

# Righteous But Shrewd

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[0:00] All right, well this morning as we continue our way through the Gospel of Luke, we come to an unusual and challenging teaching of Jesus. And it's a parable in Luke chapter 16. So if you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to Luke chapter 16.

This parable is often called the parable of the shrewd manager. And it's one of those things Jesus said that just sort of leaves us scratching our heads by the time we get to the end of it.

Wondering if we really understand what Jesus is talking about. So I'm going to start by reading the parable in its entirety and then we'll kind of comb back through it.

So reading from Luke chapter 16 verse 1. Jesus told his disciples, There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions.

So he called him in and asked him, What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management because you cannot be manager any longer.

[1:11] The manager said to himself, What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig.

And I'm ashamed to beg. I know what I'll do. So that when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.

So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, How much do you owe my master? 900 gallons of olive oil, he replied.

The manager told him, Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it 450. Then he asked the second, And how much do you owe?

A thousand bushels of wheat, he replied. He told him, Take your bill and make it 800. The master commended the dishonest manager Because he had acted shrewdly.

[2:20] For the people of this world Are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind Than are the people of the light. I tell you, Use worldly wealth To gain friends for yourselves So that when it is gone, You will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

Whoever can be trusted with very little Can also be trusted with much. And whoever is dishonest with very little Will also be dishonest with much.

So if you have not been trustworthy In handling worldly wealth, Who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy With someone else's property, Who will give you property of your own?

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one And love the other, Or you will be devoted to the one And despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money. The Pharisees who loved money Heard all this And were sneering at Jesus.

[3:37] He said to them, You are the ones who justify yourselves In the eyes of others. But God knows your hearts. What people value highly Is detestable in God's sight.

Let's go back to the top In verse 1. We first noticed that Jesus Is now teaching his disciples.

This is not aimed at the Pharisees as much But we heard at the end They do overhear it. And it's a parable about a rich man And his dishonest manager.

There was a rich man Whose manager was accused Of wasting his possessions. Now as much as we'd like more detail here About what was going on It's not here.

We don't know exactly What the manager in this story was up to. How was he wasting the rich man's stuff? Was he helping himself To some of the rich man's stuff?

[4:46] And probably Was he making bad decisions? With his stuff? We don't know. But what we do know Is that the rich man Is ready to fire this guy.

What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management Because you cannot be manager any longer. So the rich man has already made up his mind This guy's fired.

But even though he's fired He still asks the manager for an account. There still needs to be Some sort of a transition here So that the rich man knows Where things stand With all that the manager Has been responsible for.

Well after hearing this The manager realizes that he's in Big trouble. And we hear his thoughts. We kind of hear his conversation With himself.

What shall I do now? My master's taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig And I'm ashamed to beg.

[5 : 58] So the last thing this guy wants to do Is get a job in hard labor. Maybe he actually Physically isn't strong enough And knows it.

Or maybe he just despises That kind of work And doesn't want to do it. Doesn't feel that it's suited to him. And it seems in his mind That the only alternative To the hard labor Is to become a beggar. Why are those The only two choices In his mind? Well if we think through it a bit Word is sure to get around That this guy was fired For mismanaging his boss's stuff.

And so it's very unlikely After being fired That he will be able to find a job Doing anything similar.

And so in his mind It's down to Manual labor Digging Or begging Both bad choices in his mind Bad options.

Well all of a sudden He has this Crafty idea. I know what I'll do So that when I lose my job here People will Welcome me Into their houses.

[7 : 22] And what does he do? Well he uses that Little window of opportunity In his last days of work Before he hands everything over I mean he's supposed to be Preparing to give an account To his Boss Of where things stand And he kind of is Doing that in a sense By calling everyone in To talk about the debts But he uses that Window of opportunity He acts Cunningly As he meets with them And he begins to Settle their debts One by one Allowing them to pay back Much less Than they owe And Jesus gives Two samples Of how this Went down In his little story He called in each Of his master's debtors He asked the first How much do you owe My master?

900 gallons Of olive oil And the manager told him Take your bill Sit down quickly And make it 450 That's a big reduction In the debt 50% He settles the debt He clears it For just 50% Of what was owed Wouldn't that be nice To go to the bank And get 50% Yeah you don't have To pay back Half of what you owe And olive oil Was a valuable Commodity in these days I mean it takes A lot of Little olives To get A little bit Of oil According to one Commentator The total debt Of 900 gallons Would have been worth About three years Wages For the average Day laborer And the manager Says quick Let's settle this Pay back 50% And my master Will consider The debt Cleared Then comes the

Second Guy How much Do you owe? A thousand bushels Of wheat He told him Take your bill And make it 800 Now this is a Huge amount Of wheat For this time Long before Tractors And combines 100 measures Or cores Was the equivalent Of about A thousand bushels And that was The yield Of about 100 acres Of grain The estimated Value is about 8 to 10 years Salary For the average Day laborer And the manager Says quick Let's settle the debt I'll take just 80 measures Or 800 bushels And my master Will consider The debt Cleared And the master When he finds out What his manager Has done With all the people Who owed him What does he do?

Jesus says He commended him Because he had Acted Shrewdly So what Just happened Here?

Well there's Some subtleties In this Parable That we need To catch For this To make Sense First of all The thing That's probably Most surprising Is the Response Of the rich Man To his Manager Jesus says He commended Him Like he Praised Him He complimented Him On what He did We sort Of expect His response To be Anger Rage But here's The subtlety Probably the rich Man was Very angry You can almost Imagine him Finding out What the manager Had done For the first Moment He did What?

[11 : 22] You gotta be Kidding me I mean With this Manager's Actions The rich Man has Just lost An enormous Amount Of his Personal Wealth And so Of course He would Be angry But he Can be Angry And at the Same time Recognize The sheer Brilliance Of what This deceitful Manager Had done It was So clever That he Couldn't Help But commend Him Maybe you've Had a moment Where you Were playing A game Or a Sport With an Opponent Are you Pleased When they Beat you Of course Not But what If the Reason That they Beat you Was not Because they Were stronger Or faster But because They just Knew the Game better

And played Smarter Than you Have you Ever experienced A moment Like that In a game Or in Sports Where you Or your Team were Just beat But actually You were kind Of impressed With how it Was done You almost Had to just Clap Even though You just Got it Handed To you That's What's Going on Here The rich Man Has just Been beat So badly By this Crafty Weasel Manager Of his And at The same Time He's Impressed By how His manager Got himself Out of This pickle Well what's So impressive About what The manager Did Again we Have to Sort of Think it Through We have to Really chew On this What would Have happened To the Manager If he Hadn't Come up With this Clever Plan We heard

About it Already He would Have been Out of A job He Wouldn't Have too Many Options Left Think about For a second If you were In charge Of hiring For a Small Business Would you Hire This guy After hearing That he Was fired For Mismanagement And word Gets Around Nobody's Going to Want to Hire This guy Because he Can't Be trusted With Another's Property And so This manager Would have Been out Of a Job And out Of the Ability To get Another Job But it's Even worse Than that If the Reason you Were fired Was because Of dishonesty And dishonorable Handling of Your responsibilities It wouldn't Just affect Your future Job prospects It would Affect your Personal relationships As well Word gets Around Who wants

To be caught Keeping company With the Cheat And the Swindler Who was Disloyal To his Former boss And so This is why The manager Is thinking That he Won't even Be welcomed Into people's Houses Anymore He understands The consequences Of his Actions He's been Caught red Handed Dealing Dishonestly And immorally And once Word gets Out Why he Has been Fired He will Become a Social pariah A person People Avoid And exclude Because of What he Has done And so The manager Is quite Sharp When it Comes to Thinking ahead Of what The consequences Will be He sees All this Coming And he Begins To think And plan How can I change That

There's Got to Be a way I'm going To be Shunned I'm going To be Excluded I'm not Even going To be Welcoming People's Houses Anymore What can I do To change That So that My reputation Won't be Ruined And so That at Least I'll have Some Friends Who will Welcome Me into Their Houses Well this Quality of The manager Is Commendable His ability To think Ahead To make A plan That addresses The trap That he's Caught in Even if it Is a trap Of his own Fault But more Impressive Is that he Actually does Find a way Out of this Trap A trap That most People Don't ever Get out Of The rich Man Has this Manager Of his Cornered It's Checkmate Game Over You can't Be manager Anymore You're Fired Your Weaselly Days of Squandering

[16 : 24] My possessions Are over Now you're Going to Get what's Coming to You And yet The manager Manages To weasel His way Out Of the Checkmate And at The same Time Strikes a Devastating Blow To the Rich man Well how Did he do It He came Up with a Brilliant Idea Now don't Misunderstand Me It was not A righteous Thing that He did It was a Wicked Thing That he Did And yet It was Brilliant In its Wickedness It was Utterly Deceitful And conniving And it Was truly Downright Immoral And yet It was Creative It was Resourceful And it Was just What was Needed To change The outcome That he Was headed

For What's so Impressive Is that this Manager Found a Way to Completely Reverse The situation Entirely No longer Is he In a Pickle Or a Bind But now His boss Is in a Pickle Is in a Bind The boss Has just Lost A fortune But to All the People who Ode him It looks Like he's Been Exceedingly Generous And kind These people Who owed Him Big time All just Came And lined Up And they Were all Told that The boss Was willing To settle For less How kind How generous Now the Boss is the Talk of the Town Words going Around about Just how Generous he Is willing To settle All these Debts For less Than Everybody Ode

Well how Would all Those people Feel if Now the Rich man Calls them Back and Says actually My manager Was lying You still Owe me Everything Boy would They all Be upset I mean They just Assumed in Good faith That he Had authorized The manager To cut These deals And so If he goes After them Suddenly it's Going to be The rich man Who's the Pariah You can Almost imagine Them talking Well I don't Know about That rich Guy but At least His manager Was willing To cut Us a Deal He Shouldn't Have been Fired He was Good And that Rich guy I mean he Should honor The deal That his Manager Made Who knows Maybe there Could have Been lawsuits Brought against The rich man For demanding More When all These guys Said hey We have Proof that We settled The debt Right here And so

The tables Have turned Completely The rich man Is now In a bind He has Only two Choices Suffer Great loss But be Loved by Everyone in The community Or go After what He lost And lose His good

Reputation In the Process Either way The former Manager Seems to Get away With this And so The rich man Commends His former Manager You know You can I gotta Hand it To you You Weasel You got Me again This is a Tricky Parable It's filled With subtleties And we Kind of have To unravel Them before We can Really make Sense of Jesus Application What's The point Of this What does Jesus Want us To do In response To this Let's read

What Jesus Says again In verses Eight and Nine The master Commended the Dishonest Manager Because he Had acted Shrewdly For the People of This world Are more Shrewd In dealing With their Own kind Than are The people Of the Light I tell You Use worldly Wealth To gain Friends For yourselves So that When it Is gone You will Be welcomed Into Eternal Dwellings Let's Unpack This Jesus Is Saying That we His Disciples Should be Shrewd The Dishonest Manager Was an Example Of shrewdness As we Just saw His shrewdness Was seen In his Ability To Anticipate And calculate And plan And think Ahead And execute

[21 : 29] It His shrewdness Was seen In his Thinking Outside The box And his Creativity His Resourcefulness The manager Found a way To change His bleak Outcome With what He had At his Disposal And this Is where Maybe we Could Sometimes Get hung Up on This Parable Jesus Was not Saying That the Wicked Thing That he Did Was good Neither Is he Saying That we Should Sometimes Be deceitful Or act Immorally But it's Shrewdness Shrewdness Is the Quality That Jesus Wants us To have This Manager Though Is a Negative Example Of it You can Be Intelligent But wicked You can Be strong But use That strength To do Evil Shrewdness Works the Same way This man Was shrewd

But wicked What Jesus Desires Is that we Be shrewd But righteous We might Wonder Well why Would Jesus Even choose This guy As an Example In the First Place Of the Kind of Thing That he's Looking for In us Well Sometimes We can See things More clearly When there's A clear Contrast White looks Pretty white Beside black Darkness Helps us See what Light Really is And really This is how We should Learn in All of Life There are People who Set a Positive example For us To follow We should Imitate Them And there Are people Who set a Negative example And we can Actually learn From them Too What not To do This is why Solomon spent so Much time Writing about The fool In his

Proverbs Sometimes we Can see things More clearly When there's Contrast Second Jesus says The wicked Tend to be More shrewd Than the Righteous For the People of This world Are more Shrewd In dealing With their Own kind Than are The people Of the Light What do We do When we're Trying to Teach something To someone Well we give Them the Best example Of it Right The most Intense Example Of it And that's What Jesus Does here With this Shrewd Manager And so Shrewdness Is not Inherently Immoral Otherwise There'd be Nothing to Commend Of this Guy Jesus Wouldn't Use him As an Example At all We are To be Shrewd As Jesus Disciples And he Uses this Guy as An example Because like The people Of this World He is More Shrewd Than Maybe you Or I Are Now we Might have To think About that A bit We're Probably Used to Thinking of Shrewdness As going Hand in Hand with Selfishness Or Deceitfulness And it Sort of Forces us To ask The question Well what Does it Look like Then to Be shrewd Yet Righteous In case There's any Doubt about This let's Just quickly Peek over To Matthew Chapter 10 Verse 16 I mean Jesus says It here Point blank To his Disciples He says I'm sending You out Like sheep Among wolves Therefore Be as Shrewd As snakes And as Innocent As doves So shrewdness Of itself Is not Inherently

Immoral You can Be shrewd And innocent And righteous Some translations Say wise As serpents That's the same Greek word Though that Jesus uses In this Parable Jesus wants Us to be Shrewd He wants Us to be Wise He wants Us to be Resourceful And creative And even To think Outside the Box He wants Us to Think deeply About the Consequences Of our Actions And to Think ahead We don't Have time This morning To look at Where we see Shrewdness In action In some of The other Places In the Scriptures I mean You could Just quickly Think about Joseph As he Planned To save Massive Amounts Of harvest Through the Years of Plenty To get Egypt Through Many years Of famine We see Shrewdness In the Gibeonites When the Children of Israel come Into the Promised Land They pretend To be From far

[26 : 32] Away And make A peace Treaty And in Doing so They save Their lives It's another Negative example But shrewd Definitely shrewd We see it in Solomon He came up with The way to figure Out whose baby It was When there were Two women Who were claiming Ownership of the Same baby And nobody Was a witness And knew And we see Shrewdness in Jesus How he

Interacted with His opponents He refused He refused Not Not refused He actually Offered Yeah I'll answer That question But first You answer A hard Question From me We see it Both positively And negatively Used Sinfully And righteously Jesus wants His disciples He wants us To be Shrewd Righteous!

You will be Welcomed Into eternal Dwellings So Jesus Is saying Be like that Manager In this way Not in the Dishonesty In the corruption Part But be like him In this way He used what he Had While it was Available to him To ensure that He would be Welcomed Into people's Homes So be like him Do that Use the wealth The stuff That's at your Disposal Now in this Life In this World Use it To gain Friends A.K.A.

Be generous Kind Meet needs So that you Will be welcomed Into eternal Dwellings He brings in a Contrast And a twist Basically he's Saying the Dishonest Manager Shrewdly Focused on The end Goal of Being welcomed Into people's Homes But you Are to be Shrewdly Focused On a Different Goal The goal Of being Welcomed Into eternal Dwellings The living Place that Lasts forever Heaven The kingdom Of god He's talking About In other Words Being shrewd In a righteous Way Means thinking About a higher And better Goal It means Recognizing What's Most Important What will Last What will Endure Forever And if Heaven is Where my Heart and My mind Are set Then the Stuff that I have Now Will I see It for What it Is It's Temporary Stuff That I Won't Get to Manage Much Longer It's Not Really Mine To Keep And so Like The Manager I Can Be Generous I Can Give It Away I Can Be Kind To Others In The Process Gaining Friends But not So that I Can be Welcomed Into Their Houses Here On Earth But So that I Can Be Welcomed Into The Only Home That Matters Now Of course Jesus Isn't Saying You Can Sort Of Give Or Buy Your Way Into!

Here Through Acts Of Charity We Do Those Things In Faith Right We Let Go Of The Stuff That We Have Here And Now For The Sake Of Others We Do It In Faith That There Is A Lasting Home Where We Will Have Everything That We Need Where We Will Be Welcomed A Shrewd Disciple Of Jesus Recognizes That This World Is Not Our Home That The Stuff We Have Is Only Entrusted To Us For A Short Time The Shrewd Disciple Of Jesus Recognizes That We Must Give An Account One Day For What Was Entrusted To Us A Shrewd Disciple Of Jesus Recognizes That The Money And The Stuff Whatever We Have Here And Should Be Used With Generosity And Kindness For The Gospel

[31:09] And For The Kingdom And So Jesus Is Encouraging Us To Think To Be Resourceful Be Creative Think Outside The Box Even What Kind of Brings Us To The Question What Has God Entrusted To You What Are You Managing For Him Right Now How Can You Use It Generously For Others And For God And Jesus Keeps Going He Gives Us Another Couple Points Of Application This Time He Does Talk About The Trustworthiness Of The Manager Whoever Can Be Trusted With Very Little Can Also Be Trusted With Much And Whoever Is Dishonest With Very Little Will Also Be Dishonest With Much

So If You Have Been Trust Worthy! In Handling Worldly Wealth Who Will Trust You With True Riches And If You Have Been Trustworthy With Someone Else's Property Who Will Give You Property Of Your Own We Can Kind Of See How These Things Tie Into The Parable But Each One Has A Little Bit Of A Different Emphasis For Our Lives In Verse 10 We See That Yes The Dishonesty Of The Manager Was Bad And Even Dishonesty In Little Things And In Little Ways Has Big Consequences He Might Have Ended Up With Friends But He Might Not Have Got A Job Like That Ever Again The Very Smallest Details Of Our Lives Reveal Our Character!

And We Should Not Expect To Be Entrusted With Much By God Or By Others If We Aren't Proving Trustworthy With What He's Already Given Us To Manage There's Some Amazing And Solid Wisdom In Those Words Of Jesus For For Life Here On Earth So If You've Not Been Trustworthy In Handling Worldly Wealth Who Will Trust You With True Riches There Are Things Far More Valuable!

Than Wealth Fake Money In Comparison I Can't Help But Think Of Monopoly Money I Used To Like To Play With That As A Kid The Wealth Of This Life And Of This World Is Kind Of Like Monopoly Money It's Not Truly Valuable And It Doesn't Really Last When The Game Is Over It All Goes Back In The Box But If You Can't Be Trustworthy Even With How You Will God Put In Your Hand What Is Truly Valuable These Are You Get On Stuff That You Don't Really Need Or Wasting Money On Stuff That Oh I Just Gotta Have That But It's

Mostly Just For Myself It's It's Greed It's Or It's Because I'm Lazy And I Don't Want To Do It Myself So I'm Going To Shell Out Even More To Get Something That Does It For Me If That's What People See In Your Life The Last Thing They Will Do Is Put Things Of Value In Your Hands Would Anyone Even Think Of Leaving Their Property To You When They Die When You Have Badly Failed To Look!

[35 : 18] After The Rental Property Where You Now Live These Are Sharp Words And We Should Take Them To Heart The Point In Them I think Is This Don't Just Think That Automatically Because You You Are Are Shrewd In Fact Our Lives Right Now Might Actually Look More Like The Dishonorable Manager Jesus Is Saying Be Like Him In Shrewdness But With A Higher Goal Don't Be Like How He Was Untrustworthy!

Because Nobody Wants To Entrust Anything Of Value To An Untrustworthy Person And So The First Place The Most Obvious Place To Practice Shrewdness It Isn't Some Theoretical Thing That You Have To Dream Up And I Hope You Don't Go Home And Ask Yourself How Can I Be More Clever For Jesus I Gotta Figure This Out No The First Place The Most Obvious Place To Apply All Of This To Practice Shrewdness Is With Your Own Personal And Family Finances It's With The Possessions Now What Has God Given You To Manage For Him Right Now And How Are You Doing With Managing That Worldly Wealth That He's Entrusted To You Your Personal And Your Family Finances Do You Have Money Set Aside For Things That Could Happen In The Foreseeable Future Are You Thinking And Planning Ahead Are You Saving Up For Those Costly Purchases Are You Giving To Things That Matter Into Eternity When This World As We Know It Is Done With Those Who Know You Best Say That Person Is A Shrewd Manager Of Their Personal Finances Of Their Family's Finances They Take Such Good Care Of Their Belongings They Make Them Last Or Do We Sort Of Just Let The Things We Own Go Into Disrepair And Then Go Borrow Money To Buy A New One Costing Us Even More There's So Much Wisdom Here I Mean! We Could Really Take The Time But I Encourage You To Do That This Week Take These Words With You And Ask The Lord To Show You How You Need To Grow As A Manager For Him What Growth And Shrewdness Should Look Like For You In The Coming Months We'll Finish Up The Pharisees Who Loved Money Heard All This And Were Sneering At Jesus He Said To Them You Are The Ones Who Justify Yourselves In The Eyes Of Others But God Knows Your Hearts What People Value Highly Is Detestable In God's Sight So As We've Heard Jesus Gives Them This Great Wisdom This Parable This Provocative Teaching About How

They Can Be Shrewd How They Can Be Wise It's An Opportunity For Anyone Listening To Wake Up From Our Own Foolishness And Take A Different Road As We Follow Jesus And The Pharisees Sneer At Him They Mock Him Is That How You Will Respond To These Words Of Jesus Or Will You Humble Yourself Before Them And Listen To Them What Is Jesus Saying To Me Let's Pray Father Sometimes We Take It For Granted That You Have Given Us Things In This Life Whether Money In The Bank Or Stuff That We Get To Use And Enjoy Every Week But I Pray That We [39 : 59] Wouldn't Be Found Untrustworthy Please Forgive Us For All Those Times When We Have Been Like This Dishonest Manager And Squandered And Wasted And Live For Ourselves We Thank You That You Sent Your Son To Die For Us To Atone For All Of Our Sins But As We Follow You Jesus We Want To Be Righteous!

And Shrewd! Grow that In Us We Pray Form It In Us To Your Name Be The Glory Amen