

## Sermonnotes: Sunday, January 6, 2008

Notes to better help you understand Sunday's sermon text

Text: Luke 16:10-13

Title: Who is This Mammon?

*Mammon* is one of those words found in the New Testament that comes directly from the Aramaic, like *maranatha*, *abba* or *amen*. It means very simply, 'worldly goods'. Only when it becomes an idol in competition with the lordship of Jesus does it become a word denoting a dangerous thing.

Jesus uses three words in this particular passage that all come from the same Aramaic root word – the words faithful, entrust, true riches, and mammon. We miss this connection but those hearing Jesus speak in Aramaic would have gotten the connection right away.

The point is not that Jesus was clever with words, but that he saw deeply into the interconnectedness of wealth and faithfulness. Long before Jesus lived people understood that wealth is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. And so he here emphasizes that there can only be a single god in every person's life. But who that god might be is revealed in what we do.

Elsewhere Jesus says, 'where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' (Matthew 6:21) You will quite often hear people quote this passage in reverse because intuitively it seems right to say that where your 'heart' is, there you will invest your treasure. But Jesus forces us to confront the fact that he can never be 'Lord' in theory or intent, but only in what we actually do. Paul, on the crucial question of love does the same thing in 1 Corinthians 13 where he uses 15 verbs, not adjectives (though they are translated that way in most English Bibles), to tell us what love is. This in turn points out to us that faith itself is never simply about what we say we believe, but what our lives as a whole say we believe.

So it is with wealth. And Jesus tells us that when we are trustworthy – when we use the things of this world in just and righteous ways, we will be trustworthy in the more important things of the kingdom – little children, the gospel, the church, creation itself, all of which he used to describe what his kingdom is like.

Under Jesus' lordship, then, *mammon* is a tool in the building up of God's kingdom.

