

PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

Luke 16:1-9

INTRODUCTION

A. What is a steward?

1. Literally, it means a keeper of a hall.
 - a) In Medieval times a shop steward was the one who stayed at the hall and prepared the meals for the other craftsmen who were committed to other tasks.
 - b) Since he was always present, prospective employers left messages with him about needed workers.
 - c) The steward would then find out who would be available to do that work at the given time.
 - d) A good steward made sure that all the men of the guild had an equal amount of work to do.
2. Basically, he was someone who was responsible to **“look after the affairs of another person.”**
3. A stewardess is one who looks after the comfort and safety of the passengers entrusted to her.
4. The Bible tells us that we are all given **stewardship roles** in our service to God, ***and to each other!***

B. It has been suggested by someone more noble than I, that: **What you are is God's gift to you. What you make of yourself is your gift to God! Eph.5:15-16-** *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, {16} redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

1. If God has given us work to do we must be up to the task or else be subject to His wrath & judgment.
2. **1 Tim.4:14-15-** *“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you....{15} Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.”*

C. Our attitude toward stewardship is evident in everything we do! Consider some examples of stewardship from the business world.

1. **J. L. Kraft**, head of the Kraft Cheese Corporation, who had given approximately 25 percent of his enormous income to Christian causes for many years, said, " The only investments I ever made which have paid constantly increasing dividends, is the money I have given to the Lord. We can do our greatest service in leading men to understand the truth of God concerning the stewardship of time and money."
2. **John D. Rockefeller** explained a great principle when he said: "I never would have been able to tithe the first million dollars I ever made if I had not tithed my first salary, which was \$1.50 a week."
3. There are notable exceptions. Says **Fritz Kreisler**, a distinguished, world-renowned violinist: "I never look upon the money I earn as my own. It is public money. It is only a fund entrusted to my care for proper disbursement. I am constantly endeavoring to reduce my needs to the minimum. In all these years of my so-called success in music, we have not built a home for ourselves. Between it and us stand all the homeless in the world."
4. From the beginning of his business career, **John Wanamaker**, called the “merchant prince of Philadelphia,” is said to have dedicated one tenth of his increase to the Lord.
5. Likewise, **William Colgate**, the great soap and perfume manufacturer, rose to fame and wealth while consistently paying a tithe of his earnings into the gospel treasury. This he recognized as the minimum requirement designated by divine wisdom; and year by year as God prospered his efforts and multiplied his wealth, Mr. Colgate gladly gave far more than a tenth. Today a great university that wears his name stands as a monument to his fidelity and generosity.
 - a) **Prov.3:9-** *“Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase;”*
 - b) **2 Cor.9:10-11-** *“Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11) while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.”*

D. Money, in itself, is neither good nor bad; it's dangerous because **love for it** may **cause us to become bad.**

1. With money a man can do much good; and with money he can do much evil.
2. With money a man can selfishly serve his own desires; OR, IN A BETTER VEIN, with money he can generously answer to the cry of his neighbor's need.

3. With money a man can buy his way to the forbidden things and facilitate the path of wrongdoing; OR, IN A BETTER VEIN, with money he can make it easier for someone else to live as God intended!
4. YES, money DOES bring power, and REMEMBER that power is always a double-edged thing; it is **a power to do good** and ALSO it is **a power to do evil**.
 - a) **1 Tim.6:10**- *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*
 - b) **Heb.13:5**- *“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

I. A CHRISTIAN’S LIFE MUST BE CHARACTERIZED BY CONDUCT WITHOUT COVETOUSNESS!

- A. Sometimes it is difficult to work for someone **without visualizing his possessions as your own!**
 1. There are a lot of workers who truly feel that it isn’t stealing when they take home different tools that the company has provided for them to use in their work!
 2. **What do YOU call it** when someone **takes something** they didn’t buy or didn’t have permission to take?
 3. I have heard men jokingly say that the tools they are using at home are just **“on a permanent loan.”** OR, *“Oh, I’m not stealing anything, I’m just not giving it back!”*
- B. Such is the case with the steward in this parable. He was making a bed for himself with another man’s blankets.
 1. It’s easy to be generous with someone else’s goods.
 2. That may be the reason why he was losing his job in the first place.
- C. For whose benefit do you feel this parable was given by the Lord?
 1. We MIGHT figure that it was meant to teach the disciples **good working habits**, but on a closer look, especially at **vs.14**, we can see a little more clearly its true meaning!
 2. **Luke 16:14**- *“Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.”*
- D. The Pharisees were the unjust stewards who were disregarding strict allegiance to God’s word and demanding less rigorous spiritual living in order to maintain their worldly standards.

II. JESUS LET’S THEM HAVE IT

- A. Look at **Lk.16:15**- *“And He said to them, You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”*
- B. God had given the people the full law to observe and here the Pharisees were cutting that observance in half through covetousness.
- C. Jesus told us in **vs. 17**- *“But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.”*
- D. God’s word is just as abiding NOW as it was in Jesus’ day!
 1. Jesus had to deal with the Pharisees more than one time concerning this attitude of materialism!
 2. In **Matt.19:3-9**, Jesus points out their errors in their lack of respect for fidelity to the marriage relationship!
 - a) I read recently where one suggested that the Jews pled for and obtained consent to those writings of divorcements in order to count those guilty of such as “faithful” **SO THEY MIGHT CONTINUE TITHING AS THEY OUGHT.**
 - 1) I’m afraid that some of the same type of justifying ourselves has crept into the church today.
 - 2) **NO AMOUNT OF generous CONTRIBUTIONS** can offset: immorality, or negligence, or ungodliness in any form!

- b) THE LORD doesn't allow the "SALE OF INDULGENCES" to offset neglected items in our Christianity! [Larger contributions to offset sins---] SUCH AS:
- 1) A lack of personal evangelism. 2 Tim.2:2.
 - 2) Not fulfilling parental responsibilities. Eph.6:4.
 - 3) Not visiting the sick, etc. Matt.25:35-36.
 - 4) Not serving the brethren. Matt.25:40- "...to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, ..." Jno.13:35- "by this will all men know.."

III. THE EXPLANATION MAKES THE PARABLE CLEAR

- A. Now, let's read the parable again, and let's concentrate especially on verse 9 and I hope you can catch the sarcasm by which the Lord stresses their hopelessness in depending on those in the world!
- B. Luke 16:1-2: *He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. 2) "So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'* **We are all going to be called to give an account just as the Pharisees were going to be called to accountability.**
- C. vs. 3-7: *"Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. 4) 'I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.' 5) "So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6) "And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So 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?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'* **Just because some religious teacher may say that you can do less in order to be saved, DOES NOT MEAN that God will be satisfied with any less.**
- D. vs. 8: *"So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light."* **There is no argument that the sons of this world are more shrewd than those who are standing for the full adherence to the Gospel. [shrewd means: deceitful/ sly/ deceptive/ conniving/ insidious]**
1. How do you suppose movements like Promise Keepers can generate and keep large crowds of men.
 2. All they have to do is mention the Bible theme of salvation by grace, proclaim that it's all in God's hands, and that you don't have to be spiritually pure or obey anything! **It's BASIS from inception was to establish an allegiance to FAMILY – NOT primarily to GOD!**
 3. They teach that God will accept you regardless of your allegiance to His commands [viz., **regardless how much or how little you obey Him!**
 - a) Remember OUR LORD IS A KING, and thus has the power to command.
 - b) He's not very interested IN OUR VOTES concerning those things He's made obligatory!
- E. vs.9: *"And I say to you, [or, Go ahead and] make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon [and just see how far that gets you], that when [not IF, but WHEN] you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home."* **AND FRIEND, JUST WHERE DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT EVERLASTING HOME IS GOING TO BE, AND WITH WHOM?**
- F. Now let's read the *rest of the story* of what Jesus had to say. Luke 16:10-13- *"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11) "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12) "And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what 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 loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."*

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION:

- A. There is a thought-provoking article entitled, "***If You Are 35, You Have 500 Days to Live.***"
1. Its thesis was that when you subtract the time spent sleeping, working and tending to personal matters, to hygiene, odd chores and medical matters, to eating, traveling, and miscellaneous time-stealers, ***in the next thirty-six years*** you will have the equivalent of only about five hundred days left to spend as you wish.
 2. No wonder the Psalmist advised, "*So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.*"
- B. Well, stewards, how much time do you have left.
1. Have we really been profitable to the Lord, or have our spent lives been unprofitable in His kingdom?
 2. It's quite possible we may have to start ***working extra hard, or even putting in some "overtime"*** to make up for lost or contrary efforts or time which were misspent in our younger days.
 3. **There's not a better time than now to start catching up.**