

JESUS ON SELF-JUSTIFICATION

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[0 : 00] Father, sometimes your word is really hard to understand, and sometimes your word, it's just hard to understand, it frightens us, sometimes it delights us, but sometimes it frightens us.

Father, we ask that you grow in us a great trust in you. We confess before you, Father, that your word is always a clear word, that it's our minds and hearts that need to be changed.

So, Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would fall upon our minds and our hearts and our wills and our souls, so that we might hear your word and receive your word and receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord, and so with him as our Savior, that as your word enters into our life, that our lives, our day-to-day lives, will bear much fruit that brings you great glory.

Father, this is our prayer, and we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. So, one of the things that you can do for me is, in fact, if you start to drift off today because it's dark and you're tired because you're still trying to get over Christmas, let me turn this, one of the things you could do is pray for me today and also pray for me for next coming Sunday.

Throughout the entire Christmas holidays, I was aware of the fact that I was going to come back in my first Sunday back to teaching on the book of Luke. I was going to have two very hard texts to deal with.

[1 : 38] The first one, which we're going to look at in a moment, Luke 16. You might want to sort of get that in your Bibles because we're going to read it in a moment. And if you don't have Bibles, there's always some Bibles up at the front that you can take, and you're welcome to use them.

Keep them as a gift from us or return them afterwards. This week, we're going to deal with what all commentators agree is the hardest parable of all of Jesus' parables to understand.

And in fact, most commentators will say it's actually the hardest text to understand in all of the Gospel of Luke. And next week, I get to talk about divorce.

So I have two hard texts. And so if you could pray for me an extra amount this week, I would really appreciate it. And so today, we're going to look at, those of you who know your Bibles, we're going to look at the text of the dishonest steward.

The dishonest manager. And in some ways, this is a nightmare text for people. I bet if you were to read this text to the condo dwellers all around us, or to many of the people in your work, maybe even your own family members, it would just bring up many of the fears that people have about religion.

[2 : 53] Because it seems as if in this parable that Jesus praises a fellow for, first of all, being a lazy, ineffective worker, and then ripping off his boss.

And it seems as if, in first reading, it looks as if Jesus is praising this behavior. And as I said, it touches a nerve, because for many people in our culture, when they see the Christian faith or any type of religion or spirituality, they think that it's just a cover for immoral behavior.

I mean, over the past year, we've seen people in ISIS, in between their five times of daily prayer, playing soccer with the heads of people they've beheaded.

Popular fiction and movie, and maybe even our own experience, is familiar with people who are deacons and elders in church on Sunday morning, and the rest of the week they have their slum landlords, they oppress their workers.

And this is the deep fear that many in our culture have, is that religion and spirituality, and therefore Christianity, the Christian faith, is just a cover for evil. And so when they see a text like this, that appears to have Jesus promoting dishonest business dealings, it's very difficult.

[4 : 14] And for those of us who are followers of Jesus, not even affected by the world in that particular way, it's just a very troubling text. Surely Jesus can't be promoting what in other places he

would say is evil.

So, Luke 16, 1 to 15, I'm going to read the text. And you'll see what I'm talking about very, very quickly. If you're unfamiliar with the text, some of you will say, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, I remember that Bible text.

Others, maybe you're hearing it for the first time. But here at Church of the Messiah, we try to preach through books of the Bible, and we're going through Luke. So this is the text that we're going to look at today. And here's how it goes.

Jesus also said to the disciples, there was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to the rich man that the manager was wasting his possessions.

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

[5 : 17] In other words, the rich man's announced that the guy's being fired, and he's giving him whatever, a week, a month, or whatever it is. He's giving him notice, but he's fired. Inside, that's what the manager was doing.

He was screaming, as we'll see in a moment. Verse 3, And the manager said to himself, what shall I do? Since my master has taken the management away from me, I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg.

Ah, I have decided what to do, so that even when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses. So summoning his master's debtors one by one, the manager said to the first debtor, how much do you owe my master?

And the debtor said, a hundred measures of oil. And the manager said to him, take your bill and sit down quickly and write 50.

Now just sort of pause there for a second. Two things. In the ancient world, the way that these types of debts would have often been recorded is that the person who was in debt, they would write out, if they could write, they would write out in their own hand that they owed so much money.

[6 : 34] And so what the manager has done is he's come, and he's brought the copy because he would keep the copy of what's owed, and probably what he's done is he's ripped it up or burned it, and he said, now write 50 instead.

And the fellow goes along with it. And just to have a bit of a sense of how much this is, like a hundred measures of oil, is it like a hundred bucks? Is it like a hundred pennies? Like what is it? That was approximately the average, it was approximately four years wages for an average working guy or gal.

So that's how much it was. Four years wages. A lot of money. Especially in a culture like that where there was, in a sense, virtually no middle class. Basically, you had fairly well-off people.

A very, very tiny sort of middle class. And then the rest of the people were basically lucky lucky if they could live paycheck to paycheck. Just basically getting by. And so four years wages, that's a lot of money.

Okay, so back to verse 7. Then the manager said to another debtor, and how much do you owe? And the man said, I owe a hundred measures of wheat.

[7 : 46] And the manager said to him, take your bill and write 80. And just sort of pause here for a second. How much money is this worth? It's worth somewhere between 10 to 12 years wages for an average working guy or gal.

10 to 12 years wages of an average guy or gal. Almost enough for an average working person to retire for the rest of their life. Maybe it is enough.

Those of you who know about money might say, George, actually, if you have 10 times, that's enough. I don't know. But it's close, right? It's a lot of money. A lot of money. 10 to 12 years wages for an average working person. So verse 8, the first half of verse 8 is going to be the end of the parable.

And then after this, Jesus is going to comment on the parable. And so what happens next? Well, we find in verse 8, the master finding out what the manager, his manager has done.

Verse 8, End of parable. Wow.

[8 : 55] What a parable. And then, because the verses were written, added like a thousand years or something like that, more after the writing of the New Testament, some monks added it.

Most scholars would say that the parable ends with the master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. And now we start to have Jesus' comments on it. 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 in others, 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.

[10:14] You cannot serve God and money. The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed Jesus. In fact, ridicule is a good word, but it's just, they sneered at him, they despised him, they had contempt for him, and their contempt for Jesus comes out in a contemptuous, deriding, sneering, abusive language.

And Jesus said to them, you are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts, for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

So, what's going on in this text? You know, some of the lessons that Jesus says all sound pretty good.

I mean, some of us will have real concerns about this. I've become very conscious over the last year or two that whenever we talk about money, that for Quebecois, I hope I'm pointing in the right direction, for our Quebecois friends, there's this long memory of how the church kept, used Christian teaching to keep them poor.

And so, there's hackles raised about any time money is raised. And there's some complexities there to Jesus' teaching, but is Jesus contradicting himself? Like, at the end, he seems to say that dishonesty isn't good, but in the early part, he seems to be commending the guy for, not, he seems to be commending the guy for being lazy and ineffective, dealing with his laziness and ineffective by ripping off his boss and actually conspiring with other people to rip off the boss so that when he's fired, he'll be able to live with the guys who have conspired to rip off the owner.

[12:02] And that's a very odd parable. So, what's going on? Is this justifying? Is this, is the Bible, in a sense, saying, go thou and do likewise?

Well, here's the first thing I'm going to say, and it's going to be a little bit of a surprising direction to maybe talk about, but it's actually a very good point to mention here, and it's a good point to remember all of the time that we read the Bible.

And here's the first point. Unlike you and me, the living God is not insecure. Unlike you and me, the living God is not insecure.

Now, why do I say this? You know, there's a figure by the name of Feuerbach, whose name I probably haven't pronounced correctly, and he influenced a guy by the name of Marx, and they all influenced people like Freud.

And they sort of are just capturing some things that some early Greeks said, because, you know, everything's sort of just footnotes to Aristotle. And one of the things that they developed was this idea that human beings, like Marx and Feuerbach said, and Freud said that God doesn't exist, that what happens is that we project desires that we want or that our tribe wants, and we project this to create some imaginary being called God.

[13:33] And, now, Christians should accept that this is true, by the way. Christians should accept that this is true, that Feuerbach and Marx and Freud and early ancient Greeks and modern people who say that, that they're actually saying something which is true about human nature.

We do project onto God and create a God in our own image and likeness that reflects our insecurities, our fears, our longings, our yearnings, and stuff like that.

The place we disagree with Freud and all is that well, that's actually sort of begging the question as to whether or not there actually is such a being called God who does exist.

And what if there is a God that does exist and we Christians aren't saying anything other than the fact that we're beggars telling one other beggar where to find bread and we believe not that our philosophy is wiser, not that, because we have, we're not saying that we have smarter philosophers, smarter mystics, smarter poets, smarter thinkers than anybody else, we're not claiming anything special, all we're saying is that God has spoken and revealed himself and we've received it.

But the fundamental insight that we project ourselves is very true. And so you see, the fact of the matter is that every human being is insecure.

[14 : 53] Some of us are massively, unbelievably, wildly, you know, you know, bridezilla type of insecure.

And others, it's maybe deeply buried, but all of us have divided hearts. All of us, in fact, have very, very different types of desires. Like, it's not unusual, if you're honest with yourself, it's not unusual that over the course of the day, that part of the day you might sort of wish that you were as gentle and wise as St. Francis of Assisi and other times you might wish that you were like Hugh Hefner, at the Playboy Mansion.

In other points in time you might believe that you might sort of have as a virtue that you're just caring for other people the way Mother Teresa cared for people. And then another point in time in the day you wish that you were like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Bruce Willis, I'm talking like as a guy, okay?

And that you could sort of blast people and on. And other times you sort of wish that you were as evangelistic as Billy Graham and the other day, parts of the time you wish that you were maybe just able to talk and curse and do all sorts of things and this can all happen in the course of a day, it can happen in the course of an hour, but it can definitely happen in the course of a week.

that we have all these different personas and desires all going on within us and we're unstable because we're multiple selves and that always creates within us a fundamental insecurity.

[16 : 20] And because we're insecure it means that we have great problems with doctrines like God's grace, doctrines like of judgment, of hell, of human freedom, of providence, all of these things we have problems not just when we come to this parable which I'm still going to get to in a moment, I haven't forgotten it, but we have problems with it all the time because as part of our insecurity and our multiple selves we're very aware of the fact that whether it's ourselves or somebody else or maybe we grew up in a family where the dad wasn't able to express being unhappy with his wife so he took it out on the kids or the dad wasn't able to deal with the fact that he couldn't get along with his boss and so he takes it out on the wife or maybe we had a boss and we can see that she wasn't able to deal with her anger or discipline and her employees so she took it out maybe on waiters or waitresses or on her own family and we're just used to people and we can see it in our own selves we're inconsistent and sometimes we're too aggressive and sometimes we're too weak and passive and so when we see doctrines in the Bible of God's grace and of judgment and of hell and of God speaking without realizing it we project our insecurities and our multiple selves onto the text and we worry that that's what God's like but the Bible wants us to know that God is never ever and never has been insecure and he's never had multiple selves or multiple desires

God is always unchangeably himself and that the whole doctrine of God's unchangeableness is designed to protect this idea that we don't have to wake up tomorrow to discover that God now says that murder is good we don't have to worry that tomorrow we will wake up and God has changed his mind on anything nothing can change God's mind nothing can stop God from being God God is always himself he's always good he's always true he's always wise he's always strong he's always present he's always active he always knows all things he is unchangeably himself and because he's so secure he and his word allows images to be used of the Christian life and of himself which are shocking to us you see we don't want to use we don't want to refer to ourselves in ways I mean we might sort of play around and refer to ourselves in shocking types of ways in areas where we're secure but in an area where we're not secure about ourselves and somebody uses an analogy about us that touches on us we get very very uncomfortable with it but God is always secure and that's why in the Bible like you know if we went to the condos or the University of Ottawa and we were to say that one of the main images that God uses of himself is the Lord of hosts which means that he's the commander in chief of angel armies that would make people very uncomfortable that might not make us uncomfortable some of us it might but others it would make them very uncomfortable but God compares himself in the Bible sometimes to a drunken soldier to an unjust uncaring judge the whole means by which Jesus died for us has become just a common place and people wear it as jewelry but it was unbelievably shocking and offensive to the first generations of people who knew crucifixion as something that they would if not witness in their lifetime at least have heard about or know that it happens in parts of the empire and many of them it would have been a living experience for them that they would have witnessed and so the first thing is okay we're shocked here

Jesus is using an analogy of a whole pile of corrupt people well we probably wouldn't do that but God's not insecure Jesus isn't insecure he knows who he is and because he knows who he is he's able to use things which are shocking shocking to good people like you and me who even if we cheat on our taxes even if sometimes the person at the cash gives us too much change and we don't return the difference because they gave us ten dollars or twenty dollars too much we know we know that we shouldn't do it and we'd like to think that we would be the type of people who wouldn't do those things but this parable might speak very powerfully to other people and God is not insecure so he uses sometimes shocking things to catch our attention and throughout these last two weeks over Christmas when I would mention to different people I was going to preach on this they say Luke 16 what the answer the story about the dishonest manager they go whoa that parable like people who read through the gospels that's one of the parables that sticks in their mind because it sticks in their craw it sticks in our craw so that's the first it's just a general thing about it all the time is that we realize that we're reading the text it's not that the Bible is ever unbalanced it's we're unbalanced and we fear that our unbalancedness and insecurity and multiple selves that that's somehow an evidence in the text and God is never insecure he's always himself he's always God praise be to God we never have to worry that God will stop being loving never nothing can stop him being loving nothing can stop him being love itself so somebody said okay George well that's okay okay well okay so God uses shocking images but George George George George this is a this is a parable about conspiracy successful apparently successful conspiracy to defraud and Jesus does seem to commend the person for it and so what on earth is going on okay well here's I'm going to put up the point and I'm going to try to explain the point and if you could put up the second point here's what I think is going on in the text the Bible presents only two ways two ways for human beings to follow or to live one way is to strive for self justification the other way is by humble faith in Jesus receive God's free gift of justification I'll say the game I think the Bible has lots of different ways that it phrases this but the Bible is constantly trying to get us to see that there's two ways to live and in this particular case and it's going to sort of have a sort of an echo in the text one way to live is to strive for self justification to justify ourselves and justify ourselves before ourselves and before other people the other way to live is to live by humble faith in Jesus and receive in receiving and receive God's free gift of just of justification in other words that through Jesus God justifies us God completely and utterly justifies us he does it by grace as a gift through Jesus and we can add nothing to that justification it's all comes from God so some of you might say well George I like that message but I sure don't see it here in the text well here's where just sort of bear with me we have to do a little tiny bit of sort of inquiry to see why I say this so remember how the parable goes right and we all remember how it goes and we remember about the master commending the fellow excuse me the first thing is that the commending actually sort of funny type of thing now you all know that I I like if you come here to the church at all you know that I like movies that have like murders in them I like books that have murders or bank robberies and and all of that type like really bad people and all of that in fact the book that I just finished reading one of the things in the book was that there's a guy who sort of had his finger in all of the criminal activities that were going on in this large area and of course in that case there's lots of other criminals who sometimes try to encroach and take over part of the business and there's several times in the book where the guy says he's a criminal by the way he's also a deacon in the local church but that's a separate matter he gets himself elected the deacon on the deacon's board of his of his

[25 : 22] Baptist church first Baptist of the of the area but he's he's running he's running prostitutes he has a strip club he's running drugs he's running illegal weapons and does money laundering and he you know you get the idea this is a really really bad guy and but several times when people try to muscle in or do something else he says to himself something like these words he says my aren't you an industrious and clever fellow that's what he says my aren't you a clever and industrious fellow and then of course he goes and has the guy killed okay but but that's what he says he sort of admires the fact that the person who's trying to rip him off is trying to be as good a criminal as he is and so you know I would say that this commending of the of the guy at the end by the rich guy isn't necessarily something if you sort of look at it from that point of view it's not necessarily something especially when you then see what Jesus says but here's why it's all about self justification the first thing is if you go back and look at verse 15 and you have actually yeah verse 15 actually we're going to go back to a context thing we'll start at verse 1 look what it says here he also said to the disciples also said in other words this parable is linked to the parable before it in fact what you can imagine doing is that the first parable if you go back and look at chapter 15 there's three parables

and the one immediately before this is the parable of the prodigal son and so what you can imagine is that there's this conflict and there's all these

Pharisees over here sorry I'm not picking on this side of the congregation okay the Pharisees are over here and Jesus has his disciples behind him okay and in chapter 15 it's as if Jesus says these three parables his disciples can hear him says these three parables concluding with the parable of the prodigal son and he says it to the Pharisees the religious people the spiritual people the elite people of the culture and then after he said these three parables he turns to the disciples the Pharisees are all still now behind Jesus they can hear what Jesus says to the disciples and Jesus tells them this parable of the dishonest manager and then after he tells them the parable of the dishonest manager he goes on and tells them about which we'll look at in a moment about you know people you know if you're if you're dishonest and little you'll be dishonest and much if you're faithful and little you'll be faithful and much you can't serve God and mammon and as he finishes that what he hears behind him is the Pharisees the religious and the spiritual the elite the cultural elite the well-educated the powerful they sneer at Jesus they ridicule him they deride him for everything he said and Jesus turns now with his back to his disciples and looks at the Pharisees and says in verse 15 you are those who justify yourselves before men but God knows your hearts for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God why were these people ridiculing Jesus for the prodigal son and the dishonest manager Jesus says that what led them to ridicule was because they believed in self-justification and the worship of money and he said anything all self justification is an attempt to exalt yourself and God finds it an abomination so the two parables are linked and actually if you think about it I don't know how well you know you folks know the parable of the prodigal son when you go home today maybe you can read it again and if you read the prodigal son and you read the story of the dishonest manager and you go from one parable to another you'll be surprised at the number of similarities in both cases there's a man who's using somebody else's wealth and desires somebody else's wealth in both cases there's waste of the wealth in both cases there's sort of not only the desire for the wealth but the wasting of the wealth and in both cases after the wealth has been wasted there is either the threat or the reality of being reduced to a lower working class status and in both cases there is the worry that once the wealth is gone you're going to be friendless in both cases in both stories that's the same thing and in both stories the characters have a brain wave they go oh I got it oh I got it in both stories the prodigal son when he's feeding the the corn husks to the the not the corn husks he's just feeding the pods to the pigs and he says oh I got it the dishonest manager when he knows he's about to be fired going to be reduced to even lower than dicking ditches and begging he goes oh I got it and in both cases there I got it they have a strategy to move forward in both stories both stories very similar structure and but you see in the first story those of you if you go back and listen to my sermon on I think was the second Sunday in December you'll see that in the first story the prodigal God it's really a prodigal son it's really a story about God and and it's a story that God sees the son long before the son sees so this the son in humility decides his exit strategy is you know what I'm never gonna have any money anymore but what I really need is to be with my father I'd rather be home with my father and poor than anything else and so remember he prepares a speech he says you know I've been very bad I've wasted your money I'm no longer worthy to be called your son would you at least let me live at your house and work as a servant and that's his strategy and the story is that as he goes that the story is not fundamentally about his strategy although the strategy is fun very very important but the father who sees the son long before the son sees the father that the father crosses the distance between himself and the son and goes and embraces the son and welcomes the son and the son only says part of his little prepared speech before the father saying bring my bring the best robe which is his own robe and cover this guy and let's have a party because my son who is dead is alive again and in the second story of the dishonest manager he says you know what how can there be an existence apart from money and how can I possibly have an existence apart from being seen as really being important how can there be any life worth living if I don't have money and I'm not important so I'm going to find some criminals and I'm going to hope that the parable by the way is incomplete the parable doesn't say whether at the end of this in the next step that the rich man says hmm aren't you a clever fellow okay kill him okay my servants go out whack him you know kneecap him you have no idea whether the the criminals are going to actually accept the guy that the parable is incomplete because it's not a moralistic thing it's not about moralism and principles it's about the fact that God looks at our heart

and these two parables reveal radically different understandings of the human heart in the context of the living God in the prodigal son he humbly sets aside any type of self-justification and to his huge surprise and to our surprise we discover that God justifies and accepts the son in the last story the manager only desires to continue to have money be the center of his life and seek his own self-justification two radically different approaches and stories to life in the first story part of what is going on is all we see is that the father justifies the son and we don't realize that the parable is preparedness remember those of you who've been here other weeks that from chapter 9 on every single thing that happens in the gospel of Luke is

Jesus regularly every chapter and a half or two chapters says to his disciples we're going to Jerusalem I'm going to Jerusalem to die I'm going to Jerusalem to die I'm going to Jerusalem to die keeps reminding people and when we read the gospel we have to remember that everything that's said is all in the context of Jesus going to Jerusalem to die and so at the time of the prodigal son we don't understand that how the son will be justified is not merely by some degree of declaration by the father but that the that the this that ultimately my justification in yours comes by Jesus's finished work upon the cross that it will be the death of Jesus upon the cross that ultimately justifies you and me me accepting his finished work is what justifies me we don't know that I mean we know it because we know the story but when you're reading the story it's just preparing you for this so the Bible is setting before us two different ways the one way is to strive for self-justification or by humble faith in Jesus receive God's free gift of justification well some of you are saying well what about the money aspect and what about how does it all end with verse 9 and all of that other stuff and and is is the Bible now is Jesus saying that money is like dirty like George isn't that sort of what those priests said to the Quebecois for many many generations or at least I mean whether it's true or not I don't know just in in in for many people when they think about it that's what they believe happened

I'm not saying it did I just it's what they believe happened that um I'm not saying that they're wrong either I I don't know enough about Quebecois history to know whether it's a fair depiction but are is this just is this why that the the priests in the in the church in Quebec they would tell people that money is dirty and so they shouldn't seek to make money and they shouldn't seek promotions and ambitions and that allowed all these Anglican and Baptist and United Church Anglophones to get all the rich positions is that I George is still a bit confused well we're going to look at it but the first thing we have to understand is is something about what it means to be justified by Jesus when we put our when in repentance we turn to Jesus and we say father I'm I'm no longer worthy to be called your son or your daughter I cannot justify myself I I cannot exalt myself that whole project comes to an end all I can do is just hope and trust that what your son has done for us on the cross that you will justify me in him that you will do this by grace out of love and mercy for me you know father how divided my heart is you know that one moment I think I want to be like Billy Graham the next minute I want to be like Bruce Willis you know that on one on one moment I want to be faithful the next moment I want to be like Hugh Hefner you know that you know all those you know these terrible you know how father you know everything going on inside of me

[37 : 46] I cannot justify myself I all I can do is come to you for mercy and trust that you will justify me and have justified me through what Jesus has done for me on the cross that you will not weigh my merits you will only pardon my offenses and I come to you I come to you and what happens after we're justified well that's what we have to understand that's what Jesus is talking about in the text it's what happens in verses 9 and 10 and 11 and 12 and 13 it's I put it this way when I am justified by God my life begins to bear fruit for his glory when we really have been justified by God our lives start to bear fruit for his glory let's look at the text and see how it how it works itself out a little bit and then we'll talk just in closing a little bit how's my time we'll talk in closing just a tiny little bit about money I've gone on a long time hopefully I haven't lost you look at verse so verse 8 the master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness it's the end of the parable now Jesus begins to comment for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light and the word shrewd there in the Old Testament the Hebrew Old Testament was early on before Jesus' time translated into Greek and so often in fact many people believe that most of the time when the apostles were reading the Bible they were reading the Greek version of the Bible most of the time and the word in Genesis chapter 3 if you know that story about the serpent and the word in Greek that they use to translate how the serpent is is the same word that's used here in other words remember when it says about the serpent that the serpent was more subtle than other creatures more shrewd than other creatures that's the word that's used here it's

not a compliment to be said that you're like the serpent in the Garden of Eden that's not something that you should say whoa boy that's off my bucket list

I've always desired to be compared to the serpent in the Garden of Eden who leads all of mankind astray Jesus is commenting upon the fact that you're dealing with a story here that's all about people who are all consumed with money the rich man and the manager and the creditors they're all consumed with money money is their God but he's going to make a shocking thing he's going to say the fact that the fact of the matter is is that even though these people are all consumed with money that's all that consumes them yet you know what at least they pursue this with diligence so how should we then live if even thieves and criminals pursue their end with diligence does it mean that when you have received the justification that comes from me that you don't have to pursue anything if thieves understand that they should pursue money now that I have justified you shouldn't you pursue something what should you pursue verse 9 he begins to talk about it and I tell you make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth

I'll talk about that in a moment so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings and the word fails there is actually it's an interesting word it's a good word but the original word in the original language is the word that we get the word eclipse from in other words when money is eclipsed for you remember he's talking to the disciples money you live in a world where money exists but you know what one day money will be eclipsed for you so he said you know using the thing as the guy in the parable was hoping that by his criminal activity he would make friends and so what Jesus is saying is eternal dwellings the word for dwelling there which is a good word it's the same word used for tabernacle and it's a place where God meets with you and he said you know when you're justified by what I've done for you on the cross where's your destination now? you're going home and home is to be with God to live in the new heaven and the new earth that's what my justification does for you that's your new destination you know you sojourn in Canada but your true home is heaven and that's where you're going and if that's where you're going use and here Jesus takes the argument from other people you know like a lot of times religious and spiritual people will say we don't want to talk about money money is unclean it's dirty you know it's worldly it's carnal it's unimportant you can't take it with you and there's all this talk of sort of despising money but inwardly we still like it and we like to have more of it and we get upset and we go back to the cashier if she didn't give us enough change or he didn't give us enough change because you know we can talk about money being unclean and carnal and unspiritual and unworthy and non-eternal and all that but we live in a world with money still has a hold on us and Jesus is saying okay folks you're going to be justified by what I've done for you on the cross you're going to receive that but once you're justified by me you're going to bear fruit and part of how you're going to bear fruit is you're now going to start to understand that you're going to this future and this future is guaranteed so use your worldly resources in such a way that fits with your destination the dishonest manager he had no destination other than money he had no destination other than being important he didn't really care ultimately about any particular person he didn't care which one of these creditors took him in because he ultimately didn't care about people all he cared about was himself and he cared about money that's what he cared about and that was his destination and he pursued that diligently and Jesus said if these guys can pursue these things diligently you're going to be justified by me when you put your faith and trust in me now you're going to live with God and if that's your destination use the resources that you have in such a way that fits with where you're going and then he goes on and he talks about it one who is faithful you know now that okay well okay Jesus how do I do that like what do I do if that's my destination like what do I have to understand you know and Jesus says well one who is faithful verse 10 in a very little is also faithful in much you know money is in a sense a very little thing it's going to be eclipsed but you know if you're not faithful in these little tiny little things how are you going to be faithful in big things like who's going to believe you like part of the fruit that's going to come from justification is you're going to have a desire built up within you that you need to develop habits around to desire to be faithful even in little things why because one and one who is dishonest and very little is also dishonest and much and what else does Jesus say if then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth he's taking their language from them who will entrust you to the true riches the riches that eclipse money and if you have not been faithful in that which is another's because you know at the end of the day the Bible is going to teach that we're all just managers of resources we don't really own anything

God puts things under our care but you know when we die it all goes back in the box goes to somebody else and ultimately it's God's and you have to understand I have to understand that the money's ultimately not my money it's God's money it's not my resources it's God's resources I didn't do anything to create my DNA and if my DNA means I have a certain type of IQ and a certain type of health and God has blessed me with you know a wife and kids and living in Ottawa and he's given me these resources gosh I was born in this country I don't know why God had me born here rather than in you know Sri Lanka or in this you know in slums of Shanghai I didn't do anything to accomplish that and God has given me some resources he's given you maybe lesser resources some of you is giving more resources but whatever resources that God has put put in your control he's given them to you to manage them for him he's given you to them to manage for him and if you have not been faithful in that which is in others 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

[46 : 45] God and money the Pharisees who are lovers of money heard all these things and they ridiculed Jesus they sneered at him they despised him why? you are those who justify yourselves before men but God knows your hearts for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God two final points just to try to bring it home the first one is this verse 4 Jesus asks me will I manage money in service of money or will I manage money in service of the living God?

will I manage money in service of money or will I manage money in service of the living God? see the issue is we all live in a world where money exists right?

we all live in a world like that and we can't just pretend that it's unspiritual so we don't have to bother with it because all that does is it just allows greed and envy and to fester within us and it allows us to be ungenerous and hoarding types of spirits just to grow within us to start to think when we think of it it's just underneath us and beneath us it just allows us to exalt ourselves and Jesus says listen the issue is in the throne of your heart who's on the throne of your heart and on the throne of your heart the center of who you are for many of us it's myself and money and other idols as well it might be the idols of tribe or of nation or of job or career or whatever it is but there's a host of idols sitting on the throne of our heart and the throne of our heart should only have one person sitting on it and that should be the living God it should be Jesus who's died to redeem us and to restore us to that which we were created for because we were created to have God at the throne of our hearts our hearts are restless till they rest in him and Jesus says you can end up serving money managing money but really what you're doing you're managing money because you worship money which means that money manages you and money will fail one second after death

Bill Gates and the poorest person in Ottawa one second after they both die if they die at the same time one second after death they have the same financial resources so the issue isn't do you manage money the issue is who are you managing money for money himself or the living God one final thing Jesus calls me to manage the resources under my care for the glory of the living God Jesus calls me to manage the resources under my care for the glory of the living God you see that's why there's nothing wrong if God has granted you the ability to start a business start a business bless the city you know one of the ways that we bless the city that we help the poor is by starting businesses that create employment for people and you know and you know and you know if he's giving you some type of a vision to start a dance troupe or something like that those are some you know resources that you have or to paint beautiful pictures or to make films or just you know God calls you into marriage and maybe you end up deciding that you're going to have a little bit less money so one of you can stay home to care for the kids that hopefully God will bless you with and you know the thing is is that these are all resources that God has put under your care and you're to manage them not thinking about how can I maximize money in service of money but you be wise and work hard and seek promotions if God has granted you that ability to seek promotions and manage those resources but you manage them not to enthrone yourself and not to enthrone money but you manage them for the glory of God and that's why you see that it's part of that that just as well as you manage the resources and maybe cause the resources to thrive and grow but at the same time because you're not worshipping money that's why you give money to the poor and why you give money to the church it's why the spiritual discipline of tithing is so important for a Christian that there's at least a bit of a benchmark in the Bible put about okay well how is it that I show that I'm going to dethrone money as the thing which drives my managing of money well one of the ways you do it is you give money away oh no

[51 : 10] I'd rather have a spiritual thing like I'd rather have a spiritual experience in church and God says no no no you can't dethrone money in your life unless you give money away and you know you can trust me I'm going to provide for you but you've got to give money away and we're suggesting some people like Mother Teresa she had to give away everything some of us maybe God's going to call us that that we have to give away everything maybe it's more than 10% but that's how we dethrone money in our lives that's how we manage money in such a way that we show that we're living to the glory of God tithing is such an important spiritual discipline connected to this text to help us to understand how to live but build your business get the promotions look out for interest rates you know if you have credit card debt you know talk to somebody who can help you put all that under a line of credit with a lower interest you know because it's not a particular sign of being very spiritual to give lots of money to credit card companies when you can you know that money can be kept for yourself you can give it to the poor you can give it to the church like there's lots of better uses for that money but manage your money manage your resources use your energy use your mind get the degrees get the promotion manage your resources but don't do it for the exaltation of yourself don't do it to justify yourself in the eyes of men don't do it to prove to your parents or your teacher or your coach that they were wrong for you you have the opportunity

I have the opportunity to be justified by the finished work of Jesus upon the cross so that at the end of our life when we die that which we can begin to know now we will hear at the end where God the creator the living God says to me George fill in your own name I am so glad you've come to see me and be with me face to face I've been looking forward to this come I welcome you into my kingdom there's no greater justification than that which comes from God so live for his glory receive that which he gives he'll give you it in such a way that you start to bear fruit live for his glory please stand bow our heads in prayer dear God please deliver me from self-justification please deliver our church from self-justification please deliver every person who is here from striving for self-justification deliver us father from all of our striving to exalt ourselves father thank you for Jesus thank you for what he did for us on the cross thank you that you know that he knew how imperfect and how fickle and insecure we are and still you loved us still you love us still Jesus died on the cross for us thank you father that he knows us so perfectly and yet he died for us thank you father that in him when we receive him that we are justified in him that he justifies us that you justifies us father help us to be gripped with this message of the gospel and what Jesus does for us on the cross help us father to be gripped by the justification that comes from you and help us father to so live with our home in heaven bearing fruit for your glory help us to manage our resources well in a way that we can contribute to the furtherance of your kingdom and bring you glory it's your resources it's your money

I surrender all in Jesus' name we pray Amen