

## **STEWARDSHIP**

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### **Luke 16**

- 1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.
- 2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.
- 3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.
- 4 I am 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 lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?
- 6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.
- 7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.
- 8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.
- 9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.
- 10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.
- 11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?
- 12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

This is a great lesson. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense when you first read it until you sit down and look at it closely.

The older I get the more that I understand that I don't know anything. The understanding that we think that we have sometimes is not what you think.

Jesus is speaking to His disciples. He is going to tell them a story about a rich land owner and a steward. The steward is the individual that is in charge of the land owner's land and all that he has. All that he possesses is in the steward's control. When you look at Palestine during this time, it was not uncommon for someone to own land and not live on the land. He would rent the land out to someone or maybe have many renters. He would put a steward over all that he had. All the renters would answer to the steward and the steward would answer to the land owner. This is the story about that.

Jesus said, "...There was a certain rich man, which had a steward..." A steward was an individual that was to be trust worthy because he was handling another man's property. The steward did not own one thing. It didn't belong to him. Everything that he was in control of belonged to someone else.

Think about what the Bible says about being faithful stewards. The Bible says that if a man is going to be a steward then he has to be faithful. We think sometimes, that everything that we have is ours in this life. That's not the case. We brought nothing into this world; we came into this world naked and we are going out naked. We don't own anything. There is nothing here in this life that I can lay claim on and say that it is mine.

There are some things that God has placed in our control that He owns. We have in our control a lot of things. One thing is time. I don't own time. I can't control time. I can't stop the clock. I can take the battery out of the one on the wall back there, but that does not mean that time stops. That clock may stop, but time does

not stop. We can do all kinds of things to try to stop the aging process, but time goes on.

We have some things in our control that God has given us that we need to use. We have the responsibility to deal with it in a right way. God gives us twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. God expects you and me to use that in the right way. Time belongs to Him. We are not going to be here forever. While we are here we need to take the time that God has given us and use it wisely. We need to be a wise steward of the time that God gives us.

As we look at this story, the money that you have in your pocket tonight, what you have in your bank account; does not belong to you. You may say that I have worked for it all of my life and I have accumulated it. You can say that if you want to. When you got saved, you become the Lord's servant. Everything that you have belongs to Him. He is just allowing you to be steward over it for awhile. Being a steward is an awesome responsibility. It has a lot of privileges that goes along with it, but also an awesome responsibility for me and for you to be faithful in how we take control and how we use those things in the right way.

Five seconds after you step from this life into the next spiritual dimension; after you step through the veil of the shadow of death; all that you have in this life, you won't even think about. We have a responsibility as God's stewards. God has given us things, God has given us time, God has given health, God has given us a body, and there are a lot of things that we are stewards over. It doesn't belong to you, it doesn't belong to me; it belongs to God, but we have a responsibility to be faithful in using it in the right way that brings glory to Him that owns it.

We don't think how serious it is when we do not use what God has allowed us to be stewards over for His glory. It is serious.

The Bible says, "...and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods." The steward here that is over this rich man's property has been accused

by someone of wasting the rich man's money or lands. He has been accused of taking things that does not belong to him. He's been accused of doing things with that which didn't belong to him for his own use.

If you look at politics through time, we have seen people take things that did not belong to them that they were just stewards over; they have embezzled it and took it for their own use and gain. This is what this guy had done. He was a crook. He had taken things and used them for his own benefit that did not belong to him. Now this gets back to the fellow that owns the goods.

In verse two, "How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." The rich man gets word that his steward is embezzling from him and he goes to him and says, "I'm hearing that you have been an unfaithful steward." He tells his steward that he wants him to get the books out and we are going to have an audit of the books and you are going to show me where all this stuff is at. He was not accusing him. He was giving him every opportunity to clear his name. He was giving him every opportunity to show him that he had done right. He was giving him the benefit of the doubt.

He tells his steward that I have heard this of you, give an account of your stewardship for thou mayest no longer be steward. In other words he is saying here, If you have done what has been reported to me that you have done and the books don't add up then you will no longer be my steward. Do you think that is serious?

A steward didn't own a thing that was here. He had been given this job. He had accepted this job and probably getting paid well for this job. The steward did not own one thing. His lord, his master trusted him and he had put this steward in control of this vast estate. Now he has embezzled from it. Now he has to give an account for what he has done. Now he is caught.

If we would all be honest...I know that we give well here at this church and I know that most people here have a very giving heart. I know that sometimes we think that our giving stops at ten percent. We say that we want to give ten percent to God and ninety percent belongs to us. God can do what He wants to with the ten percent, but the ninety percent we can keep and do what we want to with that. It does not belong to you. You might say, "Well I work for that. That belongs to me." It doesn't belong to you. It belongs to God. God gave you the ability, strength, wisdom to do whatever you do to get whatever you have got; God has placed that within your hands to be able to be used for His glory. It all belongs to Him; it does not belong to you.

Let's don't stick our chest out and brag about what we do or don't do because it all belongs to God. Every dime that I have, every dollar that I have, every possession that I have, and life itself--it all belongs to God. Don't ever forget that. Don't ever think that it belongs to you. If you do, you are going to get ready to learn a hard lesson.

The Bible says that "...life consisteth not in the abundance of things in which you posses." Living here on planet earth does not consist of what we own or what we don't own. Until we get to the place in life where we can allow things to work for us, that we can allow what we have to be our servants instead of being our masters; until we get to that point in life then we will not understand how much God loves us and how much God wants to bless us so that we can bless other people. That's truth!

This guy gets caught. Look at what it says here. "Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." He is saying now, "I am caught." He starts wondering what he is going to do. The rich man will put me out of my stewardship and I will no longer have a job. He says here: "...I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." There probably was not anything wrong with him, as far as, getting him to do manual labor, but he didn't want to work that way.

Everyone wants to work in a suit and no one wants to get their hands dirty anymore. Everybody wants to work in the office where the air conditioner is at, but everyone cannot do that. He was probably just too lazy to dig. Not only that but he also says that to beg I am ashamed. I think that what he is trying to say here, "for me to go back and ask forgiveness of my master for what I have done, to beg for forgiveness, I'm too proud to do that. Isn't it sad today, even in my life and in your life; when God comes along, we get caught sometimes. Christian people get caught sometimes. When God comes along and says I want you to give an account of your stewardship, I want you to give an account to me with what you are doing with what I have entrusted to you; when we start taking a count, we sometimes have to say, "Lord, I'm guilty." "Lord, I have not done with what you have given me, what I should have done."

Instead of asking the Lord for forgiveness, we are too proud to do that. We all mess up a lot. None of us have any halos over our heads. We would be a whole lot better to ask God to forgive us for the wrongs that we do instead of trying to manipulate things, situations and people; it would be a whole better for us to ask God to forgive us, cleanse us and move on; than it would be for us to get deeper and deeper in sin. That's what this guy is going to do.

There is no doubt in my mind that the rich guy that he was working for was a good guy. I don't know what all would have happened, the thought of asking for forgiveness never entered his mind. He said that "I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed."

He continues, "I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses." What can I do when I am put out of my stewardship and lose my job to make all these folks that I have dealt with take care of me? That's what he is thinking here. He's not sorry that he gets caught. He is sorry that he is going to lose his job.

He does not want to dig. He does not want to ask for forgiveness. He now is thinking about how he is going to live and pay the bills. He starts rolling this around in his mind how that he can use those folks that he had dealt with when he was the steward. How can I use these folks, so that when I lose my job, they will take care of me? Now that's a crook.

One point of this story is what this guy is doing. This guy is thinking about the future. Not in the right way, but he is thinking about what the future holds. I am going to lose my job. I won't be able to work. I won't have any money coming in. How am I going to live tomorrow, next week, next month and next year? He's thinking about the future.

A lot of times, we don't think about that. We think about today. That's all we think about. We don't think about what is going to happen tomorrow. We don't think about planning for the future. We don't think about taking the things that God has placed in our control and planning how to use those things tomorrow.

If we make an hundred dollars this week, and we have fifty left after we pay our bills, and we get paid at three o'clock, figure our bills then by five-thirty that fifty is gone. We don't think about what is going to happen tomorrow. We don't think about what is going to happen the day after tomorrow. We don't think about the needs that someone else may have. We just think about today and self.

This guy here was a pretty sharp dude in his thinking about, "how am I going to live." How can I get these people to take care of me? He was planning for after he loses his job.

The Bible says in verse five: "So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him..." This is what he is going to do. He is going to call everyone that owes his master something. A lot of times people rented off of other people and they would pay the master with oil and wheat. These people were going to pay what

they owed with different commodities. He calls these people and says, "how much owest thou unto my lord?"

In verse six one says that he owes, "...An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty." Depending on what scale you look at, that could be a thousand gallons of oil. That would be worth a lot of money. Look what the steward says, "...Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty." You see what he does? You owe one hundred measures of oil, but just write a check for fifty measures of oil. Now he has a little game going on. The steward cancels half the debt, but what the debtor didn't know is that he was going to be expected to return the favor in a few days.

People manipulate people sometimes. It may look good on the cover, but you have heard, "...if it looks too good to be true, it isn't true." That holds true. Not only is he crooked himself, but now he is getting some others into his scheme. He is leading others into being dishonest. The debtor knew exactly what he owed. Then the steward says we will just take half and call it even. Therefore, the debtor thinks that he has made a friend.

The next verse says, "Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore." This debtor owes a hundred measures of wheat, but the steward tells him to just pay for eighty and we will forget the other twenty and stamp the bill paid. This steward was making some friends out in the world so that when he lost his job of being a steward that he would have some friends out here that he could go to and say, "I've lost my job and I need some help." Even though he was being crooked and giving away something that didn't belong to him; he was shrewd in his planning and thinking on how that he was going to live tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.

It says, "And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the

children of light." His master, when he finds out what the steward has done, he commends him. The steward is making plans to how that he is going to live after he loses his job. His Lord, the rich land owner, commends him because of his future thinking and plans on surviving, not on the fact that he did this in a crooked way. The rich land owner is saying, hey, this guy is pretty sharp. He knows that he is going to lose his job and now he is taking what is mine and canceling a bunch of debts to make him a lot of friends so that when he loses his job he can go to his friends and say, "You only paid for fifty measures of oil when owed an hundred. We wouldn't want to tell everybody down at church that you were a crook. So, would you help me out here?" No doubt the steward was going to use this for blackmail purposes on down the road. But the rich land owner commends him for being smart about planning for tomorrow.

It continues in verse eight, "...for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

I was talking to a man today on the phone, an unsaved fellow, a great guy, probably as hard a working individual as I've seen and worth millions of dollars, but his pursuit, his enthusiasm and zeal for making money is great. He works at it, he works hard at it. He plans for what it is going to do tomorrow and he plans on how he is going to make more money. He plans on how things are going to work next week and next month.

"...for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Unsaved people, like this individual that we were talking about here; he was pretty shrewd in that he was making plans on how that he could live, how that he could have, how that he could get and be sustained tomorrow, next week, next month, and next year. He says that the children of this world in their generation are wiser than the children of light because unsaved people have a desire in them for things.

A business man that is in business has got to make plans for tomorrow, next week, next month, and next year if he is going to stay in business. If he makes good plans, he will probably stay in business, but if he doesn't make good plans, he will probably lose his business. He works at it and is very energetic at it and wants to make it work. This is the driving force in his life. The reason that they are wiser than we are is because they take all their energy and use it to plan, to get, and to have things. If we would take that same energy that we have and use it and the opportunities that God has given us; if we would use that same energy that same drive...what he is saying here is that we don't do that. Most Christian people don't have the same drive to reach the lost, to use what God has given them, to make plans. Christian people don't have that kind of drive like a lot of unsaved people.

Jesus is telling us something with this verse. A lot of times we want to take the spiritual and the material and we want to put great vast of differences between them. In the Bible that's not true. We cannot separate my spiritual life and my material life because they all go together. If I am spiritual, if I am living a spiritual life then what I will have is spiritual also.

Why do we pray over our offering when we take it up? We pray over it because we want God to sanctify that money. We want that money to be sanctified or set apart and we want to use it for the glory of God. We want God to use that money. Then why don't we do the same with what we have in our billfold? We should because it belongs to God.

The children of this world are wiser in their generations' because they plan, work, and labor for things. If we take that same enthusiasm to labor for our eternal riches, for the salvation of those that are unsaved, and for those that are in need, if we would take that same energy it would be awesome what we could do. We couldn't build a church big enough on 141 to hold all the people that would come here. I'm talking to everyone sitting here tonight. If we would do what we need to do as Christian people, if we would use the same zeal that we do for self and

material things; if we used that same energy for the glory of God it would be awesome what we could do.

I've seen people play on the golf courses. They will walk. They will hit. They will sweat. They will walk all day long. When they come to church, if they have to park fifty feet from the door, they will whine about it.

We will go to the department store and we will walk for hours. My wife can go to the department store and walk for hours and never buy a thing. She can walk and walk. If we can go to the department store and walk all night, then we can walk fifty feet to get in the church door.

We can go sit on the creek bank all day or out in the boat ten hours fishing, but ask them to come to church and they will say, "Just can't do it today because those seats kill me." There is something wrong. If we would use the same energy for the glory of God as we do for self, it would be an absolute astonishment what we could do for God.

God has put some things in my hands to use for His glory and I had better use it for His glory. If I don't, He may put me outside from being a steward. Those things that He put in my control if I don't use them for His glory; do you think that God is just going to let me use everything that He has given me just for self? Do you think that God is going to bless me when I'm doing this stuff for self? God expects something out of you and me. He expects us to be faithful in using what He has given us to use for His glory.

We act like we are going to live for a million years upon this earth. We don't know if we are going to be alive three minutes from now or not. Sure we need to make plans. It all belongs to God and we had better treat it that way. If we don't, He may put us out of His stewardship.

Verse nine says, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." What he is saying here is that the things that God has given you and me; we need to use it to make friends with. Unrighteous mammon is money. When you look at money, when you look at the pastoral epistles, they called it filthy lucre. Money and things like that; we need to use those things to make friends with. Do you think that God gives me money just so I can buy me things? Do you think that God gives me money just so that I can throw some of it in the offering and put the rest of it in the bank? God gives us money to use for His glory. We should use the things that God gives us to make friends.

Campbell Chapel has made some tremendous friends by giving money. We have made friends by giving money to folks that this church has been a blessing to and that people prays for us and prays for this church today because we took the unrighteous mammon that we had; we sanctified it when we took up the offering; we set it apart for God's use and took that and we have used that to make friends with. Instead of hoarding it up for ourselves, why don't we take what God has given us and use it to make friends. What He is talking about is making friends for Him. He's talking about leading people to Christ and getting them to be saved.

The unjust steward made some plans on how he was going to live. Why don't we take those things that God has given us and make friends with them. He took something that wasn't his and made friends with it. Why don't we take something that is not ours and make friends with it. What you got in your wallet is not yours. What this unjust steward had was not his. He made some friends with it; and we need to take what we are stewards of and make friends with it.

If you are going to stay in the stewardship, and be blessed then you have to use it in the right way. God will not continually allow you to have control over something when you use it for yourself and forget about Him.

Verse ten says, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." What it is saying is that one who is faithful will be faithful if he has a lot or if he has little. He says here that, "he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." A crook is a crook. If he is unjust with little then he will also be unjust if he has a lot. People that are faithful; are faithful if they don't have much and they are faithful if they have a lot.

"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" If you have not been faithful with what God has placed in your control; you are the steward and God has given you control of it; if He has placed that within your trust, if you have not been faithful in using that to bring glory to Him; then how is anybody going to give that which is true riches. How are you going to be able to claim or receive what really is important if you are not faithful in the small things.

"And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" If God has given us things that are His and the responsibility to them for His glory, and if we use them for His glory while we are here, then one day we will have some things that will belong to us. What we have control of today does not belong to us; it all belongs to God. There is going to be a day when we step through this life and step into heaven where there will be some things that will actually belong to us. If we are not faithful here now, then we won't have anything there.

God expects us to be faithful and use it to His glory. If we do that, then one day we will be rewarded.