

Luke 16A

One Sunday, a preacher was speaking one what it would take for the church to become better. He said "If this church is to become better, it must take up it's bed, and walk." The congregation said "Let it walk, Preacher, let it walk."

Encouraged by their response, he went further. "If this church is going to become better, it will have throw aside it's hindrances and run!" The congregation replied, "Let it run, preacher, let it run!"

Now really into his message, he spoke stronger. "If this church really wants to become great, it will have to take up it's wings and fly!" "Let it fly, Preacher, let it fly!" the congregation shouts.

The Preacher gets louder. "If this church is going to fly, it will cost money!" The congregation replied. "Let it walk, Preacher, let it walk."

- Money can be an unpopular topic
 - Or at least it used to be
 - In many churches today it seems to have become the only topic
 - Rather than preachers talking about our support of ministry
 - They often talk about how God desires to make us rich
- In many corners, the church seems to have become completely obsessed and distracted with money and wealth?
 - Many messages from the pulpit these days deal in part or even exclusively with wealth and prosperity
 - Just ask yourself how many church billboards advertise Sunday messages or entire series on wealth or finances?
 - Not surprisingly, the bigger and more prominent the ministry, often the more it seems to focus on money topics
 - Consequently, how many Christians today see their faith exclusively within the context of a discussion of wealth – or to the use the Christianese – in terms of blessings?

- The Bible does talk about wealth extensively
 - But it addresses it very differently than the way many false teachers would prefer to preach it
 - Christ taught a parable specifically for the purpose of teaching us the proper attitude toward Earthly wealth
 - But if we're going to appreciate God's view of wealth and His purpose in giving it, then we're going to have to really be prepared for a shock
 - Because God's ways are not man's ways

[Luke 16:1](#) ¶ 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.

[Luke 16:2](#) "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.'

[Luke 16:3](#) "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.

[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.'

[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?'

[Luke 16:6](#) "And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'

[Luke 16:7](#) "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.'

[Luke 16:8](#) "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.

[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.

[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.

[Luke 16:11](#) "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you?

[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?

- Thomas Constable wrote that this is the most difficult parable in scripture to interpret
- And at first reading, it's not hard to see why
 - We're immediately struck by the parable's paradoxical message – by what appear to be several internal contradictions
 - The master is ready to fire his manager for mismanagement
 - But then the master praises the manager for being shrewd in what appears to be a scheme to cheat the master out of even more money
 - This manager looks like a genuinely detestable character who embezzles from his boss at every opportunity
 - Yet in the end, Jesus seems to praise his behavior
 - The parable is throwing contradictions at us
- And then there is this reference to unrighteous wealth
 - What is unrighteous wealth anyway?
 - Well, let's sort this out
- As is usually, the case a little background is necessary
- In Jewish culture (as in our culture today) wealthy businessman often employed managers to handle their business affairs
 - These managers would attend to every detail of the master's business, including purchasing and selling goods and extending credit to customers
 - But under Jewish law, specifically Deut 23:19, it was unlawful to charge usury interest
 - So it became a custom in Jewish society for a manager such as this one to overcharge a customer by adding his own fee directly to the bill for the goods or services
 - So when the bill was repaid, the manager took his share off the top and gave the rest that was due to his master

- It was not uncommon for a manager to charge a 100% fee on top of the bill owed the master
- So, the first thing to understand is that the fee these clients owed to the master was in part money owed to the master himself and part money owed to the manager for his services
- Now the second thing to understand as we study this parable is what comparison Christ is making in verse 8
 - In verse 16:8, Jesus makes the comparison between the sons of this age (in other words, unbelievers) and the sons of light (believers)
 - And He uses a very important phrase
 - He uses the term “in relation to their own kind”
 - In other words, he’s not making a comparison between how believers deal with unbeliever or vice versa
 - He’s making a comparison between how unbelievers deal with other unbelievers vs. how believers deal with other believers
 - So the second point is that the Church (us) can learn something about how to deal with one another in the area of money from what we see unbelievers doing with one another with their wealth
- So looking at the deals, we find a manager who has not been reliable in his position of authority, and the master tells him he is ready to fire him
 - But notably he doesn’t fire him yet – technically the manager is still on the payroll
 - But before releasing him, the master tells the manager to give an accounting of his management
 - The master wants to look over the books and see how bad things are
- Now the manager sees his chance to help himself
 - He knows that his firing is imminent – he’s about to leave this comfortable world he has grown accustomed to
 - And he doesn’t know what he will find on the outside how will he be received?

- He probably wasn't well liked, for being a tough negotiator or unforgiving creditor for his master
 - So he wants to develop a plan to help break his fall when he is fired
 - Something that will make his life easier and better when he finds himself on the other side
- So he devises a shrewd scheme
 - He realizes that all the debts that are currently owed to his master include a portion that belongs to him – his fee added to each debt
 - Since he knows he's going to be fired before those customers repay their debt, he stands to lose all that money
 - So why not at least gain some advantage out of his loss
 - He runs to each of his master's debtors and while he still has the master's authority, he reduces their debts by the amount of his fee
 - This is perfectly legal because the manager is still employed as the master's representative
 - Since only the manager's fee was deducted from each bill, the master's original debt is still going to be paid
 - The master has not lost a cent
- Meanwhile, the manager builds good will among these clients in the hope they will look favorably upon him when he is unemployed and looking for help
- The Master praises the manager because this is such a smart move
 - It's a win-win-win
 - The master's business benefits from the positive reaction of the clients to the discounts
 - The clients save money,
 - The manager gains the favor of the clients,
 - So Jesus isn't praising his previously poor management style

- He simply praises the manager's shrewdness in knowing how to use money for the greatest gain in his world

- But here's where the parable can get's tough...
 - Jesus says that the sons of light (us) could learn something from how this manager responded to his situation
 - Jesus says that the unbelievers are more shrewd than Christians
 - And it's clear from the text that Jesus is not praising the manager's previous mismanagement
 - He's praising his creativity in light of his limited opportunity
 - In a nutshell, Jesus tells the disciples that we should use the wealth of unrighteousness to make friends for the sake of eternity
 - The problem most people have with truly understanding this parable is that we don't understand the difference between the wealth of unrighteousness and the wealth of righteousness
 - Did you assumed that the wealth of unrighteousness meant wealth gained through dishonest means?
 - It doesn't
 - The wealth of unrighteousness is the money of this world – the treasure of earth
 - The money that the sons of this age seek after
 - The money that perishes along with everything else in this world when it burns up
 - The money that people store up here rather than in storing a treasure in heaven
 - It's called unrighteous because it is the money that the unrighteous world values
 - The money that the unbelieving world puts it's trust in

- Now you can put all this together and understand why Jesus compliments the sons of this age and criticizes the believers
 - Jesus says we should learn from how the unrighteous use their wealth
 - Like the manager, unbelievers are willing to influence people and win friends and gain all the benefits that their money can give them in this world
 - For unbelievers, the money of this world is all they have to depend upon and trust in – it is their treasure
 - And they make the most of what their money will buy them in this world, until their time is up
 - But the sons of light are criticized for not dealing with one another as shrewdly as unbelievers deal with each other
 - And here's the secret
 - Because we live as if we were sons of this world
 - As if we had no future in eternity either
 - As if the money we have right now is our treasure in heaven
 - But it's not
 - The money God has given you right now is the wealth of unrighteousness
 - It will burn up when this world ends
 - But what if I told you there was a way to turn it into real treasure in heaven
 - That you could deposit it in your bank in heaven so that when you leave this world and enter eternity, you would have it there waiting for you
 - And it will never perish there
 - It can't be stolen
 - It can't wear out

- It's actually very easy – spend it on the work of the kingdom now
 - And I'm not talking about tithing – at least not exclusively
 - Look at what Jesus says in the parable
 - Verse 9 – make friends with your earthly money, but who are the friends of the sons of like? Other sons of light?
- And what will these sons of light do if you use your wealth for their benefit? They welcome you into eternal dwellings
 - Unlike the favors that the unrighteous earned with their money – favors that perish when this world ends, the rewards you earn, the eternal friends you win for Christ bring eternal benefits
 - Whether you're helping fund outreach ministries that establish new believers
 - Or supporting the Body of Christ by funding Christian organizations
 - Or providing financial aid to the widow or poor or sick living down the street,
 - Or just placing an extra check in the offering plate, or whatever God lays on your heart,
 - When you use unrighteous wealth to gain eternal benefits, you are that shrewd manager – but one working for an eternal master – one who will remember your good management
- Look at what Jesus says at the end of the parable
 - Of the unrighteous wealth that God has given you here...
 - Wealth that has no true value
 - Wealth that will all burn up anyway
 - Wealth that you can't take with you
 - Wealth that will be completely forgotten in eternity
 - If you aren't willing to spend that wealth now for His glory and for the benefit of His kingdom – if you would trust in it and store it up even though you know it won't be with you in eternity

- Then Jesus asks what kind of true riches do you expect to have in eternity? Why should God trust you with eternal riches?
- You want a prosperity message from scripture? Brother and sisters – that’s the true prosperity gospel
 - God gives you what He determines, and then He watches what you do with it
 - If you horde it, focus on it, worry over it and spend your whole life trying to get more, save more, earn more and glorify yourself with it – then you better enjoy it while you can
 - Because in eternity you’ll have very little to bother over
 - But if you live contently with whatever God has given you, determined to put every penny you can to work for the glory of God and for his kingdom, winning friends who will greet you in eternity – then you will certainly see eternal treasure
 - In other words, just like the manager who turned his worthless unpaid bills into true gain, Christians should use the worthless wealth of this world to build up treasure in heaven
 - And if we truly recognized the perishable nature of this world’s wealth, we would never hesitate to use it for the gain of eternal riches
 - Consider Christ’s words at the end of that parable

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- First, Jesus says we have been entrusted with a very little thing
 - Our earthly ministry is a very little thing in the view of eternity and in the view of all that God has at his disposal
 - And we are asked to be faithful to it

- Which means doing with it what He asks us to do
 - But if we are unrighteous in such a very little, we will be unrighteous if given a lot
 - So don't expect God to give you a lot – either now or in the age to come
- And if you are unrighteous in the use of this worthless Monopoly money that the world worships
 - Then God has good reason to expect that you would be equally unrighteous with true kingdom riches
 - So don't expect to inherit anything of value
- Finally, If you aren't faithful in using something that is not your own (world's money)
 - Something you should be even more willing to use for God's purposes
- Then how will you expect God to entrust you with something that is truly yours
 - In other words, riches in heaven awarded to you
- The obvious answer to all these questions is you won't be rewarded
 - You will lose your reward
- Remember the words of Christ in Matt....

[Matt. 13:44](#) ¶ “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

- We are trading one treasure for another
 - And the irony is that only one is of any lasting value
 - Only one should mean anything to us

- Jesus ends with one of the most powerful statements on wealth in the Bible:
[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.”

- This verse implies two very important principles
 - First, money is either a tool to please God or it is your God
 - And the test to determine whether you see money as a tool or as your god is this
 - If you view money as merely a tool – a means to pleasing God
 - Then you will despise money
 - You will use it when needed to accomplish your mission
 - But you will have no love for it
 - You will not relish it
 - You will not enjoy working with it
 - It will not capture you attention
 - It will not excite you
 - For Jesus says if you love one, you will hate the other
 - If are devoted to one, you will despise the other
 - And so it goes in reverse
 - If you are in love with money
 - If you are focused on your money and what it can do for you
 - Then you are despising God or worse – hating Him

- This is a hard lesson, but never before has the church been so rich
 - And so weak, and so fickle, and so complacent

- Paul said it best

[2Tim. 3:1](#) ¶ But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

[2Tim. 3:2](#) For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

[2Tim. 3:3](#) unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

[2Tim. 3:4](#) treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

[2Tim. 3:5](#) holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

- And in the next two verses, we see why Jesus chose to teach the disciples on this point

[Luke 16:14](#) ¶ Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

[Luke 16:15](#) And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

- Jesus knew that the chief stumbling block of the Pharisees was their love of money and men’s approval
 - But Jesus rightly calls them for their hypocrisy and their love of money rather than their love of God
 - Again, it’s one or the other
 - Their every action and thought was directed around building themselves up – either financially or publicly
 - And Jesus is teaching His disciples to learn from the mistakes of these men and not to repeat them