery from their work place...
- And we know that loyalty in the work place is a thing of the past – from both the point of view of employers and employees...
- There's a lack of trust, of transparency...
- So what we're looking at this morning is very topical... very real... and addresses the human condition and work place reality.
- Can we so easily make the jump from slaves and masters to the work place?
- ...we I think we can – there are certainly some differences in both circumstances... but there are also principles which are the same...
- And if you're here this morning as an employee or employer (or both) in any sense this morning, my prayer is that there'll be plenty to either affirm the way you're living now – or challenge it!!
- ...and if you're retired and work is a distant memory... nevertheless, I'm confident that there'll be things here for you to reflect on – even if it's the way you pray for those still in the work place, or the way you direct and guide your children or grandchildren...
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- So look with me at v5 – *Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.*
- Now it's amazing here that slaves are even **addressed** by Paul. In similar 1st century lists – slaves were **never** addressed. They were nobodies...
- And then later in the passage, masters are told how to treat their **slaves** who are told by **Aristotle** are merely **human tools** – they can be just **thrown out** and **killed**... there was no **crime** in killing a **slave**, no **crime** in **starving** a slave to **death**....they were just **tools** – you can throw out a **screw driver**, you can throw out a **slave**...
- indeed Christianity was **mocked** in the early days as being a religion for **slaves, women** and **children** – the **weakest** in the Roman empire – and yet here – God actually **speaks** to the slaves... and says I've got something to **say** to you – I'm **interested** in how you **live**... //
- **Why** does Paul speak to **slaves**? //
- Because **in Christ** it doesn't matter if you are a **slave** or **free**.... You a **child** of the **living God** – **both** saved by **Christ's mercy**... it must have been **hard** for the slaves to **continue** to live as **slaves**...
-I want to point out one thing about the original language – the word translated 'Lord' in v7, is **exactly** the same **word** translated '**masters**' in v5
- So there's a little play on words here...

- ... v5 – servants, be obedient to your earthly masters.... V7 serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the **Master!**
- **v9 Masters** treat your slaves in the same way... since you know that he who is both **their** Master and yours is in heaven....
- So you serve your small ‘m’ master as if you were serving your big ‘M’ Master!
- And the command very simply, is to **obey**.
- They may have said – **now** we are children of the **living God** – surely we don’t **have** to obey – and God says **no no no, continue** to live as you are in the **culture** that you are and obey **them** as you would obey **Christ**. //
- This is very helpful if you are an **employee** – it’s not quite the **same** as being a **slave** – but you **are** under **authority**, and you’re **working**... //
- Now the **beauty** of being an **employee** is that you can walk **out** whenever you **choose**... that, a **slave** could **never do**...
- When Paul says to obey your earthly masters as you would obey Christ... he means in all areas of life... so if the Master asks to wear a uniform and conform to WHS standards and he or she tells you when to work and how to do it – obey them...
- But clearly we know from **elsewhere** in the Bible there are times when you must **disobey** your master, you must **disobey** your **husband** sometimes, you must disobey your **parents** sometimes, **IF**... they are calling upon you to **sin** – then your **higher allegiance** kicks in –
- Peter says in 1 Peter we are to obey all the authorities of the government.. and yet its Peter in the book of Acts when he’s commanded not to preach about Jesus ever again who says.. *we must obey God rather than man*.... So the Bible is aware that every now and again you need to **disobey** – but on the whole, the reality is “obey your masters”.
- (Video tape editor – copy some pornography – I said that I wouldn’t do it...) //
- Notice he says “Obey your **earthly** masters” – so on the one level they are spoken of with **respect** – but they are **relativised**... and **dethroned** – **earthly masters** - in contrast to the **Master Jesus Christ**. We are to be **respectful**, and yet the boss **ceases** to be the **Lord of all things**. All he is in control of in the end is the **company** and **money**... and sometimes he’s not in all **that** control of **those**...
- Then he says v6 – *obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your HEART*...
- Must be hard **working** as a **slave** – **how** do you work for someone who owns you and treats you like a **human tool**...?
- Well he says – not as **eye slaves**, that is what the word literally means... slaves are not to be **eye slaves**... only working when the boss is watching you... when the boss can see you and watch you **work**...
- ...now that is the way **many** of us work – we work **harder** when the boss can **see** us, when the boss is **away** the pace **slows down**... like the illustrations I opened with... it’s very easy to have on your computer your work windows open as well as your Internet and social media, and when the boss shows up – you simply **alt-tab** across to a **work window**...
- Like the story of the WWII digger who went back to Papua New Guinea and worked a mine. The natives who worked for him always worked hard when he was there, but when he went into town for supplies they’d all sit round doing nothing.
- Nothing he did changed this... so he took his one glass eye out from an eye injury and put it up on a pole and told them he was watching them... it worked for a fortnight or so, until one day he came back and all the workers had gone home and someone had put a tin can over the eye!
- **We’re eye slaves**...

- Now – this is **normal** – we work **hard** when the boss is **watching**...
- But not for the **Christian**... because **fundamentally** – and here is the **revolutionary** thing – we’re not working for the **boss**... **he’s** not the person whose **approval** we **seek**... so if they’ve got a **security** camera on a **thoughtful intelligent Christian**, it won’t change the way they **work** at **all**...
- Look at v6 again – *like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart...*
- So when you go to **work**... tomorrow... you can learn to do your work not for your **boss** who you can **see**... the **little petty master**, but you can do all **your** work for the **honour** and **joy** and **pleasure** of your **Master**...
- v7 *serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people.*
- we know from the ancient world that **Christian** slaves were often bought for more money than **non-Christian** slaves.. for over the years the Romans worked out that the **Christian** slaves would be a more **useful tool** than a **non-Christian** slave because he would work **harder** and more **honestly**...
- Your work may be **study** – that’s your **work**... so if you are a **Christian student** – you **study** and do your **work**... not just to please the **marker** or in order to get **through** – but to honour your **Master** – **you do it for him**...
- You may go to work and **flip burgers** – you may design **airplanes** – **whatever it is**... no matter how **drudgerious** it may seem, it can become a **work** of **devotion**... all can be **worship**...
- There is no **distinction** between **ministry** and **other work**... **all work** is work for the **Lord**... all **seek** to **honour him**...
- v8 – it’s **his reward** – **his blessing** we seek no matter **what** we’re doing.
- and normally speaking, our allegiance to **Christ** is our supreme concern, and that will cause us to be better **children**, better **wives**, better **husbands**, better **slaves**, better **masters**... or **employees**...

MASTERS

- And for the masters – v9 *treat your slaves in the same way* – i.e. – knowing that it is the Lord you are serving and that he is watching you – *do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with him.*
- Masters – employers – won’t get special **treatment** or a different **judgement** because of their **status here** on earth!
- history has shown that you can’t **trust** bosses – you can’t trust people in **power**... which is why hundreds of years of ago, **Christians** were **absolutely** at the **forefront** of **forming unions**
- One of the **many outcomes** of Christianity.
- Now – you may or may not like **unions** – but the reason they were formed was because at times masters will **kill** their **workers** to make a profit... we still see that in various industries...
- But a **Christian** master will see that his task is not just a get a **good day’s work** out of them... but to make sure he treats them **justly** – because **he** will **answer** to **HIS Master**... on the **day**.
- Do you have people serving under your leadership?
- If we did a leadership 360 on you, what would the results show?
- How are you treating those who work for you?
- Are you seen as just and fair and reasonable?
- Do your workers see in you the qualities at the end of ch 4 where we read *be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other....* would they see in you, someone who commends the way of the Lord Jesus to them?

- Do you consider that you too are working for the Master... and are accountable to him who sees all and knows all... whose eye is on you! ///

- Well we need to bring these things to an end.
- If you are an **employee**? **Thank** the Lord you are not a **slave**...! And then work as if **Jesus** were in **charge**... **wholeheartedly, sincerely**...
- And **employer**? Don't act like a **typical Master** - you also have a **Master in heaven** - and there'll be no **favouritism** shown to you just because you were **high** up your **corporate ladder**!

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- There is no **sacred** and **secular divide**.
 - There is **no** area in which you're dealing with **God** - and then over **here**, an area which is **God-free**! It's not as if here at church you're dealing with God - and over there - it's just secular. That idea is just **pagan**!
 - No - we worship God here in church on Sunday and then you go to work and you continue worshipping God by working **honestly**... working **hard** with all your **heart** and **mind** - as if **Jesus Christ himself** was running the **company** you work for or the **division** of the **government** that you work in.
 - So no sacred/secular division - v7 - Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people
 - Here's a reminder that according to Jesus whom we follow - true **greatness**, is **service** - and the mark of **greatness** is not being able to **boss** people around - according to Jesus... the mark of **greatness** is **washing feet** - doing the **lowly** work - doing the **humble** work.. doing often the **despised** work which gets no one's applause or approval other than the one who **matters**... the **Master** who will **judge**.
 - True greatness is **where**? Where Jesus looks at his weakest - when he's being **nailed** up... that's his **moment** of **glory**...
 - That's why the call to **children, wives** and **slaves** is no **surprise**... because we see in Jesus, that the mark of **greatness** is **sacrificial, submissive love**...
 - Jesus says in John 13 - if you **know** these things you are blessed if you **do** them... if you **do** them.
 - The blessing of God in your life this week won't have come from coming to church and having listened to a long sermon... but by **doing these things**. /
 - If you are a **wife**...living in humble, joyful, glad, synchronicity and teamwork and submission with your husband..
 - If you are a **husband** - loving and never ever being harsh,
 - If you are **child**, loving respectfully and obediently...
 - If you a **father** not driving your children nuts by being harsh and all those other things we mentioned..
 - If you a **slave, a worker, an employee** - working **honestly**... so you can bring joy to your **Master** in the way you **work**
 - And if you're a **master** - being **just** and **fair** in the way you work and treat those working for you. ///
 - In **all** these areas, the blessing is found in **doing** them. So pray the prayer with **Jesus** - "**your** will be done on **earth** as it is in **heaven**"... in the **home**, and at **work**!