

Luke 16

Verses 1-8:

--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. 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.’*

“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. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.’ “So he called every one of his master’s debtors to him, and said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ 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.’ 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.”

--(1-2) Jesus begins to address His disciples about their relationship to earthly goods. He does so by telling them a story about a steward of an estate who wastefully mismanages his master’s goods until word of his wastefulness comes to the master.

--The master then calls him to give an account of his stewardship and hand over the books before being fired. *How many billions of dollars are wasted regularly in our society?!*

--(3-4) The steward refuses manual labor or begging, and so contrives a plan that will encourage others to show him hospitality when he is thrown out of his position.

--*may receive me into their houses. . . links to **they may receive you into an everlasting home (9)**.*

--(5-7) Here we find the steward’s plan. He aims to “amend” the books before he is fired.

--100 measures of oil were about 875 gallons. Equal to nearly three years’ wages.

--100 measures of wheat were about 1000 bushels. Equal to nearly eight years’ wages.

--These were significant changes in their bills, and the story infers he did this with **every one of his master’s debtors**.

--His plan being, when they hear this kind and generous steward was removed, they would return his kindness and open their homes to him.

--(8) The master (not God but the steward’s master) commends the steward on his way out for his prudent forethought.

--Don’t misinterpret what is happening. Jesus clearly declares the steward is an **unjust steward**. What he did was wrong, but intelligent. *Like one can recognize the intelligence or cunning mind of Satan, an opposing general, or a bank robber.*

--How does Jesus sum it up? ***For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.***

--What does He mean by this? Jesus means that worldly people are smarter in their interactions with other worldly people than we tend to be with our eternal family.

--We are sons and daughters of light (**Jn. 12:36; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5**), but many Christians still act with more prudence and forethought at work than in relation to their eternal family.

--Our **generation** is special because we only get to interact with one set of people on our way to heaven. I will know Moses for eternity. But I will know my family and friends, as well as my family in Christ, both now and eternally. We will only know one group of people (one generation) for eternity-plus. How did we relate to them?

Verses 9-13:

--“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?”

“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.”

--(9) What does it mean to *make friends of unrighteous mammon*? I think it means to relate to money wisely, as the unjust steward “made friends” of those indebted to his master.

--Why? So that when we **fail**, or die here, we will be welcomed into **an everlasting home**.

--Commentators get way too creative with their interpretations here. The clearest and simplest answer is the correct one.

--Jesus is saying faithful use of our present possessions looks like using material gain to form loving bonds with those we will share eternity with. This is not a new truth. Jesus had just said something very similar.

****Luke 14:13-14: but when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.****

--There is so much abuse around the topic of money and giving in the church. So many unsanctified, greedy appeals for money, or heretical false doctrines from peddlers of the word of God, masquerading like their ministries are aimed at something other than pure greed.

--But despite the abuses, there is truth. What has our giving to the church connected us with? Everyone who gives here is tied to all the good God is doing at and through Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia.

--But giving to “the church” is not all. What about personal generosity to other believers? What about support of the poor or orphans? Missions? How many of us will be thanked and welcomed gladly into everlasting dwelling places because of our faithful use of passing money? What a glad beginning to everlasting friendships with other children of light!

--**(10-12)** Are we faithful stewards of the little things of this earth? The passing things we know we cannot keep? Everything we own is not our own! *Just think, Judas was there listening, and simultaneously stealing from Jesus’ money bag!*

--Our current faithfulness in relation to *unrighteous mammon* is our preliminary test of stewardship. We are on trial with our Master’s goods *now*, and we will all be called to give an account of the books one day!

1 Timothy 6:7: For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

--We cannot carry it out, but we certainly can send it ahead! Jesus does not consider our present material possessions as *true riches* because they are passing. They are God’s goods and not truly *your own*. *That thought should help us think more soberly and shrewdly about our material wealth.*

--Unfaithfulness, even in little things, is a crack, a leak where spiritual life and grace seep out. Unfaithfulness in earthly stewardship reveals unbelief in heavenly citizenship.

--Misuse of passing unrighteous mammon will mean the loss of true riches, which are eternal and cannot be misused. True riches are the only things that will be truly and eternally ours.

--**(13)** Whose servant are we? How will I know? Well, is my money in service to God? If not, neither am I. Does my use of God’s possessions count for eternity? *Francis Schaeffer’s Ash Heap Lives.*

--Jesus makes abundantly clear that anyone preaching God and money is not loving and loyal to Him.

--I believe the line Jesus draws here is why so many Christians struggle to find joy, peace, and contentment despite all the blessings and freedoms we have here in America.

--They have too much of heaven in their heart to be happy in the world, and also, love the world too much to be happy with heaven. They remain miserable servants because they are futilely attempting to serve two masters. A choice must be made and will be made only by putting our money where our mouth is. *Can I add here that I believe this goes much further than merely “giving” money, but also touches the simplicity of our lifestyle, comfort, entertainment, etc. Who is being served or loved through my material stewardship?*

Verses 14-18:

--*Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. 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.*

"The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.

"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery."

--(14) The Pharisees understood Jesus was teaching about the stewardship of material things, and because they loved wealth, **they derided Him**, or *turned up their noses at Him*. The poor fool from Nazareth was spouting nonsense!

--(15) Jesus gives the Pharisees a stern rebuke.

--**You are those who justify yourselves before men.** . . They could defend their reputations before men, but not before God, who clearly saw their covetous hearts. *Reputation is what people *think we are*. Character is what God *knows we are*.*

--Defending our lifestyle by the ways of the world around us is foolish if God thinks and weighs things otherwise.

--**For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.**

--The Greek word for **abomination** describes something foul or detestable. It is used of the image the anti-christ will set up in the temple (**Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14**) and the great Mystery Babylon (**Rev. 17:4-5**), and all things that will never enter the New Jerusalem (**Rev. 21:27**).

--I am not living pleasing to God because I live a socially acceptable American lifestyle. Sins in good cultural standing, those men esteem, favor, and glorify, God sees so differently! *The materialism of America—all its greed, covetousness, indulgence, excess, and love of wealth is detestable to God.*

--Don't look around you, even at other Christians, to defend your lifestyle. What does God say?! How does God see? He alone is the final judge of all opinions.

--(16-17) God's view of things is clearly revealed in the law and prophets, of which John the Baptist was the final servant who literally pointed his finger at the Messiah, Jesus Christ. God's view of things was then being revealed by Jesus Christ, of whom John was the forerunner (**Heb. 1:1-2**).

--**everyone is pressing into it.** . . is a forceful term and is translated **heaven suffers violence** in **Mt. 11:12**.

--Jesus is either picturing the sober and serious attitude needed in relation to keeping on the narrow path, or the inevitability of every being funneled into the kingdom of God one way or another. I think either interpretation fits. Maybe both.

--A **tittle** referred to a slight mark on a Hebrew letter.

--Jesus is pointing out that the law, on which the Pharisees prided themselves and used to justify themselves, remained a reflection of what God esteems. The law of God would also be their judge!

John 5:45-47: Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?

--Again, it is important for us to realize we will be judged by His Word alone. Don't weigh your actions against the world's culture or even church culture. Measure your life by the Word of God.

--**(18)** Why does Jesus speak about divorce here? Because the law of God regarding divorce was very clear, but the Pharisees made up all types of excuses to escape the judgment of the law!

Rabbi Hillel taught that a man could divorce his wife if she burnt his food. Rabbi Akiba taught that a man could divorce his wife if he found someone prettier, etc.

--This type of easy divorce and remarriage was an abomination to God (**Deut. 24:1-4**).

--There are biblical causes for a just divorce, such as God acknowledged with Joseph before he understood what was happening with Mary. The Scriptures mention adultery (**Mt. 19:1-9**), and abandonment (**1 Cor. 7**), but defining what makes an allowable divorce is not Jesus' point here.

--Jesus' point is simple. The Pharisees, who prided themselves on keeping the law, didn't keep some of the clearest commands of the law regarding marriage, and instead justified themselves with terrible excuses to get out of the demands of God's law! *Plenty of Christians are still making the same mistake!*

--Jesus' teaching raised the standard of God's law regarding marriage (**Mt. 5:31-32**) while the Pharisees lowered and ignored it.

--May God, in His grace, keep us from the cultural self-justification of things that are an abomination to God.

Verses 19-23:

--“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

--**(19)** There is debate among commentators whether this is a parable. I do not believe it is:

--First, Jesus never names people directly in parables. Here we have Lazarus and Abraham.

--Second, neither Jesus nor Luke calls it a parable.

--Third, I think the contextual flow is as follows: Jesus has been describing the sinfulness of a materialistic lifestyle, and now, in culmination of the lesson, He introduces us to a man who lived the life He was warning against.

--Jesus describes this rich man as someone who displayed and indulged in his wealth.

--Jesus gives us no name for the rich man, but tradition has named him Dives. I will give him no name since that is what Jesus did.

--**(20-21)** Then we are introduced to Lazarus. A beggar who lay helplessly at this man's front gate. He longed for some crumbs from the rich man's extravagant table and was in such a sorry state that even the mongrel street dogs were licking his open sores.

--The point being, Lazarus was a clear opportunity for the rich man to use his wealth for something other than selfish means.

--**(22)** The two states had been so contrasting in life, but now, death, the great equalizer, changes everything, and the two states are going to be just as contrasting after death!

--We are told angels are present at Lazarus' death, but nothing of the rich man's death.

--The angels carry Lazarus to **Abraham's bosom**. . . or Abraham's side. Abraham, the father of faith, is wherever those who died in faith before Christ waited. Jesus names that place as paradise to the thief on the cross (**Lk. 23:43**).

--After the resurrection, Jesus would eventually ascend to the Father (**Jn. 20:17**), and once He did, He brought man, as the Son of Man, back into what we now think of as heaven—the direct presence of God where there is a throne, temple, angels, etc. (**Isa. 6; Rev. 4-5**). Now if we die, we go to be with Jesus in heaven (**2 Cor. 5:8**). That is where we remain until the Second Coming of Christ and His millennial reign on this earth, followed by the creation of the New Heavens and New Earth (**Rev. 21-22**).

--**(23) Hades**. . . in the New Testament refers to the place of the dead. It corresponds to the *sheol* of the Old Testament. Those who die without faith are tormented in Hades and remain there until the final judgment. Eventually, all the dead in Hades are judged at the white throne judgment (**Rev. 20:13-14**) and cast into the lake of fire, which is the eternal state of hell for all unbelievers.

--Is Hades the realm of the dead that includes paradise and a place of suffering for unbelievers, or is paradise somewhere else, and Hades only holds unbelievers? We don't know fully. Though, Scriptures do tend to speak as if there is only one place for the dead (**Eccl. 3:20**), but one cannot be dogmatic.

--God hasn't given us clarity about these spiritual locations because we don't need it. We do need to be clear about their reality!

--Lazarus did not go to paradise because he was poor, and the rich man did not go to Hades because he was rich. They both went to their respective places because of faith and repentance. Clearly, the rich man knows repentance is required to escape his torment (**30**).

--Lazarus trusted in God despite horrendous earthly circumstances.

--The rich man's life displayed a lack of faith in the law and prophets or Jesus' teaching if he heard that. Like the Pharisees, he could have probably quoted the law's insistence on loving one's neighbor, but ignored the dying man in need at his front gate. Why?

--He no doubt gave himself cultural excuses, but the true reason was that he loved money and highly esteemed the things of men which were an abomination in the sight of God!

Verses 24-26:

--"Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'"

--These verses are so important. This is the only lost soul we ever hear speak from beyond the grave. Jesus alone can tell us this, just as He alone can tell us when the angels in heaven rejoice.

--What do we see and hear? The rich man is still selfish. He is alone. He is tormented. He can remember. His state is fixed (The Greek word for **gulf** is *chasma*).

--How can a soul be tormented in flame? Hell was made specifically for spiritual beings—Satan and his angels. The torment goes beyond the physical there.

Matthew 25:41: Then He will say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:'

--**remember that in your lifetime.** . . Which *lifetime* are we focused on? The present one or the eternal one?

--Notice as well, Abraham's speech is not harsh, but neither is it overly disturbed. Abraham sees the righteousness of Lazarus' fixed condition and the rich man's fixed condition. *We see a similar constant response from heaven to God's judgment through the book of Revelation.*

--Jesus teaches us that God is not ashamed of heaven. Nor is He ashamed of hell. *The doctrine of hell is not enjoyable to contemplate, but it is healthy for us.*

--Jesus had more to say about hell than anyone else in the Bible. His warnings should not be taken lightly, no matter how many modern doubters spout lies claiming otherwise. *The fact that eternal judgment will never be a "likeable" doctrine does not prove it is false.*

Verses 27-31:

--"Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

--**(27-28)** The rich man thought of himself first, but now thinks about his five brothers. He imagines their best hope is a post-death appearance of Lazarus.

--**(29)** Abraham responds by saying they have all they need for faith and repentance through Moses and the prophets—the Word of God.

--**(30)** Here we find evidence of a still fallen and carnal mind in conflict with God and His truth. The rich man still has no faith in God's Word. *Please God, let us never echo the faithless lack of confidence the damned express toward the Word of God!*

--**(31)** The truth of Abraham's words was proven over and over again. Just think of all those raised from the dead: Jairus' daughter, the widow of Nain's son, Lazarus, Jesus, Dorcas, Paul, Eutychus, and who knows how many more!

--Miracles are not more powerful than the Word of God.

*Morgan (The Gospel According to Luke, pg. 192): *"That statement reveals the tremendous fact that life which is not affected by moral considerations will not be affected by the miraculous."**

*Tozer (Echoes From Eden, pg. 95): *"God knows the human conscience. He knows that the most effective voice throughout the world is the voice of the Word. If men will not hear the Word of God, they will not hear anything else."**