

CAN WE USE WORLDLY WEALTH?

The Parable of the Dishonest Manager

LUKE 16:1-13

The Parable

Luke 16:1-13 (NASB)

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.”

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.'

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.

⁴ I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.'

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?'

⁶ And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And 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?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He *said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

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.

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.

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.

¹¹ Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you?

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?

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.”

The Removal and the Readiness of a Rascal

Luke 16:1-13

On December 26, 2004, the world watched in horror as the story of the tsunami disaster in Southeast Asia unfolded. An earthquake beneath the Indian Ocean triggered a huge tidal wave as high as 100 feet tall that came crashing on shore across the region like a sledge hammer on an anvil. The tsunami did damage as far as the east coast of Africa, 5000 miles away. Over a quarter million people died in the rampaging waters and devastation that followed. Entire island populations and coastal villages were wiped out — every man, woman, and child in some cases.

However, according to the Associated Press, there was one notable exception to the loss of life. The Morgan sea gypsies are a small tribe of fishermen who spend much of the year on their boats fishing between India, Indonesia and Thailand. Each December, between fishing seasons, they live in small thatch huts on the beaches of Thailand. In December, 2004, they were living directly in the path of certain disaster from this tsunami. Yet, every single member of the tribe survived, while most of their neighbors disappeared in the rampaging waters.

Why did these people survive while others around them perished? The tribal chief explains, “For generations our fathers warned us that if the waters ever receded fast, they would quickly reappear in the same quantity in which they disappeared.” On December 26th, when the sea suddenly drained away, many of their neighbors ran to the beach with baskets to pick up stranded fish. Not the Morgan sea gypsies. The chief ordered his tribe to run in the opposite direction, to the mountains and safety. When the tsunami hit, the entire tribe was spared because they were prepared by their forefathers for these kinds of disasters. They heeded the warnings given to them from long ago.

In this story, we find the same theme of “preparation for disaster” illustrated in the actions of a crook or a rascal. Jesus shared a story about a sneaky steward to illustrate his wisdom in preparing for the future. He does not commend the crookedness of this rascal. He commends his wisdom and forethought in preparing for the future. The steward did something that was wise, but he did it in the wrong way. Christ focuses His attention on the wisdom of his readiness for what was to come. Let’s take a look at the removal and the readiness of this rascal and the insights that surround this story.

I. The Problem of a Profligate Steward Luke 16:1-2

Luke 16:1-2 (NASB)

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.

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.’”

This chapter opens with a problem. A rich man had a steward that was accused of wasting his goods. A steward was a manager or governor of a house. He handled the business affairs for the master of the house. He was in charge of work assignments, paying bills, wages, or collecting debts. They had almost unlimited power that was given to them from their master. For example, Joseph was the steward of Potiphar and Eliezar was Abraham's steward.

We will note several things here. The waste of the steward was *exposed*. This man was accused of wasting the goods of his master through mismanagement of those goods. Somebody obviously reported him. As we will see, his problem was not a lack of *ability*. It was a lack of a good *attitude* and having character.

Anytime you are lacking character in your life, it is eventually going to hurt you or others. It will produce “waste.” This word “squandering” is from the word *diaskorpizo* {dee-as-kor-pid'-zo} which means “to winnow, squander, to scatter by throwing into the wind.” It is the same word that was used to describe the prodigal son who wasted his substance in a far country.

The waste was also *extensive*. The Greek verb tense of “wasted” or “squandered”: means it was not merely a past offense, but it was on-going at the time. He had done his evil over a long period of time and it was just now catching up with him.

The waste or squandering was also *expensive*. It was costly for the master and now it will be costly for the steward. Mismanagement seems to be the problem here, not fraud or embezzlement which would have triggered legal action against him. If he had committed crimes, he would have not been given the opportunity to make arrangements to get his books in order. He would have been dismissed immediately. This is not the case here. The master gave the steward the opportunity to defend himself or answer the charges by presenting the records to his boss. The master told him, “Give an account of your stewardship. You may no longer be my steward.”

There are three key thoughts we want to address here before we go further into the story. **First** of all, all Christians are stewards of the **gifts, abilities, knowledge, wisdom, possessions, time, family, and opportunities** that God has given to them. We are to be faithful and use what God has given to us wisely. Don't throw away what God has given to you. Use His blessings for His glory! Use God's blessings to be an encouragement to other people.

1 Corinthians 4:2— “Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.”

1 Peter 4:10— “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”