

Melanie Rosa
Lakewood UMC

“Work, Worship, Play”

June 10, 2007
Matthew 6:19-26

This coming week your Lay Leader Gary Dyer and I will be attending the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference, a gathering of multiple Methodists from Colorado, Utah and Wyoming.

We will meet and meet and meet morning, noon, and night, to discuss issues affecting our life together, some very important, some not so much.

We will pray, sing, and Gary will be honored at the Laity Luncheon on Saturday as an Outstanding Lay Speaker.

He is a real leader in the District and Conference and you should be proud of him.

Every year when Annual Conference rolls around I think of the Methodist Pastor who was given just one week to live.

He had a fast growing tumor that was inoperable, and there was little hope.

The doctor told him: “You need to spend the next week doing exactly what you have always wanted to do because it could well be your last.”

He said to the doctor: “Well then, I think I will attend Annual Conference, the big yearly meeting of my denomination.”

The doctor said, “With such limited time, why on earth would you choose to do that?”

The minister said, “Because then it will definitely feel like the longest week of my life!”

As a Methodist Minister I have many masters.

I not only have the Bishop who appoints me every single year, and to whom I am accountable for my ministry.

I also have a District Superintendent who evaluates and supervises me, other clergy who are supposed to hold me accountable for spiritual growth and faithfulness to my ordination vows.

I have all of you, who are in some ways my bosses and people I try to serve and help and guide into deeper faith.

Not to mention the staff with whom I work day after day, and Fred, Mark and Katie, and Lucy our collie.

You might think I was master of something or someone, but you would be wrong.

I have many masters to which I give my time, loyalty and attention.

Jesus said that nobody can have even two masters.

He said that “You cannot worship two Gods at once.

Loving one you will hate the other.”

Some refer to this Scripture passage as a good argument against polygamy.

Can you have more than one loyalty? Of course, we all do.

Certainly you can love more than one child just as much as another,
one place as much as another, one parent as much as the other.

You can have multiple talents and interests, you can multi-task,
why not have multiple masters?

It does make life alot harder, and I think that is the point of this lesson.

We are all pulled and many different directions by so many different people and
things, we all have many masters.

Of course it is not necessarily always a bad thing to many involvements, interests,
and responsibilities, if you are not enslaved to them.

I have found it to be so true that
if you want to get something done, you ask the busiest person you know.

Frankly, I love to be busy, and that's a good thing because I have many
opportunities for just that.

But I find that sometimes my busyness is an escape.
Sometimes I am trying to serve masters that do not even exist except in my mind.

I get so easily seduced by my multiple masters that I fall into the
"Superwoman" syndrome.

I want to be a great spiritual leader, a perfect wife and mother,
a great friend, a contributing member of my community, devout Christian,
an involved citizen, a good cook, fluent in many languages, great skier,
mountain climber, all the while having a very clean house.

I would like excellence in every area of my life.

How I admired the late Erma Bombeck who said she long ago let go of
such expectations, in fact she confessed that it was a stretch for her to
do the laundry and get a hot meal in the same week. She once wrote:
"The newspaper is so full of depressing news these days that some mornings

I do not want to get out of bed.

I do not know about the world situation, but if I see one more story about
a woman who works full-time, bakes her own bread, makes her own coats,
works for world peace, is running for the Senate,
carrying a child for a woman unable to have one, teaches night school,
washes and irons her aluminum foil, and whose hobby is "people"

I am going to be sick!"

Bombeck goes on to say:

“I have an article about a woman who is pictured holding a freshly baked pie. According to the article, she gets up every morning at 4:30 to start the laundry and begin preparations for dinner. She leaves for work making sure everyone in her family is happy. That miracle accomplished, she works all day, arrives home at 4, finishes dinner, does some housework, and spends quality time with the children. She makes all the clothes worn by the family, cans and freezes vegetables, and (I swear this is true) is restoring a log cabin behind their home in her spare time.”

I admire people like that, I really do.

But I wonder what motivates them. Who or what is master of their lives? At the age of 20, you think you can be the master of your fate and the captain of your soul.

By age 50, you're inclined to settle for being the master of your weight and the captain of your bowling team.

Nevertheless, it is a question we should honestly ask ourselves: Who am I serving? Who am I trying to please, impress, satisfy? You can determine a part of the answer to that question by examining both your checkbook and your appointment book. They will reveal your priorities pretty quickly.

Some have said that beyond our relationships, most of us have three primary components to our lives: Worship, Work, and Play.

Worship is not necessarily something done at church or temple or mosque. We usually think of it in religious terms, but one definition of worship is this: “Acts of praise, honor, and devotion offered through the living of human life.”

Acts of praise, honor, devotion.

By that definition even atheists have something that they worship.

Some people worship themselves, although they would never admit it. Others worship another person, the source of their identity and happiness. Some worship nature or exercise or money or knowledge or their jobs.

When you think of human life in terms of worship, work, and play it seems that the current reality for most people is that they play at their worship, worship their work, and work at their play.

Think about it—we do play at worship.

It is not something that is taken all that seriously by most people.
 We don't really expect to have God transform our hearts and minds,
 we don't enter into the presence of God with profound awe and anticipation.
 And many of us do worship our work, whether we are paid for it or not.
 We give more attention, more devotion, more time, energy and effort to what fills
 our days than to our relationships and our souls.
 Of course that is often by necessity,
 but it is all too easy to let your work become your God.
 And more and more we work at our play-hobbies become obsessions,
 leisure pursuits become competitions.
 We don't just play to relax and unwind, we play to win!

The truth is that worship, work, play, friends, family, job, hobbies,
 everything wants to be our master.
 There are so many things demanding our time, money, energy and attention.
 And technology does not help matters much at all.
 Our ability to communicate instantly in a variety of ways means
 that people can have access to our attention 24 hours a day.
 We are on information and communication overload.

And that can leave us feeling not only fragmented, but hollow and empty inside.
 We can connect instantly with people all over the world,
 yet relationships and communities are disintegrating at an increasingly rapid rate.
 People fear commitment because they have learned that nothing lasts.
 Industry's growth tears people out of lifelong neighborhoods.
 High mobility and downsizing moves people around like nomads.
 Yet Internet chat rooms are more popular than ever.
 Face Book and My Space are booming. People yearn for a place of belonging.
 Jesus said that where our treasure is our hearts will be also,
 but most of us are not sure just where our treasure is.
 We are still looking for it.

In the context of this Scripture teaching, Jesus is talking about priorities.
 He suggests that we have to be very careful about what we give power in our lives.
 It is perfectly fine to be busy, to have many people we love and serve,
 and activities which interest us.
 But we have to be cautious, because whatever we love with all our hearts will
 become our God. We need to be attentive to our many masters.

And we all have far too many of them.

In the words of St. Augustine: “Our hearts are restless until they rest in God.
When we finally rest in God we can stop searching, stop running,
stop trying to impress others, achieve popularity or secular success,
stop trying to be Superman or Superwoman.

My own experience has taught me that when I am centered in God everything else
really does fall into place.

Other things lose their power over me.

I don't have to worry about everything or feel responsible for everything,
I can trust in the goodness of God and trust in the goodness of creation.
It doesn't mean that I won't get stressed out, or bad things won't happen.

It means that there is someone to learn on no matter what happens.

If you allow God to be your Master, other things lose their power over you.

And life seems to somehow take care of itself.

Who or what is Master of your life?

In the movie, City Slickers, three middle-age city executives are on vacation at a
dude ranch in the Southwest. They sign up for a fun-filled cattle drive.

The tough trail boss, Curly, played by Jack Palance, is talking with the overworked
urbanite, Billy Crystal. Curly says:

“You city folks come up here every year, with the same problems.

You spend 50 weeks a year getting knots in your rope, and come down here
thinking two weeks will untie it. None of you get it.

Do you know what the secret of life is? The secret of life is just one thing
(Curly holds up one finger). You stick to that, and everything else don't mean
nothing.”

Crystal then asks what that one thing is.

Curly responds: “That's what you've got to figure out.”

May God help us to figure out exactly who or what is master of our lives.