Introduction: a phrase that cuts like a sword

Jesus was not ambiguous. In the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, we find one of those phrases that leave no room for half-measures:

> *“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Mt 6:24).*

With this sentence, Christ places the human being before an existential dilemma: whom do you serve? Who occupies the throne of your heart? God, with His eternal love, or money, with its fleeting promises of security and power?

The phrase, so well known, is often repeated without deep reflection on its consequences. But if we break it down from the perspective of theology, history, and daily life, we discover that it is a warning for yesterday and today, perhaps more relevant than ever in this consumerist and frenetic society.

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1. Biblical context: what did Jesus really mean?

When the Gospel speaks of *“money”* (in Greek *mammon*), it does not refer solely to coins or bills, but to wealth considered as an idol, as a force that becomes a competitor to God. *Mammon* is not neutral: it represents the risk of absolutizing material things, of placing one’s trust in what one possesses rather than in the One who gives everything.

In Jewish tradition, there was already an awareness that wealth could be a temptation. The Book of Sirach warns: *“Gold has ruined many and misled the hearts of kings”* (Sir 31:6). Jesus brings this warning to its highest expression: money does not only distract, it can become a true master, a direct rival of God.

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2. A historical glance: the Church and wealth

Throughout the centuries, the Church has had to struggle against the temptation to reduce the Gospel to material interests. Already the Fathers of the Church denounced greed as the root of many evils. Saint John Chrysostom affirmed: *“Not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor and deprivation of their means of life.”*

In the Middle Ages, orders such as the Franciscans arose precisely to remind the ecclesial world that evangelical poverty is a path to freedom. Saint Francis of Assisi did not reject work or the economy, but he understood that when money becomes lord, the heart is chained.

Today, the Magisterium continues to insist on the same point. Saint John Paul II, in *Centesimus Annus*, warned of the danger of idolizing the market. Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, speaks of the “god money” as a modern tyranny that generates exclusion and discards lives.

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3. Theology of choice: only one throne in the heart

The phrase of Jesus has a profoundly theological background: the human heart does not admit shared sovereigns. To serve God implies total trust, obedience, and love. But to serve money means, in practice, to place greater trust in material goods than in divine providence.

Moral theology teaches us that it is not money in itself that is the problem, but the place it occupies. Wealth can be a means at the service of the common good or an idol that enslaves. Here we see fulfilled what Saint Augustine called *ordo amoris* (the order of love): if you excessively love what is inferior (money), you displace the Supreme Good (God).

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4. A practical guide: how to serve God and not money

4.1. **Economic examination of conscience**

- Ask yourself: what place does money have in my daily decisions?
- Do I work only to accumulate or to serve my family and society?
- Do I worry more about losing money than about losing the grace of God?

4.2. **Practicing trust in providence**

- Jesus Himself said: *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Mt 6:33).
- This does not mean irresponsibility, but interior freedom: saving and foresight, yes; obsession and fear, no.

4.3. **The virtue of evangelical poverty**

- It is not about renouncing everything, but about living with sobriety.
- Review your consumption: do you really need what you buy?
- Learn to detach yourself: donate, share, help those in need.

4.4. **Charity as an antidote to money-idolatry**

- The best way to break the domination of money is to give it away.
- Almsgiving, tithing, supporting charitable causes are not just social gestures: they are spiritual acts that set you free.

4.5. **Discernment in work and business**

- Work ethics is key: not everything that generates profit is lawful.
- Ask yourself: does my way of working reflect justice, honesty, and respect for people?

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5. Present-day relevance: money as a new global idol

We live in a culture where success is measured in euros, likes, and possessions. Compulsive consumption, enslaving debts, and the obsession with appearances show that *mammon* is still alive and powerful.

The modern world says: “You are worth what you have.” Christ responds: “You are worth because you are a child of God.” This is the great counterculture of the Gospel.

Money promises security, but it cannot stop sickness or prevent death. It promises happiness, but generates dissatisfaction. As Saint Paul says: *“For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil”* (1 Tim 6:10).

6. Conclusion: the secret of true wealth

Serving God does not impoverish, it truly enriches. Faith, hope, and love are treasures that do not devalue. Money can be useful, but it will never be your savior.

The great lesson of Jesus is clear: **it is not about demonizing material goods, but about putting them in their rightful place**. Money must be servant, never master.

And the final question is inevitable: **whom do you serve?**

Suggested final prayer

Lord, free us from the slavery of money.
Grant that we may use what we have with wisdom,
that we may live with a detached heart,
and that we may never place our trust in riches,
but in Your eternal love,
which is the only treasure that does not pass away. Amen.