

“Parable of the Shrewd Manager”

Introduction – Luke 16:1-15

This is a very interesting parable and one that at first glance seems to indicate Jesus saying it is “ok” to be unjust which is as we shall see, not true at all! 😊

I. THE AUDIENCE – VERSES 14-15

Luke 16:14-15 (NIV)

14 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. **15** He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.

So we find herein the crowd both disciples and religious teachers, pharisees who as our passage indicates were walking with God from the outward appearance but yet their hearts were far from Him. We see throughout the Gospels and the New Testament the warnings of loving money and making our faith about financial prosperity rather than serving God from a true heart relationship with Jesus.

Listen to these:

In the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 6:19-24 (NIV)

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **22** “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. **23** But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! **24** “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or

he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Desire for wealth can choke spiritual life:

Mark 4:18-19 (NIV)

18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; **19** but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

Greed is equated with idolatry:

Ephesians 5:5 (NIV)

5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Colossians 3:5-8 (NIV)

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. **6** Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. **7** You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. **8** But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Paul's big warning to Timothy:

1 Timothy 6:3-10 (NIV)

3 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, **4** he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions **5** and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. **6** But godliness with contentment is great gain. **7** For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. **8** But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. **9** People who want to get rich fall into

temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. **10** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

MONEY ISN'T EVIL! THE LOVE OF MONEY AND WHAT IT CAUSES US TO DO IS!

A very strong warning against putting our life in money:

James 5:1-6 (NIV)

1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. **2** Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. **3** Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. **4** Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. **5** You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. **6** You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

II. THE PARABLE – VERSES 1-7

Luke 16:1-7 (NIV)

1 Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. **2** So he called him in and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.’ **3** “The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg— **4** I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’ **5** “So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ **6** “‘Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied. “The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.’ **7** “Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’

“‘A thousand bushels of wheat,’ he replied. ‘He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’”

This is an unusual parable because it centers in on two unbelievers and how they deal with their money. This is not a parable to teach us to be dishonest in the gaining of wealth, but it is centered in on how to make sure the wealth that I have I invest it wisely! Not just in things as Jesus warned:

Luke 12:15 (NIV)

15 THEN HE SAID TO THEM, “WATCH OUT! BE ON YOUR GUARD AGAINST ALL KINDS OF GREED; A MAN’S LIFE DOES NOT CONSIST IN THE ABUNDANCE OF HIS POSSESSIONS.”

The two characters are:

1. **THE RICH MASTER** who obviously was a very successful businessman that wasn’t always uprights and honest in his dealings. He had a manager who was not doing a very good job (again, not for us to imitate!) and he called him in and said: “I heard that you are wasting my possessions and I’m calling you to account for this as I’ve decided that you are no longer going to be my manager!” (my paraphrase)

He didn’t fire him immediately, so this indicates some character in the master; but he put him on notice his days were numbered.

2. **THE MANAGER** comes up with a pretty amazing plan to get on the good side of the rich master’s debtors:

Luke 16:3-7 (NIV)

3 “The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg— **4** I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’ **5** “So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you

owe my master?’ 6 “‘Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied. “The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.’ 7 “Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’ “‘A thousand bushels of wheat,’ he replied. “He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’ Again we could say alright I’m going to con someone who has plenty of money out of some of their wealth and then be able to have a clear conscience before God because I helped some people! Not at all! 😊

III. THE APPLICATION – VERSES 8-13

Luke 16:8-13 (NIV)

8 “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. **9** I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. **10** “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. **11** So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? **12** And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own? **13** “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

Jesus is making His disciples aware of how money can mess with us! How it can corrupt our spiritual life! We cannot have our eyes on just my life and my possessions. He uses this example of an unbeliever actually having the sense to use money to help others even though it was wrong in what he did. It indicated that he could see the positive impact helping others:

Luke 16:9 (NIV)

9 I TELL YOU, USE WORLDLY WEALTH TO GAIN FRIENDS FOR YOURSELVES, SO THAT WHEN IT IS GONE, YOU WILL BE WELCOMED INTO ETERNAL DWELLINGS.

Jesus is not saying that do what you got to do to get ahead even if it involves ripping other people off! His emphasis here is on how worldly wealth is so uncertain and we need to look at it in this way! Not to control us but to be led by God's Holy Spirit in being kind and generous. So yes, we need to pay our bills, be honest and upright in our business dealings, take thought on how we can be of help and encouragement to others and as we do we gain eternal treasures! Listen to the apostle Paul on looking at giving as an opportunity not a chore!

II Corinthians 9:6-13 (NIV)

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. **7** Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. **9** As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." **10** Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. **11** You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. **12** This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. **13** Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

Conclusion

So again we need to take to heart the hold that money has on us and not let it be my master! I need to use worldly wealth for eternal treasures! That is the message of this parable! Take these words from the Sermon on the Mount to heart:

Matthew 6:1-4 (NIV)

1 “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. **2** “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. **3** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.