

Stewardship: Your Best Life Later

Luke 16:1-15

Outline/Summary

Understanding the Parable (1-9)

- *Not an easy one to preach nor one I'd pick on my own*
- *Systematic expositional preaching--ensures we preach the whole of God's Word.*
 - ESV **2 Timothy 4:2-4** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.
- *Money is a theme in 1/3 of the approx. 40 parables-- It is an important topic.*
- *This is not an easy text (16 interpretations in single resource) to understand or to hear*
 - *sounds like wicked man is commended for his extortion*
 - *sounds like Jesus is saying we can earn heaven by making friends with our money...*
 - *various attempts to interpret motivations or fill in the rest of the story... there is no "rest of the story"--this is a parable (made up by Jesus to teach a lesson)*
- *actually an exhortation to acting shrewdly with forward thinking*

The Implications of the Parable (1-9)

1. All of Us are Unfaithful Stewards

"A steward's primary goal is to be found faithful by his master as the steward uses the master's resources to accomplish the tasks delegated to him." --Randy Alcorn

- *wealth, talents, ... children are not only gifts from God but assignments*
- *In Christ we are called/restored to the role of stewardship*

ESV **1 Corinthians 4:1** This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

ESV **1 Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

2. The Boss will come Accounting

- *Not that some is ours and some is God's: everything we have is from God and for God (Rom 11:36)*

3. Time is Short

- *The manager had a short time between being busted (receiving the news that the truth is out about him) and giving an account of his stewardship.*
- *We too have a short time. Either death or the return of Christ will bring us before God*

ESV **James 4:14** yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

ESV **1 Thessalonians 5:2** For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

4. Be Future-minded (vs. Present-minded)

^{ESV} **Matthew 6:19** "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

5. Be Shrewd (wise, clever, strategic, bold & risky, stringently goal-focused)

"Everything is either a tool or an idol"

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 6:17** As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

6. Be Generous

- *Though this man is selfish, verse 9 implies we are to be generous and others-minded.*
- *Jim Elliot ("Beyond the Gates of Splendor") is famously quoted:
"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."
Few know that the very next line quotes Luke 16:9*

The Rationales of the Parable (10-15)

1. Faithfulness with Little Results in Much (10a)

- *not a call to be careless/unwise*
- *not a call to give in order to get from God*
- *having little is a test--what you give when you have little speaks more than what we (claim we) would give if we had much. (the love of money is not a sin of the rich alone)*

2. Faithfulness in the Temporary Results in the Eternal (10b-11)

- *not "if" but "when" riches fail*
- **Exhortation:** *think on, pray for, and live like Col 3 (Ref. see memory verses)*

3. Faithfulness with Another's Results in Our Own (12)

- *not "do good with your own, then you can have another's"*
- *stewardship concept: "do good with another's [God's], and someday he will give us what shouldn't be ours"*
- **Exhortation:** *think on, pray for, and live like Col 3 (Ref. see memory verses)*

4. You Can't Serve Two Masters (13)

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 6:9** But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

5. You Can't Justify Yourself (15)

- *Pharisees were lovers of money and "justifying" themselves before men. (v. 14)*
- *Taught to disciples & assumes the gospel (not justification-by-money-works re-write)*

Study Helps and Application

Discussion 1: Jesus used this story to illustrate the importance of shrewdness with respect to the future. The manager was commended not for his dishonesty, but for his shrewdness.

- Discuss the difference between a believer's and an unbeliever's perspective on the future. (*eternal vs. "he who dies with the most toys wins"*)
 - *A message for unbelievers? (no--to disciples) Exhortation to believers? (yes)*
- Given that everything we have is a stewardship (you and all that you have belong to God) and the Christian is to view the future from an eternal perspective, how ***ought*** that to affect how we use our time, energy, talents and resources?
 - ***Have*** you been investing time, energy, talents, and resources with an eternal perspective, or more like your worldly neighbors? To build God's Kingdom or your own?

Discussion 2: Ryan exhorted us to think, pray, and live Colossians 3:

^{ESV} **Colossians 3:1** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

- First things first: "If then you have been raised..." Have you repented and believed the gospel? (*Don't skip this, never assume people have!*). Everything else from here is about believers.
- "Set your minds on things above" command is given in a radical context: "If you have been raised ... you have died Christ ... is your life ... [therefore] ...put to death ... what is earthly."
 - *Are you considering yourselves dead not only to sin (Rom 6:11), but to earthly pursuits? (none of us do--we are a work in progress!)*

If it hasn't gotten personal enough

Optional 1: What are you finding most convicting in these texts as you apply them to your life? In what ways do you need to repent?

^{ESV} **James 5:16a** Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

Reminder: Repentance is a lifestyle for the believer--get used to this Biblical language. As "repent and believe" is the consistent call throughout Scripture, remind one another that these are "inseparable graces" or two sides of the same coin. Repent AND believe. Believe that: 1) our perfect Savior paid the price for that sin; 2) the Comforter (Holy Spirit) can empower us to change, especially when we understand that we cannot change on our own.

As time permits

Discussion 3: Self justification and God's knowledge of our hearts.

^{ESV} **Luke 16:15** And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

- We commonly hear people say "God knows my/your heart." This is true. Also note how God's judgment is ultimately according to ways/fruit of his deeds:

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 17:10** "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

- Is this *good* news? (*no, this is Law and what makes the good news... so good!*)

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 17:9** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

^{ESV} **Matthew 15:19** For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

^{ESV} **Mark 7:21** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

- The Pharisees sought to justify themselves before men through external religious piety. Talk about ways in which we try to appear, to the world and one another, more righteous than we really are.
 - We know God is not impressed with these outward appearances--what motivates us to keep doing it? (*Hint: Where do pride and fear of man fit in?*)

Discussion 4: Justification and transformation (from money servants to God servants).

We know God can save us and change us. Soak up the best news you could ever imagine...It is God who sanctifies (makes us holy); it is God who justifies! Notice how actively and completely God saves:

^{ESV} **Romans 8:26** Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And **he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.** ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also **called**, and those whom he called he also **justified**, and those whom he justified he also **glorified.** ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? **It is God who justifies.** ³⁴ Who is to condemn? **Christ Jesus** is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, **who indeed is interceding for us.**

- In the "Golden Chain of Redemption" (vv 29-30) pick out transformation language. (*"conformed to the image of his Son"--this is no servant of mammon!*)
- How is the bad news of God "knowing our hearts" resolved? (*Spirit intercedes*)

Memory Verses

^{ESV} **Colossians 3:1** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Resources for Further Study

- *The Treasure Principle (Discovering the Secret of Joyful Giving)* by Randy Alcorn