

Luke 16:1-13: Using Our Resources Redemptively

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[0:00] The scripture passage for today is from Luke chapter 16, verses 1 through 13. You can find that in the Bibles in your seats on page 748.

If you want to go there. Alright, Luke chapter 16.

He also said to the disciples, I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.

So summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, How much do you owe my master? He said, A hundred measures of oil. 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? He said, A hundred measures of wheat. He said to him, Take your bill and write eighty. The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.

[1:31] For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Good morning to you. My name is Arthur Jackson, and with Oscar and four other men, I have the privilege of serving on the pastoral staff at Holy Trinity Church.

[2:43] And what an opportunity it is this morning to be able to share with you. I'm old enough to be many of your dads. I've got children that are 33 years old, and they're the youngest, so that's older than probably most of you here.

But what an honor. I normally regularly serve on the south side with Dave Helm. But this particular series is a crucial one as we continue to form and to shape our understanding of what it means to have a Christian economic ethic.

There are certain guidelines for you and me as we handle the resources that God has entrusted to us. You may say here on this morning, well, pastor, I'm still in school.

And I haven't yet begun to earn at least what I hope that I will earn. Well, no doubt you have something coming in.

And the question is, how are you managing and handling what has been entrusted to you in what you may call your lean years?

[4:06] Oh, you're in your lean years now? Eating a lot of those ramen noodles and popcorn and pizza. I had my kids introduce my wife and me to ramen noodles.

Never heard of those things before. But they were in college. And I heard that that is a critical staple for those who were in college.

Well, check it out. When the religious leaders heard the words that Jesus spoke today, they were more amused about Jesus' words than convinced or convicted or motivated about them.

If you will look in chapter 16 of Luke, you will see in verse 14 what they did when they heard the words that had been read in our hearing on this morning.

Look at what it says. The Pharisees, and check this out, who were lovers of money, heard all these things. They ridiculed him. They made fun.

[5:16] They scoffed at Jesus. They scoffed at his words when he gave them these very wise instructions with a very winsome picture of what it means to be responsible with what has been entrusted to us.

Because these same people, the religious leaders of Jesus' day, if you would look at chapter 15 and verses 1 and 2, we will see that they grumbled when tax collectors and sinners, these were the marginalized people of the day, when they flocked to Jesus to hear his words of welcome.

Listen, look at there with me. Chapter 15, verses 1 and 2. Now, the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

That's Jesus. But notice the Pharisees and scribes grumbled, saying, this man received sinners. And not only that, he eats with them. These marginalized people, these people in that day who were held at an arm's length, Jesus had his own intersection cafe, if you will, in his day.

[6:45] And it was for everybody in the community so that they can gather there and hear and be in the presence of the king. Huh? Just think of the buzz that may have been there when the people with the reputation, the street people, the untouchables, made their way forward and sat down in the presence of Jesus.

Huh? The responses of the religious about the irreligious people prompted Jesus in Luke 15 to tell three different stories that emphasize, friends, the joy of heaven when something lost is found.

Huh? Huh? So these same people that grumbled about Jesus' association in Luke chapter 15, here they are in chapter 16. They are scoffing at Jesus' words.

Huh? They were a part of organized religion, yet they were out of sync with Jesus. Huh?

Out of sync with Jesus in welcoming the needy and out of sync with them on how to best use what had been entrusted to them.

[8:05] Check this out. They were people with confused values. People with confused values.

And the people of God should not be confused about things that are so critical to faith and so critical to life.

I have a great book on my shelf called Kingdom Ethics, following Jesus in a contemporary context. The authors notice this.

They note this. The challenge of developing a Christian moral vision for economic life has been with the church since its beginning.

The challenge of developing a moral vision for Christian economic life. And some of you may be in the early stages of forming that moral vision.

[9:14] Who are you going to take your cues from? As far as how to handle what's been trusted to you. The challenge remains for the followers of Jesus today.

And what we see in this chapter on this morning can really help us to be on the same page with Jesus. And I'm sure that's what you want to do in the whole of your life.

What was it about what Jesus said in these verses that would make lovers of money in his day and our day turn up their noses and dismiss what he had to say?

What is it about these 13 verses that would generate that kind of emotion? Those kinds of feelings. Those kinds of feelings. I believe that we can see here.

The story in the text deals with one of the hot topics of our day. Money. Possessions. Let me give you another quote from this book.

[10:18] Christians living in the wealthiest and most powerful nation of the world. The powerhouse of global capitalism are daily subjected to the most sophisticated enticements ever devised.

Enticements not just to buy certain products. But to buy into a certain way of looking at and living life. You feel that pressure?

Let me give you a few stats that help put things in perspective. In fiscal year 2009, which ended in September of last year, Starbucks sales calculated to be \$9.8 billion.

If you've been looking at the news, that is more than the gross domestic product of all of Haiti, which approaches \$8 billion, the total sum of goods and services in that particular country. We spend more on coffee. And I'm a Dunkin' Donuts man. And we probably spend a lot on that too. Than they spend in the total goods and services in Haiti.

[11:31] I know we've got some fast food people here. A lot of, we have so many choices as far as where we can get that quick fix of cholesterol or sugar or whatever it is that, you know, runs in our veins.

But guess how many billions America spent on fast food in 2008? Well, about \$110 billion on fast food.

Four years ago, six years ago, Americans spent roughly \$706 billion on entertainment. Now, here's the, and this is more than the gross domestic product or gross national product of several developed nations as Canada and Australia.

So here in verse one, we see the problem. Problem. Look at there, chapter 16, verse one. He also said to his disciples, there was a rich man who had a manager.

I mean, this man had so much. They had to have somebody. He needed a wealth manager of sorts to help him keep track on what was coming in and what was going out.

[12:50] The steward was a manager of a household. So we see the problem was a problem of mismanagement.

This wheeling and dealing of this household manager had finally caught up with him. He was not doing his job. And in that day, mismanagement was possible because strict accounts were not always kept.

I mean, that's sort of like in our day. Bernie Madoff made off with a lot, didn't he? Because of the, perhaps the lack of controls that should have been exercised in that domain.

In our day, it would be like having an asset or a wealth management where large sums are entrusted of money and other assets are committed to an individual to oversee, to make investments.

But notice that person who is doing the overseeing, that person who is doing the managing, he doesn't own, but yet the person is responsible for what's been entrusted to him.

[13:56] And to get the greatest return on the investments. But notice, you see, in verse 2, the announcement of the dismissal. The managers called into, on the red carpet or whatever carpet it was, the dirt carpet perhaps back in that day.

And given notice that his days were numbered, his pink slip comes down. Look there in verse 2.

And he called him and said, what is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management for you can no longer be manager.

You're on your way out of here. Verse 3, he had a little bit of time to ponder his future. Too proud for manual labor. Too weak for manual labor.

Too proud to beg. But nonetheless, when hit with this particular news, his mind begins to turn and to spin.

It does. Rather than to stymie him, it sort of motivates him. And he begins to think, what am I going to do? He begins to look into the future and take steps to do the things that are going to secure his future well-being.

[15:14] We see the problem in verses 1 through 3, but look at the plan in verses 4 through 7. What did he need to do before his termination became effective in order to be welcome elsewhere?

And that's what we see in these verses. In verse 6, look at that. He gives a 50% discount in oil.

Verse 5, so summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, how much do you owe my master? He said, a hundred measures of oil. He said to him, take your bill and sit down quickly and write 50.

Huh? The invoice said, 850 gallons in the measurements of our day. He cut that in half. Look at verse 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 80. About a thousand bushels in our measure. He cuts a deal and gives the guy a 20% discount, a 20% break.

[16:28] So the question comes, why all of this wheeling and dealing?

Well, here's what was happening. One chapter in his life was coming to an

end.

He had been given his pink slip. He was on his way out, and he wanted somewhere to go when he lost. This was a practical kind of forethought to see what's going to happen in the future when I'm out of a job.

How could he begin anew somewhere else? How could he be received somewhere else? Now, there's likely that there probably were other accounts.

We have examples of just two of them. Those were the ones he had dealings with, that is his master's debtors. Several questions are in order.

Did the accounts receivables include a commission for the manager? Could have been. Or was everything just due to the master alone? And the discount could have been his commission.

[17:35] When he offered the discounts, who was it that was really gaining? Who was actually losing? Was anyone really losing or was it a win-win situation for everybody concerned?

The master has a good reputation. The steward, he's looking out for number one and he has somewhere to go. And, of course, the debtors are getting a discount. Did the master get his due? Did the debtors get a discount? Were there open doors? Problem? The plan? And look at verse 8. The praise. The manager is commended by the master for his wise handling of the matter. You see that there in verse 8? The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

Ever known any clever crooks? We hear about them. We hear about the dumb crooks too, don't we? You know, someone gives something with their picture on it.

[18:45] You know, that's not what we're talking about here. This guy was a clever crook. Huh? All three, that is the master, the manager, and the debtors stood to gain.

The master, the reputation as a generous man. The debtors, a reduction in their bills. For the steward, future open doors, future favor for those who have received discounts.

Now here's what's happening in the text. And this is what Jesus clicks on. Sometimes we can get caught up with the details. But what's Jesus really, what's the point that he's driving home here?

The text features the dealings of the sons of this world. They know how to deal in darkness.

They know how to deal with their own. They know how to talk the language. They know how to cut the deals because that's just the way, friends, that this world operates.

[19:45] It operates on those kinds of terms. But then we see some principles that come in view in the rest of what Jesus is saying. What was the point that Jesus was getting at?

Huh? Did he applaud the underhand, under the table dealings of this steward of the world? No, that wasn't Jesus' point. He did not applaud the honor for the man for acting dishonestly.

He praised him for acting prudently, wisely, shrewdly. He insightfully and creatively used opportunities at his disposal to secure his earthly well-being.

He was wise in handling the very practical matters of this life. Huh? So what Jesus is doing in the last part of 8, he's contrasting the sons of this world, the sons of this age, people who are living in darkness.

In Ephesians chapter 5 verse speaks about those of us who are walking in the light. That's those who are believers. Those who have been illumined with light from above.

[20:58] One is said to be wiser than the other. That's a mild rebuke, isn't it?

Jesus knows that those who are living for the things of this present world, the sons of this age, behave more shrewdly as they act with their own interest in view than the sons of light.

Those who have been illumined with light from above, the children of God. Here's just to put it in our own terms. Jesus said that the sons of this age really know how to take care of business.

They know how to take care of business. They look out for themselves in their own, even if they have to resort to dishonest means in doing it. They know how to cut deals. They wheel and deal in order to get what's needed for the situation.

Another way of saying they are survivors. I don't know anybody who's a survivor. There are a lot of people on the streets and the corridors of Chicago.

[22:07] They survive in the rat race downtown and they survive in the neighborhoods. They are survivors because they look around them and see what they need to do in order to take care of themselves.

In the future. Jesus, there are several exhortations that we can take from this particular text. Verse nine.

And look at that with me. It says, I tell you, here's the here's here's the word exhortation. Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, worldly resources, mammon, if you will. That's the command is clear. Make friends with your resources. What kind of friends? This is the only command that's here. What do you do?

Make friends for yourselves. How is it to be done? By means of mammon, worldly resources, money, riches, material possessions. That's what he says.

[23:17] Riches one day will fail. Riches are good only for time. And we must realize that you and I can use worldly wealth. What has been given to you little or much in a way whereby we are investing for eternity in ways that outlive and outlast.

The dollars and the cents that are here. They will one day fail. Huh? Look in verse nine again. The they in verse nine compares to or contrasts with the they in verse four.

There, there are those who are receivers into earthly homes. You see that in verse four. I've decided what to do so that when I am removed from management, people will receive me into their houses.

That is their earthly dwellings. But earthly homes in verse four are temporary, which contrasts with the eternal dwellings, which are permanent in verse nine.

The they who receive those who are who those who use worldly wealth wisely into eternal dwellings are those who have been helped. By those who possess those earthly resources.

[24:38] Just like the stewards made friends, you can make friends who will receive you. Along with God and the host of heaven. How?

What means are your resources? So I ask you a question. Are you a lover of God or a lover of money? Lovers of money use people.

They use them ruthlessly and mercilessly. But lovers of God use money to help people.

Another way of putting it is that they use their resources redemptively. One of the things this means is that we should use our dollars, friends, to rescue people.

People who are suffering in this world, both spiritually and physically. You and I can use our resources in those kinds of ways. When we hear this, there is a real caution.

[25:44] In essence, we can hear the echoes of beware, beware, watch out. There's a real warning in these verses. The desire for money has a way of ruling over our lives.

We love or desire money because of what it can buy or how it makes us feel. We exchange our money for food and put it in our stomachs.

We exchange our money for clothes and jewelry and wear it. Now, again, it's not anything that is intrinsically wrong with these things. We exchange our money for vehicles made of metal and rubber and plastic and we drive them.

We exchange our money into tickets and help make other people wealthy by their entertaining us. Those are the ways that you and I use money.

Yet how much do we invest in things that last beyond this life? Food, though essential for this life, will not survive this life. Houses and cars and jewelry will not survive this life, friends.

[26:55] People will. People will. It is those who will be helped by our resources that will speak to the lasting nature of our investments.

And though we can't buy our way into heaven, yet the ways that we spend and invest our money speaks for the genuineness, friends, of our relationship with God and our love for God.

Huh? Use. Use. Your resources redemptively. Use the worldly resources that have been trusted to you literally much to make friends who will receive you.

And to eternal places. Huh? Welcome you into eternity. Help to gain eternal friendships. If we use our money to advance eternal causes, those who help or help will go before us and receive us.

And our investments now should count for the future. Huh? It's a test. How we handle our resources now.

[28:13] It's a test for the future. Faithfulness in the mammon and worldly resources. Unrighteous mammon qualifies us to be entrusted with that which is true riches.

You see that? That's what Jesus says in the text there. So, one who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much. And one who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest in much.

If you have been not faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? Huh? The things characterize mammon. What are they? It rusts. It cankers. It wears out.

Huh? When they're gone, they're gone. But when you invest in people, it has a way of living on, doesn't it? They can be used here for people whose lives, whose souls live on.

[29:21] One of the things that Shirley and I are pondering, and we had the privilege with you of sharing in the World Vision offering for our Haitian friends on last week.

But here's a question that we need to ponder, and I encourage you to do that. Might the Lord be calling some of us to make Haitian friends? With our resources.

100 refugees coming to our city like other people from other nations of the world. Yeah, we can go to the world. But the world also has a way of coming to us.

Yeah, you wrote a check on last week. Maybe you said, I've done that. It's a done deal. Might the Lord be calling you to go beyond that?

We can use our resources here in a practical way, redemptively. Where they have a special, where they're ongoing needs. I praise and applaud those who God has called to adoption.

[30:32] That's another way of using resources that God has entrusted to you in redemptive ways. Why haven't we engaged in some of these kind of more eternal investments more?

I believe that we have been so captured and captivated by our culture of this world that we have not allowed ourselves to think beyond the box that this world has us trapped in.

Sons of this world wise. Why are we not sons of children of God more wise?

And being giving and eternally resourceful. We find ourselves emulating the rich, the famous.

We can't await all but... But God has given us ways where you and I can be so counter-cultural. If we would just listen and hear, Are you a lover of God?

[31:49] Or a lover of money? So, not only should we be... We should also be faithful with our resources. And we see that in verses 10 through 12.

It's an encouragement to be faithful with what we have been given. And how we handle these opportunities. It sets the groundwork and prepares us to even be more trustworthy.

Both, I believe in this life and even in the future. Those who are considered to be paupers on earth will be princes in heaven.

Because they've been faithful with what has been entrusted to them. Oh, there awaits us a life beyond this life. And friends, we must live not only for the here and now.

And this is testing ground to see how we handle what has been given us here. And it will prepare us for our responsibilities in the future.

[32:57] Unfaithfulness with what we've been entrusted with now. This qualifies us for greater responsibilities in the future. And then we're to love and serve God with our resources.

In essence, that's what Jesus is getting at in verse 13. How the word that he uses here is impossible. Because of the dedication demanded to live as a slave.

But you're going to be a slave too. There's a picture in Acts chapter 4 verses 32 through 37. Where the early church rallied around needs.

And there we see a person known in scripture as Barnabas. He sells land. And what the apostles are doing. They're coming.

They're laying their resources. I mean the people are doing and laying it at the apostles feet. And then they're making distribution to those who are in need. That which was theirs became ours.

[33:59] They no longer regarded it as mine. When the needs arose, those who even had property sold it. Brought it to church leadership.

And what the saints did in Jerusalem pictures what Jesus is talking about in these last verses. They've been entrusted with earthly things.

They're using them to redemptively to help the physical and the spiritual needs of those who are there. My final words. What can you and I do?

Use your wealth wisely. Use it creatively. Not foolishly. No matter the or your wealth.

Whatever your wealth pool might be. Use it wisely and creatively. Not foolishly. Who can you invest in? Not only that.

[34:55] Use money redemptively. Your resources redemptively. Not recklessly. Use them to alleviate spiritual and physical suffering.

Use money thirdly. Inclusively. Not exclusively. What do you mean by that? Not just for earthly well-being. But also with heaven in view. When we use our money.

It should not just be taking care of our fleeting earthly needs. And we're not careful. That's what we'll do with it. But also use it. Lay it up treasures.

Just like you. You've got. You started perhaps on that savings account. Or CD. And you're going to leave it when you leave here. Put some up for the glory of God.

To alleviate the physical and spiritual needs. What am I saying? Faithful use of our earthly resources includes sharing.

[35:54] That has eternity in view. That's what Jesus is saying here.

Faithful use of our earthly resources includes sharing. That has eternity in view.

What do I want you to do? I want you to re-examine. And perhaps re-order. The use of the resources that have been trusted to you. So that you can be.

More redemptive. In how you live. And what you do with the resources. In doing so. Guess what?

We follow the pattern of Jesus. For you know.

The grace of our Lord Jesus. That though he was rich. Yet for your sake he became poor. So that you through his poverty.

Might become rich. Let's pray. Lord we love you. May we not be as. The. Religious leaders in the text.

[37:01] Loving. Money. More than loving. People. They grumbled. When. You. Welcomed.

The untouchables of that day. They scoffed. When you spoke about using. Money. Redemptively. May we follow your example.

Not theirs is our prayer. In Jesus name. Amen.