



A Hard Word for Busy Times

by Ryan Schmitz

Abomination is a strong word. It is something extremely offensive, highly odious, and therefore hated with intensity. Part of Luke 16:15 says that what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God.

Luke 16:15, And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”

I know it’s not a very popular line of thought, but have you ever wondered what things we value “highly” that God actually detests? I’m not talking about specific sins but whole value systems. Values define our goals, our vision, and our pursuits and, therefore, define our worship—the orbit of our hearts. Value denotes an assigning of worth. What we assign as worth is what decides our treasure. What we treasure will possess our hearts. As Jesus said, in Luke 12:34, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

As a father myself, I know there are value systems that are aggressively trying to capture my children’s hearts. Many of these value systems are toxic impostors, and I hate them. They are an abomination to me. If internalized, these false value systems will act as a defining vision, a constant orbit of goals, desires and fears that will invisibly influence my children’s decisions and, therefore, direct their lives.

Jesus spoke of two possible directing masters, God and mammon (Luke 16:13). He also urged us to seek first the kingdom of God, promising that our material needs will be met (Matthew 6:33).

Luke 16:13, “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

Mammon distorts our real identity and robs us of true fulfillment. Mammon is an impostor god and promises a lot of things that God does ... things like security, peace, happiness, acceptance, and honor.

Mammon, however, isn’t just money or goods. Mammon has its own culture. It embraces the world’s esteem and all the political, relational, and economical dynamics that are foundational to maintain this esteem. Many people do not recognize the extent of mammon’s influence, since all of us were born into its culture.

Mammon isn’t just the love of stuff. It’s the love of popularity and the ego tickle that goes with the stuff. It’s also the love of the influence, control, perceived safety, respect, envy, and applause that accompanies the stuff. Mammon’s roots can be entrenched in expenditures, fame, politics, occupational or degree status, friends and acquaintances . . . all of which can be connected to the counterfeit kingdom of worship whose altar is in our hearts.

How it must grieve The Father to have made an offering of His beaten, bloodied Son to ransom us and adopt us into His Holy family and, in response, we scratch and beg for the world’s fallen system to give us its approval. We stew, lust, fret, and scheme about how we can satisfy the gatekeepers of mere human culture when the King of Glory Himself bore our shame and endured our just punishment to provide us with eternal life that will eventually be realized in His presence among the grandeur of Everlasting Heaven.

Jesus Himself stands with open arms, saying even now, “Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Mammon, on the other hand, is a deceitful mistress. For example, whatever is provided through the world’s self-oriented system is never enough. This reality drives people to their wit’s end. The world seduces people to trade the strength of their lives for things that never fully satisfy and are not lasting. There is no rest of soul but, instead, only striving, working, stretching and jockeying to get something or somewhere they hoped would bring true peace. Mammon is a disguised fraud in this life, and this reality will be fully revealed in the life to come. Mammon’s influence, power, and time are acutely limited. This is why Jesus pleads with us to invest in Heaven (Matthew 6:20).

Matthew 6:20, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Despite the fact that the Kingdom of God is already within us (Luke 17:20-21) along with the many exhortations of Christ Himself to live for its enduring reality, many professing Christians live just like those who believe our present existence is all there is. Their motivation is mammon, their reasoning is based on mammon, and their sweat is for mammon. Their treasure, the location of their hearts, is in earthly things. Jesus is really more like a “bonus” add-on.

Luke 17:20-21, Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; ²¹ nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

Yet Christ warned us two masters are impossible. We always will gravitate to one or the other, and resent the other’s economy in increasing measure (Matthew 6:24). Furthermore, Jesus warned that the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this fleeting life will choke out The Father’s fruit in our lives (Matthew 13:22). Fruit is what glorifies The Father and characterizes the Lordship of Jesus for His disciples (John 15:8). So a one-time decision to follow Jesus as master isn’t the end game. Mammon is actively deceitful, never to be trusted. It can grow up around our hearts like a thorny vine, slowly and unannounced until we can hardly move in the Father’s will because of mammon’s strangle hold.

Matthew 6:24, No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Matthew 13:22, No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

John 15:8, By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

The only way to be free is to take the sword of Truth against what has ensnared us. Measuring ourselves against the backdrop of a compromised, unfruitful, lazy, fat, sleepy, spiritually impoverished Christianity is unwise. Jesus said the Truth would set us free (John 8:32).

John 8:32, And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

We must ask the hard questions. How much time, energy and effort do we spend on worldly security and comfort in contrast to the real retirement dilemma called eternity and the certain medical emergency called death? Jesus promises The Father will take care of us (Matthew 6:30). So why don’t we labor in the work He is passionate about, the transformation of us into His image and the fields of souls white unto harvest? Somehow we just don’t believe or maybe we are just busy, like the world, chasing stuff.

Matthew 6:30, Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*

The apostle Paul said, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). So what are we afraid we will lose if we give ourselves to His mission? If we could actually see what awaits us, I’m sure we would all live radical, self-sacrificing lives, pouring ourselves into The Lord’s work and spurning all mammon idols. We would say with Paul, “To live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

But we don’t get to see with our physical eyes. The Lord has chosen that “The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). Who needs faith for what they plainly see? For now, the Father has given His Word and His deposit, the Holy Spirit, the One who is the down payment, the promise of our future inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). For now, we walk by faith, believing that what The Father says in His Word is true.

Ephesians 1:13-14, In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

The resurrection is true. Judgment is true. Rewards are true and heaven and Hell are true, and they will all last for a very, very long forever. As a Christian, we will have a very long forever to be with the One who gave everything to ransom us. This One also entrusted us, individually, with a specific grace to minister to others and expects a return (1Peter 4:10 and Matthew 25:14-30). So how’s that going? How’s the Master’s investment doing? Or, perhaps, He is not as much Master as we would like to think? Who is really calling the shots . . . Jesus or mammon? Where do we really

live. . . in Zion or Babylon? Now is the time to ask ourselves these eternally significant questions. We can, at least, repent today and then depend on His grace to change us, starting today.

1 Peter 4:10, As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Matthew 25:14-30, For *the kingdom of heaven is* like a man traveling to a far country, *who* called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶ Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷ And likewise he who *had received* two gained two more also. ¹⁸ But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

²⁰ “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ ²¹ His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ ²² He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ ²³ His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

²⁴ “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is yours*.’

²⁶ “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷ So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸ Therefore take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents.

²⁹ ‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

Our earthly story will soon come to its end. I want to spend and be spent for the rule of God, for Kingdom work and Kingdom concerns. I don't want to cloak comfort or unbelief in smoke screen vocabulary like “prudence” or “stewardship”. Soon enough, we will meet The King and give an account of the things we have done (Romans 14:12). The secrets of every heart will be laid bare and everything will be naked and open (Hebrews 4:13).

Romans 14:12, So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Hebrews 4:13, And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.

How will I and my fellow believers look into the eyes of Jesus, the One who gave all, after we have lived a life of lukewarm allegiance of distraction and excuses? I know we are saved by His grace. I'm not talking about that reality. I'm talking about honor, about fidelity, about obedience, about justice, and about Jesus Christ getting the *all* of us He paid for. Our love affair with mammon is spiritual adultery. It is squandering the riches of an eternal inheritance for a quick bowl of lifetime entertainment beans.

The Father's love and command are all about our success and prosperity. He is showing us what is real, what is lasting and how to be great in the kingdom economy that is now and forever (1 Timothy 4:8). He wants our joy to be full. I know this is edgy, but we have lost the shock and weight of The Gospel, of a Messiah from Nazareth, of the Hope of the Nations being born in a stable and suffering public Roman execution. Until The Kingdom fully comes, Jesus Christ is ever countercultural. He will offend our sensibilities (John 6:61), and His demands are unapologetic (Matthew 8:22). Contrary to popular teaching, there is a steep cost to follow Him (Luke 9:23-24). He will make war with the value system we are born into (Matthew 10:34) while we, somehow, really want to make Him cool to the world. Or perhaps, we are trying to reconcile Him to the world in us. If the spirit of this world is “just cool” with Jesus, we are likely not living out His truth.

1 Timothy 4:8, For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

John 6:61, When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you?”

Matthew 8:22, But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Luke 9:23-24, Then He said to *them* all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”

Matthew 10:34, Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

May the tables of compromise be turned over in the temple of our hearts so we can have room for His unyielding passion for the Father, for His house, and for the nations.

1 John 2:15-17, Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—is not of the Father but of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.