

The Parable of the Steward

Luke 16:1-17

Preface: The difficulty in the lead-up to today's message

1. The difficulty of the parable and the conviction to be faithful
2. The difficulty is that this parable reveals a point of conflict in my personal life that I have been wrestling with.
 - a. I am preaching to myself

Introduction:

- **Story:** I know I wouldn't be here today if it were not for the investment of others in my life. The investment of their time. The investment of their knowledge. The investment of their care. The investment of their love. The investment of their encouragement. The investment of their possessions. The investment of their money.
 - My mom: When others discouraged me she invested and believed in God's calling for my life and paid through my first year of Bible college.
 - My sister: Buy me books. This investment awakened in me a desire to grow in Christ through reading and studying.
 - Youth Leaders: The investment of youth leaders who spent time with me using their own personal resources to meet up.
 - Mentors: Pastor James
 - He invested in my life during my young adult years. We would gather to do our devotions. He was investing in my life. It was through simple coffee and lunch meet-ups that seemed ordinary at the time.
- People invested in my life and it would be remiss to not mention how money and the sharing of possessions played a role in my journey to know God and grow in my relationship with God.

Main Idea:

- Faithful stewardship in the kingdom of God is interconnected to how we use our wealth to invest in people because people matter to God.

Scripture Reading: Luke 16:1-17

PRAYER

Context:

- **The Gospel of Luke:**

- A theme throughout Luke is that the gospel is for ALL and that all are welcomed into the kingdom of God. There is an emphasis on Jesus and his mission “to seek and save the lost”
- Running parallel to that theme is the progress of the disciples as they learn to count the cost of following Jesus.
 - The danger of riches is constantly emphasized in connection with following Jesus. He warns his disciples not to set their hearts upon riches and to give generously to the poor.
 - One difficult ask is Jesus saying, “Sell your possessions and give to the needy”

- **The Preceding Chapter:**

- In the lead-up to chapter 16. Chapter 15 has three parables:
 - Jesus is drawing sinners near to him, he “receives them and eats with them”. This offends the religious experts of Jesus’ day. They viewed it as a transgression toward God’s holiness. If Jesus truly were a righteous man, they reasoned, then he would not associate with such people. He would keep himself pure and separate from sinners.
- Jesus’ response is telling three parables.
- The parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son
 - These parables have a common theme. That which is lost is found and when that happens there is such great rejoicing, Jesus reveals the great lengths to which God goes through to make that happen.
- I read those stories and can't help but conclude that people matter to God. It is with this understanding in mind that we read the parable of the steward.

Scripture Observation:

- **Preface:**

- V:1 Who is Jesus speaking to? Disciples
 - Jesus is about to present an upside-down view on the stewardship of money and what faithful stewardship looks like in the kingdom of God.

1. **Parable Narration v:1-8:**

a. Point of Conflict: V:1-2

i. V:1

1. The two main characters of the story are introduced: The rich man and manager (steward)
2. The conflict is introduced: Charges against Manager for wasting the rich man's possessions
 - a. He has been dishonest in his stewardship. He was misusing and wasting that which didn't belong to him

ii. V:2

1. Rich Man responds to the charges by confronting his manager
2. Manager loses three things
 - a. "Turn in your account of your management"-his responsibility
 - b. "You can no longer be manager" his title
 - c. By default his means of making a living is lost

b. Point of Internal Conflict: V:3-4

i. V:3

1. The Internal wrestle of the manager
 - a. "What shall I do?"
 - b. "I am not strong enough to dig"
 - c. "I am ashamed to beg"

ii. V:4

1. He devises a plan of action and is set on carrying it out. "I have decided what to do"
2. "So when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses"
 - a. He goes into self-preservation mode by planning ahead for the future that awaits him so he can be taken care of. His internal motivation for his plan

of action is self-preservation. He is thinking about himself.

- c. Point of External Response: V:5-8
 - i. V:5-7
 - 1. The manager puts his plan into action and begins to summon those in debt to the rich man/his master and begins reducing their debt.
 - 2. Scripture says “one by one” so it must be more than the two examples we read. The rich man is incurring huge losses while the manager is securing his future.
 - 3. How does this secure his future?
 - a. Those in debt would have been overjoyed and seen this as an act of generosity and part of their culture was the repaying of favors. So he would have favors lined up and he would be in good standing with people because of his generosity.
- The anticipation now shifts toward the rich man/the master. How shall he respond?
 - d. Point of Shock
 - i. V:8A “The master commended (praised) the **dishonest** manager for his **shrewdness**”
 - 1. The individual: The manager is dishonest
 - a. Charged for wasting his master’s possessions
 - b. Self-Seeking in his motivation
 - c. Gained favors with people through unjust means
 - 2. The action: Though he was dishonest he demonstrated shrewdness
 - a. The word shrewdness here is connected with being prudent in dealing with people.

2. **Jesus' Response: v:8B-13**

a. V:8-9 Steward Wealth

- i. Jesus is showing his disciples how they should steward their wealth
 1. Use wealth as a means so that lost people can be found. To help those in need. To love your neighbor (remember the parable of the good samaritan).
 - a. "Use wealth for eternal spiritual purposes. Use wealth to meet people's needs, Invest in people's lives to do as much good for the glory of God and the eternal good of others." John Piper
 2. Story: Church of the Blessed
 - a. Ex-Convict

b. V:10-12 Steward Faithfully

- i. Jesus is showing that what is required in our use of wealth is FAITHFULNESS with what we have been given.
 1. There is a journey of surrender in this area of our lives in acknowledging that what we have belongs to God and we are stewards of what belongs to Him vs being stewards of what belongs to us.
 - a. The amount that we have doesn't matter. Whether it be little or much, what is required is faithfulness
 - 2.

c. V:13 Steward Freely

- i. Jesus shows what will obstruct faithfulness
 1. Love of Money
 2. "Money is a great servant, but a bad master"
 3. Previous parables: Parable of the foolish rich man, and prodigal son have money as a point conflict.
 - a. Two brothers arguing over inheritance
 - b. One son choosing family inheritance over family relationship
 - c. Relatable in Hong Kong where family conflict is a common occurrence due to inheritance
 4. Love for God and People frees us. When we begin to give generously we begin to shift to a place where money is no longer our master.

Conclusion:

- God's kingdom requires a decision. What is the decision being required? What kind of steward will I be?
 - Faithful stewardship in the kingdom of God is interconnected to how we use our wealth to invest in people because people matter to God.
 - If we are not using our wealth for people to know God, for people to be like Him, and to make Him known then we are not faithful in our stewardship but dishonest.

Jesus Ridiculed

- d. V:14-17
 - i. The Pharisees heard these things, and their response was to ridicule Jesus.
 - ii. Why? They were Lovers of Money
 - 1. Jesus confronts the idols in our hearts

Gospel Solution

- People matter to God. He sent Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice.