

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

**Chapter 16- Luke 16:1-14**

**271- You Cannot Serve God and Wealth- Part 3**

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March 22, 2015

## **Luke 16:1-14**

**1** Now He was also saying to the disciples, "**There was a rich man who had a manager, and this *manager* was reported to him as squandering his possessions.**

**2** "And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.'

**3** "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg.

**4** 'I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.'

**5** "And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he *began* saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

**6** "And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'

**7** "Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

**8** "And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.

**9** "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.

**10** "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

**11** "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you?

**12 "And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"**

**13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."**

**14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.**

To the Glory of God

Now this is our third time we are looking at this Parable that Jesus gave about the shrewd manager. And this morning I want to get into this even deeper, so please look again at the first part of verse 8:

**And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly...**

So here is a very puzzling statement by our Lord about somebody who was ungodly and yet shrewd. And if you didn't know any better- you would think that Jesus is saying that it is better to be shrewd than it is to be godly. And then in the last part of verse 8 and the first part of verse 9- Jesus begins to make a Statement:

**8 ...for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.**

**9 And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.**

Now we know, from our own time in God's Word, that Jesus is not teaching here that it is better to be shrewd than godly. And yet it does seem that He is saying that. So why did Jesus use this example and what in the world is Jesus really teaching here?

Now keep in mind that the Parables that Jesus gave were not real life stories. Parables are fiction. Parables are fictitious stories that make an eternal Truth understandable to the average person. So as Jesus gave these Parables- He filled them with some very shocking things, and He taught in very unexpected ways. And this Parable is an

example of that. But how in the world can we learn any kind of Spiritual Truth from a Parable about a man commending an unrighteous and shrewd manager? How can you get any kind of godly Truth out of such a bad example?

Well, I struggled with this Parable as I imagine many of you have. And as I read what John Calvin and Matthew Henry wrote about it- I found out that they struggled with it, too. In fact, I couldn't find a single Puritan who had done a complete exegesis on the entire Passage of **Luke 16:1-14**. Not one. Charles Spurgeon, John Owen, Martyn Lloyd Jones, and Jonathan Edwards and several of the others preached on verse 2 and verses 13&14- but *none* of the men that I value so much examined this Parable in detail. But Dr. Luke was moved upon by God the Holy Spirit to quote Jesus giving this Parable, and so we should try to examine it and see if we can make some sense out of it.

Now Jesus was actually very good about teaching from both the expected and the unexpected experiences of life. And because we know that God is absolutely Sovereign over everything, all the time- we know that the events of this life are not random or accidental or without purpose.

Everything that happens- happens because God willed it to happen. And it is very important that we understand that it is *not* that God simply looked through the corridor of time in His Omniscience and *knew* that a particular event would occur. No, the Holy Bible teaches clearly and repeatedly that God either actively *caused* that event to happen or He passively *allowed* it to happen- and the Bible goes on to teach that God did that- because by either *causing* that event or by *allowing* that event- His Will in the earth was furthered.

And so based on that- we know that there are no random events. There are no accidents; no such thing as "luck" or "chance" or "happenstance". There are no "coincidences"- even if we don't see any connection. And what that means is that *everything* has purpose and meaning, and every good and wonderful thing that comes into your life comes to you- on purpose- from the Good Hand of God.

But that also means that every event that we view to be "bad" or "wrong" or "unjust" or "evil" or "terrible" or "destructive"- comes to us by way of the very same Good Hand of God. And these "bad" things come with the very same Purpose and meaning as the "good" things. And the struggle that we have to comprehend this is due to the fact that our

vision is so limited. We only see the “here and now”, and that not very well. We have mainly forgotten the past and we have no idea about the future.

But our Wise and Good God sees the past, present, and future all at once. And He sees all of that- *perfectly*- with perfect understanding. And so based on that complete vision and knowledge- God works. And God works *purposefully* and God works *deliberately*, and so God pulls and He pushes and He stops and He starts and He raises up and He casts down and He causes and He allows so that the greater “Good” of His Own Will and His Purpose and His Glory will be carried to the degree that He desires- all the way up to the grandest scheme and all the way down to the most minute detail.

But the Promise of Scripture goes further to tell us that all of what God is working- is working together also for the ultimate fulfillment of the Joy of all of those who are saved and called by God to Salvation. And so based on that- we know that the Working of God in this life-regardless of whether it seems to us to be “good” or “bad”- can be very good place to learn from.

So even though Jesus uses the example of a sinful man in this Parable- that doesn’t mean that we can’t learn something very wise and very godly from it. And this is not the first time that Jesus has used the example of an ungodly person in His Parable, and it won’t be the last. Back in **Luke 11**- we saw an irritable man being awakened out of sleep by a persistent father. Here in **Luke 16**- Jesus uses a shrewd but ungodly manager and a wealthy man who praises the ungodly manager. And over in **Luke 18**, as we shall see in the future, Jesus used an unjust judge as an analogy for God Himself- even though we know for sure that God is *not* unjust.

So here the main character is a man identified in verse 8 as the “**unrighteous manager**”. And there’s no question that this man is unrighteous. He is evil and wicked and conniving- and he starts out as irresponsible but he ends up as an embezzler.

And some theologians down through the years have worked really hard to try to protect Jesus from using a bad man to make a good point, and so they have gone through “ministerial gymnastics” to try to make this evil man to be seen in a different light and make him godly. But you simply can’t get there from here- there’s just no way around the fact that Jesus Himself called this man “**the unrighteous manager**”.

Now keep in mind that this is a Parable that Jesus made up. He created and invented it. And so there are no hidden details or forgotten facts about this Parable other than the ones Jesus gives right here. Paul Harvey is not going to come later on to tell us "The Rest of the Story". This is it. So resist the temptation to try to arrive at some secret explanation about this Parable- it is what it is.

So we are wasting our time to try to turn this very bad man into a good man in order to try to keep Jesus from looking bad. Jesus looks just fine- and He said what He meant to say- that the manager of this Parable is a real bad man. He is a wasteful, deceitful, thieving, selfish and conniving- sinful man.

And most of us would be okay with that except for what Jesus says in the beginning of verse 8:

**And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly...**

Now we would probably like this Parable better if the master *punished* the evil manager or beat him. But praise him? That really throws us a curve. But what we have to try to do is to get out of our own 21<sup>st</sup> Century American shoes and try to stand as an ordinary person in the Middle East during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. What were the Pharisees thinking as they heard Jesus give this Parable- because in seeking to find that out- we will see the whole point of the story.

Now keep in mind that Jesus was born under the Law and Jesus lived every day of His life up to the point where He was crucified under the Law of Moses. And so when Jesus taught- He followed the Old Testament rabbinical pattern of teaching. And *part* of that OT rabbinical pattern was that He taught using examples going from the least to the greater. So, for example- it was common to hear Jesus use the phrase,

**"How much more..."**

... when He taught. So, for example- if an unjust judge will listen to the cry of a woman- in **Luke 18**- *how much more* will God, Who is a Just Judge, listen to His people when they cry to Him? If an irritated man will open the door just to get rid of you in the Parable of **Luke 11**- *how*

*much more* will a God who loves you do when you knock on His door with a need? If a wicked, evil man is shrewd in the use of money that he has access to- here in **Luke 16**- *how much more* will God do? So this is teaching from the least to the greater, and OT rabbi's loved to teach that way, and so did Jesus. So let's look at the beginning of verse 1:

**Now He was also saying to the disciples...**

Now as I told you last week- **Luke 14** all the way through Chapter 21- comprises a lot of the Teachings of Jesus Christ. This is the section where almost all of the Parables are, and some really good, deep Teaching. But even though these 8 Chapters hold a lot of teaching- they really only comprise a few months in the chronological life of Jesus. Jesus is making His way to Jerusalem to die and He is teaching His disciples along the way.

Now by this time- the Pharisees have all basically made up their minds about Jesus, and they have utterly rejected Him and all that He has done and all that He has said, and they have chalked it all up to Jesus being a devil- who at best should be rejected and at worst should be killed. And as Jesus gets closer to Jerusalem and His Teachings become more distinct and sharp- the rejection of the Pharisees turns into hatred, and the hatred eventually turns into murder.

And in Chapter 14- we saw that Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath- as he totally and categorically rejected the view of the Sabbath held by the Pharisees. And then Jesus launched into a series of teachings at the end of Chapter 14 and on into Chapter 15 that were designed to show two things:

1. God's absolute Love for His elect- even if they are sinful, sick, dirty, and disabled when they first come into contact with Jesus.
2. God's absolute rejection of all man-made false religion- even if they appear to be holy, clean, pious, and pure on the outside.

And at the end of Chapter 15- Jesus gave one of the most amazing Parables- that was designed to confront the Pharisees to their face and to show them that they had been utterly rejected by God as Jesus links the Pharisees with the older son in the Parable of the man who had two sons.

And now as we begin Chapter 16- we see that Jesus has turned from talking directly to the Pharisees and is now speaking directly to His disciples. And normally- the disciples would be the *mathetes*- the students or the learners who make up one of four places:

- ✓ People who are genuinely saved
- ✓ People who are on their way to being saved
- ✓ People who are intellectually curious about Jesus but who are not being dealt with by the Holy Spirit to be saved
- ✓ People who are on their way to leaving Jesus

... all four of those groups would normally make up the disciples. But here in beginning this Chapter- we see that *these* disciples are all saved people. And we know that because there is a change in the way Jesus talks. When He was talking to the self-righteous, religious, hypocrites- Jesus confronted them with their own lostness, and called on them to repent and believe and enter the Kingdom and find their joy in the Joy of God. But here in verse 1- Jesus is talking only to the disciples- those who are already, to some degree and who are in some way, committed to Jesus. And so Jesus talks here about how they are to live their lives- which shows that they are already saved. So this is moving away from an Evangelistic, Salvation Message to discipleship teaching. So based on that- we know that this Parable is for saved people. So now look at the next part of verse 1:

### **Luke 16:1b**

**... There was a rich man who had a manager...**

So that is the title of Jesus' Parable- "The Parable of the Rich Man Who Had a Manager".

Now the word that was translated here as "**manager**" comes from the Greek word that means: *the manager of a household or of household affairs; especially a steward, manager, or a superintendent*<sup>1</sup>

Now a manager or a steward is a guy who is hired to operate or look after at least one aspect of somebody else's business or his affairs. And we already know that the man who hired the manager was

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<sup>1</sup> (from Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

wealthy- because Jesus said he was, and we also know that this was a big operation because the debts that were owed to the man by just two of many debtors were huge debts, and those kinds of debts would not belong to poor people. So this Parable has to do with people who walk in big finance and people of considerable power and influence and holdings. And the rich man was rich enough to have these kinds of relationships and these kinds of contracts and these kinds of business debts.

And this wealthy man had hired a steward or a manager- which showed that he was probably an absentee land owner- who lived in an estate somewhere distant, and he had this farming or agricultural operation going on- which was under the management of this appointed and hired manager.

And somebody else came to the rich man and reported that the manager was squandering the possessions of the wealthy man. And it is interesting to see that the verb here that was translated into "reported" is the verb *diaballo*- which means *to bring charges, to bring accusations*. And it has a hostile tone to it, and the noun connected to it is *diabalos*, from where we get "diabolical" from, and which we associate with the devil, who is a slanderer. That's what *diabalos* means, Slander. But in this case- it's legitimate slander. And this news finds its way through the pipeline because this guy is doing business with other people and the word starts rolling back to the rich man that he is squandering his possessions.

So the manager here is irresponsible. He's violating the stewardship of what belonged to someone else. And the rich man having found out about it- acts immediately, self-protectively. In verse 2, he called him and said to him, "What is this I hear about you?" And again he's so detached from the operation of the business that he doesn't know any details and this news has come to him by some other source. And so the rich man tells the manager this in verse 2:

### **Luke 16:2b**

**... Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.**

And so as this manager looks ahead- he doesn't have much hope. And he says, *"What am I going to do? My master is taking the*

*stewardship away from me. So what am I going to do? I'm not strong enough to dig."*

Now the hardest kind of manual labor both back then, and now, is digging. And this manager is a white-collar guy. And digging is real hard- but it is also humiliating. Digging is a menial job. And even though it is easier to find a digging job than it is a managerial position- he doesn't want to get his hands dirty. But on the other hand- this manager is not going to beg either. He says in verse 3, "**I'm ashamed to beg.**" So not only is he too weak to dig- he's also *ashamed* to dig; it's beneath him to dig and even to beg. So he's got a serious problem. "*I don't have a future,*" he thinks. But then a light goes off:

#### **Luke 16:4**

**I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.**

And then he puts his plan into action:

#### **Luke 16:5**

**And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he *began* saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'**

So this irresponsible manager is going to contact all the people who owe his master a debt. Now back in an agricultural world- debt paid in kind was often paid at the harvest. So if you owed somebody olive oil or wheat or any other commodity you paid when it was harvest time. And so these debts were outstanding and awaiting payment at harvest.

And this man is going to go to each of these debtors one-by-one, and he is going to try to strike a deal to discount their debt big time. And by doing that- these people would be beholding to him- because at this time- the people who owed the rich man don't know that the manager is being fired.

Now as we studied back in Chapter 14- in Jewish society reciprocation was a big deal. If somebody did something for you- you were obligated to do something for them. If somebody put on a luncheon, you put on a luncheon for them. If they put on a banquet for you, you had to put on a banquet for them. That was the way Jewish

society was in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- if somebody did a huge favor for you, you owed them a huge favor.

So now the manager who had already wasted his master's resources was now going to embezzle him. So we see that the manager here doesn't care about his boss- there's only one person on the planet he's concerned about and it's himself. So he's a typical guy of the world and he's going to get ahead *honestly*, if he can- but he isn't afraid to get ahead *dishonestly*- if honest doesn't work out.

So, he begins saying to the first, verse 5, "**How much do you owe my master?**" Check your records, contracts, substantial debts, and sit with him at the table, and this first one says, "a hundred measures of oil." Now one measure back then was called a "bath"- which was about 8.75 gallons. So a hundred measures would be 875 gallons. And the cost of that much oil back then would have been about 1,000 denarii. And 1,000 denarii would be over three years wages- so this was a pretty substantial debt.

So he says take your bill, sit down write 50 in your own handwriting; sign it and I'll sign it, and we got a new deal. Well, this guy can't sign quickly enough. Sit down quickly before any change of mind, before any fear sets in and get a 50% discount. Criminals, con-men, crooks are always in a hurry, aren't they, always. So with a stroke of the pen- this man just saved a year and a half of one man's earning off of his debt.

And then he goes to the second one. Verse 7, says, "How much do you owe? He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'take your bill and write eighty.'" Well this could be calculated about a thousand bushels of wheat, which would take about a hundred acres to produce, the value of which would equal eight to ten years of one's man labor. So a 20 percent reduction would be like a two-year reduction of labor- which is not very different that the one and a half year reduction of the man who got a higher percentage. So however you look at it- these are big discounts. And such deals were done in cases where weather had ruined the crop or wheat had seen a plague by locusts, or perhaps price fluctuations. Sometimes debts were restructured because of difficulties that came to bring change, but there was no external difficulty. This was all the man working a deal for himself. But all these people would be happy to sign up and of course everybody would assume that the master had told this guy to do it, that he was acting for

his master. He *always* acted for his master. They didn't know he had been terminated. So they all strike the deals. And he has just embezzled his master out of a fortune. He wasted it and now he's embezzled it in a sense by discounting it.

But then comes the big mystery- look again at the first part of verse 8:

**And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly...**

What? Up to now- we had some sympathy for this rich man. I mean he seemed like a poor victim- but this is a pretty ridiculous thing for him to say about a man who had done so much damage to him. But the master says, "*You're a shrewd guy- you are impressively shrewd.*" And so in the Parable- the rich man actually *commends* the manager who just stole from him for his shrewdness. Amazing.

And how did he act on his shrewdness? He reduced the debt that all the people who owed his master had. So he has done them all a lot of good. And now they are all profoundly obligated to him and they all owe him big time. And his plan is to go and claim those favors when he leaves this master and pick out of those debtors the situation that looks the best to him. So he's got a lot of options now- because he did this kind of discount for everybody- not just one- to create a wide range of options for himself.

So this manager is a sinful self-protective, conniving, maneuvering businessman who acts for his own future benefit in a very clever and ingenious way, using resources at his disposal with shrewdness to secure the future that he wants- regardless of whether it is moral or not. And then Jesus makes a simple but profound point at the end of verse 8:

**... for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.**

So, basically, Jesus was saying, "*Sinners are more shrewd than saints*". And the term "**sons of this age**" is talking about people in this world- who are *not* in the Kingdom of God- people who are part of this temporal world- the kingdom of darkness, the unrighteous, the unsaved

people who are *not* in God's Kingdom, who belong to this passing world. And Jesus says that these lost and unsaved people- are more clever in securing their own future in this life than the sons of light. In other words- the sons of this age are concerned about their worldly temporal earthly future here- because it's all they have, and they have become rather good at it over the last 6,000 years.

So in every aspect of this life- there are expressions of genius and ingenuity and cleverness and conniving, and sometimes corruption and graft, unimaginable and imaginable schemes for people to generate future wealth. And we are being bombarded with the mantra, "*Take care of your future*" and we're subject to advertising like this all the time.

And that is them. But what are *you* planning for? People in this world are using every kind of scheme and ingenuity conceivable to make sure the little time they have at the end of their life is comfortable. They have a very short future on this earth- just a few short years and it's astonishing how much effort, and manpower, and worry and hours and money that goes in to trying to make their last final years on this earth and in this life- comfortable.

So when it comes to human life in this age, in this world, Jesus says that the lost people are amazingly shrewd in taking care of their little brief future- more so, Jesus says, than the sons of light. And, of course, the reason for that is because the sons of light or saved people are more concerned about Heaven than they are retirement. They are infinitely more concerned with being found faithful than they are a quarter of a point move in the market. But listen to the Word of the Lord from **James 4:13-16**:

**13** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."

**14** Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

**15** Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

**16** But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

... yet the people in this generation work so hard to try to make their brief future to be what they want it to be.

But what about us? What about the “sons of light”? What about those of us whose life is in the age to come and those who are looking for that city whose Builder and Maker is God? What about those who live in the realm of Salvation- the Kingdom of Light, the realm of righteousness and holiness, those of us whose home is in Heaven, whose citizenship is in Heaven, whose inheritance is in Heaven, whose reward is in Heaven? How can the sons of light be so foolish in their preparation for a future that lasts forever?

So do you work as hard on the use of your material wealth and your possessions and your money for *eternal* purpose as you do for temporal ones? That's the question. Do you have an eternal perspective about money? Is that where you're investing your resources?

So now the Parable is finished and here comes the application. Jesus points us to three things, three Truths, three Lessons:

1. Money and others
2. Money and yourself
3. Money and God

So let's examine these quickly.

## 1. Money and Others

### Luke 16:9

**And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.**

So Jesus says here- **“Take your money and make friends”**. Now most people in the lost world do this all the time. They use their money to buy earthly friends. But here Jesus is telling His disciples to use their money to buy Heavenly friends. So He is saying, *“Use your money, literally to make friends who are going to welcome you into your eternal home.”* So what is that? These are the “friends” that will be standing on the edge of Glory when you arrive to embrace you because through your investment in the Gospel- and the extension of the Kingdom- these people heard and they believed, and that is why they are there.

And this is another example of teaching by going from the least to the greater. If an earthy conniving, cunning, shrewd, crafty guy does what he needs to do with resources available to him to achieve his little temporal future, then *how much more* should you, who have an eternal future, use your resources to plan for eternity?

So even though we're all going to Heaven if we truly know the Lord- we're *not* all going to have the same welcoming committee.

Now the phrase "*wealth or mammon of unrighteousness*" comes from the Aramaic word for money, possessions, and wealth. And it's "unrighteous" in the sense that it belongs to this unrighteous, passing world. So money is an element of this fallen world. And it belongs to the unrighteous life among sinners. It burns up. It says in verse 9, "**It fails**". So when your time to deal with money is over- it will fail. It's only for here; it's only a part of this fallen system. It doesn't matter, as we saw back in **Luke 12**, if you have huge crops and you build bigger barns and bigger barns and bigger barns and stuff more of our stuff in those bigger barns, the day is going to come when your soul is required and all that stuff will disappear out of your life.

So what are you doing about the future that lasts forever? It is amazing that the unrighteous wealth, the stuff of this fallen world can be applied in such a way as to produce a heavenly reward- but it can. Money belongs to *this* life. It belongs to *this* world. All material things belong to this world, and they will all fail, and money will fail, and it is true you cannot take it with you- but you *can* send the *fruit* of it in Gospel Ministry on ahead. And this is a wonderful and a gracious gift by God to us that transcends this world. You can use your money to make friends who will receive you into Heavenly dwellings, eternal dwellings. And that is the foundation of our Christian giving.

Now over in **Matthew 6**, Jesus said,

**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust destroy, thieves break in and steal.**

So there are lots of ways to lose your money. But Jesus teaches us to lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven where neither moth or rust destroy, where thieves do not break in or steal, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also.

So if your heart is on the "here and now"- you put your money here- on things passing away. And if your heart is over there- in Heaven- then you will put your money into things that promote that. So where your heart is- that is what determines where you put your money. So it's not so much that you "put your money where your mouth is"- human beings "put their money where their *heart* is".

And because we are *not* sons of this age, and because we *can't* take this money, this wealth, this stuff that God has given us with us- we should not use money to simply pad a few years of temporal life when it can be used to create a richness that will last forever. So use your money for *eternal* purposes. And you'll be welcomed into Heaven by all those, and you'll never know who they are until you get there, who were reached because you gave.

On the final day when your life ends- your money fails. You're separated from your money forever. You're going to go to Heaven and find out if any of it was used to purchase friends who are there to welcome you when you arrive. So use your money, beloved, for eternal uses. Give while you live to those ministries, those Gospel ministries, Church ministries that you know and you trust. Endless personal accumulation is sinful, wasteful, and robs us of eternal blessing. You give to the Lord, **Luke 6:38, "and He will give pressed down, shaken together, running over**, not just here but even more importantly in eternity. And you will enjoy the fruit of that forever and ever and ever. So first of all if we have the right attitude about money and others- we will invest in Gospel ministry that is winning others and advancing God's Kingdom.

## 2. Money and Ourselves

### **Luke 16:10**

**He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.**

So this Truth says that our circumstances don't determine our faithfulness- our character does. You hear people say, "*If I had more I'd give more.*" No, they wouldn't. It doesn't matter how much you have. The widow who had nothing- gave everything. But most people who have everything in this life- give nothing toward the Gospel. So a

person's willingness to give into God's Kingdom is not about his circumstances. It's based on a view of Heaven and a view of earth. It's a perspective that has captured your heart.

If you are concerned about what is eternal, if you are concerned about your money being used as a gracious Act of God to actually help proclaim the Gospel around the world, and you are investing in friends who will welcome you into Heaven, that's a perspective whether you have little or much. Dealing with money with a heavenly view is never about how much you have. It's about integrity and spiritual character. If you're interested in investing in eternity- you do it. And if you're not- you won't. Your Treasure always goes where your heart is- regardless of the amount you have.

So who are you? Are you faithful or not faithful? And if you're faithful in a very little thing- then you will be faithful in much. And if you're unrighteous in a very little thing- if you're sinful with the little that you have- then you'll be just as sinful with more because that's a reflection of the true condition of your heart.

So it's not about if only you had more but rather who are you right now? The amount you possess is not the test of your character. If you are self-indulgent, if you're materialistic, if you're irresponsible, if you're any of these things with the little that you have- if you had more you'd be the same. And people like that are simply *not* committed to Heaven. Now look at this same Truth from a different perspective- look at verse 11,

### **Luke 16:11**

**Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you?**

So not only what you do with your money is an indication of either your faithfulness or your unrighteousness- but this also has an impact in your eternal reward. That's what verse 11 is saying. What verse 11 is saying is, *"Look, if you haven't been faithful in how you employed your righteous money, who would ever entrust the true riches to you? Do you think you're going to get a reward in Heaven for that? If more of your waking time is spent thinking about money than not thinking about money, this is a huge part of our life. And if you don't invest your*

*wealth in the work of Redemption you're impoverishing yourself in the future."*

So the real question is: Who is God? He is the eternal Treasure and the eternal Reward. So do you think God is going to reward you in eternity if you have frittered and wasted your opportunity, your stewardship here? You can buy yourself endless junk and trinkets and creature comforts and earthly possessions, and all the shallow corrupting temporary things that burn up. But then when you come into the Presence of the Lord do you really expect Him to give you the true riches, literally the true things? That eternal reward that comes to those that are faithful? But here comes another zinger in verse 12.

### **Luke 16:12**

**And if you have not been faithful in *the use of that which is another's*, who will give you that which is your own?**

So this starts out with the issue of faithfulness, then it moves from the issue of faithfulness, in general, just being faithful in little and much, to the faithful use of money, and now it moves to the fact that this faithful use of money isn't even yours. That is true stewardship. You don't even own what you think you own. It belongs to another. Who? God. You're just a steward- a manager. You're like the manager in the Parable. You don't own what you have- it's all God's.

I expect the sons of this age to live in indulgence, exploitation, selfishness, hoarding, conspicuous consumption, and waste. I expect them to be smart, shrewd, and cunning. I even expect them to be criminal, if they can get away with it. Because it's all about getting as much as you can, and stashing it all away to live the way you want to live here. So we expect that with people who have no sense of accountability to God. They feel like it's theirs. They pulled themselves up by their own boot straps and they earned it and it belongs to them and they have the right to do with it as they see fit.

But with Christians- we know that nothing that we have down here is ours. *Everything* we have down here- we are accountable to God for it- because ultimately- it all belongs to God, and He asks that we would use it for His Glory. Like the **Matthew 25** parable where the man doles out a certain amount to all his servants and comes back to see what they've done with what He gave them in trust.

Listen, friends- everything you have is a stewardship issue- not just the money you give to God and not just what you put into the Church. *Everything* you have belongs to God- including the next beat of your heart. And nothing is guaranteed past right now. And so *everything* is on loan from God and everything will be taken back to God and so everything is to be used for God's Glory. Everything- even your eating and drinking is to be to the Glory of God.

And so Jesus says that if you're sinful in the use of your money, who then is going to entrust to you the true riches? You're going to forfeit your reward, and if you haven't been faithful in using what is God's, then who's going to give you that which is your own, which is another way of saying you're also going to forfeit your eternal reward. You're going to be cheated, that which you look forward to you won't receive. As I say we'll all be in Heaven- but we're *not* all going to have the same welcoming committee, and nor are we all going to have the same rewards.

So faithfulness is the real issue here. So look at your own heart and see if you are faithful in how you use your money- understanding that this has implications for your eternal reward, verse 11, the true riches, the true things, and faithful use of what is rightfully God's. And if you're *not* faithful with that- then you'll forfeit that which really could belong to you in eternity.

Now the tragic irony of this sinful kind of indulgence is that the more you waste what is God's on yourself and on useless earthly things, the more you accumulate here- the less you will have forever. And that is because the true riches are over there. What you really want to own is the Treasure that God gives to those that have been faithful stewards of money. You have to have the **2Corinthians 4:18** perspective,

**We look not at the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen. The things that are seen are temporal; the things that are not seen are eternal.**

### **3. Money and God**

#### **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 devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**

Now this Truth is based on the verb that means: *to serve*. It is the Greek word *douleuo*, and it's a word that means: *bond slavery*. So no slave can serve two masters. So serving God is a life that consumes and demands *everything* from you. So this is not the concept of an occasional act of obedience. This is not a part-time job or a hobby. This is not even talking about an 8 to 5 full-time job. This is not about dating Jesus or having some kind of distant relationship with Jesus that is based on your convenience.

This is about being a purchased slave; it is about being *owned* by Jesus- about being the bought and paid for property of the Master- Who has absolute Lordship control over the slave- to the point where that slave could never have that kind of relationship with anybody else.

This is a slave who has no spare time that was his own. He has no possessions that do not belong to his Master. So the thought behind this Statement by Jesus is that of the full-time service of a bond-slave to his Master.

And Jesus says that a slave who has been bought and paid for by the shed Blood of the Lamb of God *cannot* serve God and mammon- Good and Wealth. They cannot. They don't have the ability or the power. You're going to hate one and love the other, or you're going to hold to one and despise the other. So there has to be a conscious and purposeful choice. Either you're going to serve God- which means that you're going to take your wealth and invest it in what honors God- or you're going to serve money which means you're going to take it and use it for what you want here in this life. But you can't do both. So you have to decide. And conflicting demands like this will produce conflicting emotions and attitudes.

And if you want to use your money for the here and now- you're not going to like sermons like this. If you want to pour your money into this world and plow your fortune here and pad your temporal life- then you're not going to like sermons like this.

But if you're saved and serving God- then you're saying to yourself, "*Wow, I need to take another look at what I'm doing here.*" This language is very strong here and Jesus makes no apology for it, and neither should we. The Incarnate Good says that we can't serve both. So I'm going to hate God and love money, or I'm going to despise money and I'm going to hold on to God. And instead of feeling bad

about passages like this because they intimidate our use of my money, we should feel good about passages like this because we can celebrate in our hearts that we truly do love God.

500 years ago- John Calvin said,

"Where riches hold the dominion of the heart, God has lost His authority."

About 100 years ago- A. W. Pink wrote this:

"These two are diametrically opposed, God and money. One commands you to walk by faith, the other to walk by sight. One to be humble, the other to be proud. One to set your affection on things above, the other to set them on the things that are on the earth. One to look at the things that are unseen and eternal, the other to look at the things that are seen and temporal; one to have your conversation in heaven, the other to cleave to the dust; one to be careful for nothing, the other to be all anxiety. One to be content with such things as you have, the other enlarge your desires. One to be ready to distribute, the other to withhold; one to look at the things of others, the other to look at only one's own things; one to seek happiness in the Creator, the other to seek happiness in the creature. Is it not plain, you can't serve two such masters."

Possession of wealth is a gift from God- given to us as a stewardship to be used for the Father's Glory. And the way we handle money demonstrates our character and our Gospel concern for others, and our desire to be good managers and to receive an eternal reward and to be pleasing to our Lord. Choosing to honor God with our money is to say earthly wealth is not my master. Choosing to honor God with our money is to say I want to take this stewardship and use what is His for His Glory.

So money is a test. It is a test of your attitude toward others- are you really pouring it into reaching people who can be friends for eternity? And it is a test about being faithful- faithful with what isn't even yours to use it to honor God. And money is a test to determine if you are truly a servant of the Lord and joyfully treasuring Him above all that this world has to offer.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.