

Ephesians 6:5-9 “Know who’s boss!”
Christ Church Huntingdon Sermon Sun 8th September 2019

V6

- I’ve called this sermon **“Know who’s boss!”**
 - **Those of you in employment...**
 - In our church: Lawyers, builders, physio, techies, paramedics, accountants, teachers, police workers, lab workers, shop workers, factory workers, military personel. (we’re going to meet some of you shortly!)
 - ...Need to know: **Who is your boss?**
 - Must be one of most important question in workplace.
 - **Answer? Jesus Christ.**
 - If you get that, you’ve got Eph 6:5-9. Revolutionise workplace (top/bottom!)
 - V6 Slaves of Christ.
- As go through Ephesians: 3rd submission rel’n (along w wives & husb, children & parents)
 - Showing us what a Spirit filled life (v18) looks like once you trust Jesus.
 - And how practical! It affects what you do tomorrow morning!
 - One of the great lessons of reformation, was place we worship God not restricted to monastery or in church, but in factory & home.
- We’re going to learn a huge amount from this passage that will be relevant for workplace. But just 2 comments before start...
 - **1) Don’t switch off if not in paid work**
 - Retired, stay at home parents, those without work or off work
 - Principles important for you too in other relationships.
 - If facing unemployment in a hard situation and we want to give you support and care. Church is a family where we can support one another.
 - **2) Don’t switch off if you find references to slavery strange**
 - Maybe think no slaves today- so passage not relevant. Wrong!
 - Maybe think “there’s an elephant in the room here” :
shouldn’t Paul be challenging slavery not accepting it?
 - Few brief thoughts... (ask me more after)
 - 1) Slavery was a fact in 1st C. Up to 1 in 5 of Roman Empire slaves.
 - 2) Yes there was mistreatment and cruelty but doctors, lawyers= slaves
 - 3) NT actually sets a trajectory that would seek to undermine and eventually abolish slavery what became the slave trade. Paul’s letter to Philemon encourages a slave owner to receive a runaway slave back as a brother, and down the track, Christians have been at the forefront of challenging the trafficking of individuals in the past and today. The basic principles of justice in the Bible lead us to say that people shouldn’t be treated as things. As “stop the traffik” puts its “people shouldn’t be sold”.
 - 4) But that’s not the focus of Paul’s teaching here which is to address the the status quo of the relationships that people found themselves in, and wonderfully in the Christian church the lowest slave up to the highest master was in church were brothers and sisters alongside one another.
- 2 sections: 2 groups addressed, and both hinge on **knowing** who’s boss.
 - Do you see the “know” v8 and v9

KNOW WHO IS BOSS= JESUS! 1) v5-7... Employees, know that Jesus is Boss and you will treat your employers with respect, consistency and cheerfulness

- As I read section again- see how many references to Jesus!
 - It's clear slaves in 1st C needed to know that they were looking beyond their earthly masters to their heavenly master.
 - And as we bring it to the 21st century attitudes can be carried over.
 - And like in the section on marriage and parenting, the relationship with Jesus was to govern and be seen in their relationship with their employers.
- Jesus is your MASTER! (same word used of Jesus and earthly master).
 - Jesus is your boss.
- Wonder if we've grasped this.
 - So easy to have our *Sunday thinking*- church and Jesus vs our *Monday thinking*- but you have an awesome, powerful, wonderful extremely high powered boss who cares for you and provides for you, and values you, and his name is JESUS!
 - Look closely at v6 Slaves of Christ... (it's a very striking phrase)
 - We have a master
 - He is good, and caring and
 - But he demands total allegiance.
 - We are not our own- he has bought us and control us.
 - It's not a demeaning or constraining thing when you know how wonderful Jesus is
 - But he calls the shots; he is master, we are his servants.
 - Get that straight and you will look at your human boss differently.
- **First you will treat them with respect**
- **verse 5**
- You would listen to Jesus wouldn't you? So you need to listen to your line manager.
- You respect Jesus? Well respect your earthly boss.
 - That doesn't mean you always agree with what she or he does.
 - You may at times think that they make bad decisions, or worse got to their position by shady means.
 - Don't do something your boss tells you if it goes against God's will, like lying or - that's implicit for all these relationships in v1 "obey in the Lord".
 - But as you look upwards to their senior position, you look even higher to Jesus' highest position and you try to please Jesus in your relationship with them, offering them to the best of your ability the willing service a Christian should give.
 - And Paul says with "sincerity of heart"- which means you are transparent and straightforward, no ulterior motive. You just get on with the job with respect, doing it for Jesus.
- **Next treat them with consistency.**
- Paul says something fascinating in v6.
 - Do what the boss asks whether they are watching or not.
 - You know how kids behave extra well when the head is walking past.

- Christians aren't to fluctuate according to who's watching because Jesus is in the office or the factory 24/7.
 - So you don't start texting your mates or slacking off or gossiping to your neighbour the moment the boss walks out
 - V6b-
 - I heard of a cleaner asked what difference it made when she became a Christian. She said I clean the places people can't see now as well!
- **Treat them with cheerfulness**
 - V7
 - That word wholeheartedly has the flavour of "good will"
 - It could be translated with eagerness or enthusiasm
 - And if you look beyond your line manager to your heavenly manager, then you will want to work positively.
 - If I'm living for Jesus, then as salt and light, I'm going to make the workplace a better place to be, and bless colleagues and customers around me.
 - I heard of a headmaster who used to willingly employ Christians in his school. He wasn't a Christian himself, but the Christian teachers took a real interest in the kids and wanted the best for them, and worked hard and threw themselves into school.
 - The reason Paul gives here in v8 is that Jesus rewards his servants, and we are slaves of Christ now.
 - You may have a boss that never recognises what you do or thanks you. He or She may even favour others ahead of you every time, But Jesus notices what you do, and at the judgement day he will commend what he saw you do at work, and say "well done good and faithful servant"
- So though slavery is hopefully something of the past, there's lots we can learn here.
 - Unless self employed (which brings its own challenges) most of us will look up to someone. Well Paul says look beyond them to Christ. And then you will treat the earthly master with respect, consistency and cheerfulness.
 - Talk more afterwards.

KNOW WHO IS BOSS= JESUS! 2) v9... Employers, know that Jesus is Boss and you will treat your employees with gentleness and fairness

- Some of us here have responsibility over others. We get to manage them or lead them in work or home or church situations.
- Just 1 verse for you, but it packs a punch.
- Starts with "treat your slaves in the same way". It's hard to know exactly what that refers to, possibly the "doing good" in v8 but most likely it's the point which we've seen all the way through v5-8 that our relationship with Jesus controls our relationship with others.
- Bosses may look down to junior colleagues more than they look up to senior colleagues, but the principle remains. Looking at all you do is Jesus.
- And that's spelled out in the KNOWING of the second half of the verse **v9**.

So Paul gives two particular implications.

- **Treat them with gentleness**
 - Slaves in the first century weren't always treated with gentleness.
 - Some took to running away or even suicide to escape the mistreatment they suffered in an environment where a master could whip, mutilate or even condemn a slave to death.
 - But Paul wants Christian masters to act very differently.
 - V9 "Do not threaten them".
 - John Stott says "threats are a weapon which the powerful wield over the powerless". We need to be very careful with all threats.
 - Parents too often threaten terrible things which they will never carry out, or they don't follow through on their threats, emptying their words of any meaning, and therefore losing the control and respect of their children.
 - But no doubt Masters then, and Managers today can leave their employees cowering with the constant fear of sacking or discipline. That's not right.
 - Build your colleagues up gently and constructively.
 - ▲ A friend of mine is a manager in a firm in Cambridge, and he has several people under him. He seeks to be a servant leader who acts to serve those under him. He doesn't do all their work, but he seeks to build them up and catch the balls that they drop, sometimes taking the flack for mistakes himself or as a team, rather than singling someone out as a failure.
 - Do not threaten them.
 - Why? Because above the CEO and the lowest zero hour employee is Jesus.
 - ▲ When we come to take Communion together, we are all on the same level at the foot of the cross.
 - In our church in Belgium we had the CEO of a bank. He was the highest you could get in that office.
 - And we had asylum seekers who couldn't even work
 - But above them both is the same Master
 - Both are slaves of Christ, with the wonderful privilege of knowing the Master of the Universe as their boss, and as their friend, because Jesus says in John 15, we are no longer called servants but friends, because we have been brought into knowing the Father's plans.
- So treat them with Gentleness and **treat them with fairness.**
 - Jesus doesn't have special favourites.
 - We are all his favourite!
 - You don't get special treatment if you went to the right school or university
 - Or if you have the gift of the gab or you
 - Jesus doesn't show favouritism with us, and we shouldn't with our employees. Treat them with fairness.

I'd like to finish with a question.

- Have you seen how extraordinarily magnificent Jesus is?
 - Do you see how he transforms relationships and situations?
 - What a
 - He couldn't have had higher authority than anyone else in the universe.
 - And yet he stooped down to serve.
 - And he even stooped down to the cross to die for us as we will remember shortly.
 - Do you **know** that he is boss? (because you know v8, since you know v9)
 - If you do, it will show in your workplace. You won't be able to help it.
 - And others will come to see Jesus in you, even though they see him in person.