

Use Jesus' money to make eternal friends

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- [0 : 00] Good morning, church family. Our passage this morning is Luke 16, 1 to 15. Jesus also said to the disciples, There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.
- And he called him and said to him, What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.
- And the manager said to himself, What shall I do? Since my master is taking the management away from me, I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg.
- I've decided what to do so that when I'm 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.
- [1 : 20] 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 condemned the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. 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 you 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?
- [2 : 40] 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. The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.
- And he 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. Well, good morning everyone.
- Will you please pray with me as we come to God's word? Lord, you promise that if the Son sets you free, you'll be free indeed.
- [3 : 49] So I pray this morning that you would set us free from the love of money. In Jesus' name I pray it. Amen.
- Well, how much does God want you to give? Let me ask the elephant in the room question.

How much? Is it 10%? Is it a tithe? I wonder, do you give a token amount just to calm your conscience, to get rid of that guilt?

I've been reflecting in this series that I feel guilty just for having more. I have more than others.

There's just guilt there. There's something there. Some think Jesus is against having, having more. And those who think that will often go to Luke's gospel, thinking that Luke's gospel, there's so much more recorded in this gospel about money and possessions than all the other gospels.

[5 : 07] But the problem with seeing the Jesus in this gospel as if he's against riches is Luke is probably pretty well off himself.

He's a physician. He's talking to Theophilus, who's a high-up person in society who probably has a lot of money to spend himself. There are many warnings to the rich, but there's also heaps of examples of the rich following Christ.

There's patrons of Jesus' ministry. There's Zacchaeus throwing a party and giving to the poor. So as an article I wrote, Luke's gospel, as we come to it, is not against the rich.

It's a gospel to the rich. And I think all of us in this room are rich. If we think in terms of history, in terms of the country we're living in, I know there's going to be difference among us, great difference, but we're rich, aren't we?

I'm eating sumptuously every day. I'm having three meals a day more. I have a fridge full after our weekly shop, and the power is on.

[6 : 25] I'm not using it as a cupboard, as we heard last week. So this is a gospel to the rich. Are we meant to feel guilty?

Are we meant to give 10%? If we're coming with that mindset, we're coming to one of the most confusing parables that Jesus ever told.

It just doesn't quite compute. Like, what is he saying? Is he commending dishonesty? We've got this dishonest manager. Is he commending him?

What is this parable about? As we come to this, we need to spend a few minutes understanding what parables are, how they work.

These story-like parables, these longer ones, there's a phrase that I've heard so many times that when you hear it, I'd love us all to put it in the bin.

[7 : 28] It's wrong. Parables are earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. Have you heard that before? Put it in the bin, please. There's some truth to it, but it just, it domesticates parables.

Because that understanding of parables makes it sound like every detail in the story represents some kind of spiritual reality. We're kind of going to unlock the puzzle. That's not how parables work.

Not these longer ones, these story-like ones. Let me illustrate with a different parable. There was, now this is modern read day, modern day retelling, okay.

There was a single vehicle car accident and this male driver looked about 19 years old. He's got tattoos and piercings all over him. He's got a mohawk, if you know what a mohawk is.

He's sitting on the curb next to his beat-up car. He's staring at the ground, cigarette in his hands and he's just blood trickling down his face. Okay.

[8 : 39] And the first car to come by was the Archbishop of Sydney in the next car. And he sees this guy. He slows down, but he's wearing his vestments.

He doesn't want to get his holy vestments dirty or get blood on them. So he keeps driving. Now the next car to come was Dave Bott, a local pastor.

And he slowed down. He notices this man, but he's running late for a church meeting to do kingdom work. And so he too drives past. The next car, there's a devout Muslim man who's running late for his evening prayers.

He sees the man. He pulls over. He puts his hazard lights on. He calls an ambulance. He uses his turban to bind up his wounds. He pays the \$415 for the ambulance call-out fee because he doesn't have insurance.

And then he goes to the hospital with him. Now, which one loved his neighbour? Parables pack a punch, don't they?

[9 : 57] Assuming you think I got that parable right. Obviously, it's the good Samaritan. They pack a punch. They're meant to get under your skin and make you re-look at your assumptions about God and others and what a true kingdom attitudes are.

They pack a punch. Parables are meant to divide people, we're told in Matthew 13.

Some are going to find them confusing and ridiculous and reject them, proving that they don't care for Jesus' kingdom. Others are drawn into them.

What is this parable saying? You want to see the kingdom through Jesus' eyes. So, let this parable of the dishonest manager pack a punch.

We're meant to be shocked. Now, one last comment about parables to help us here is there's some parables that are how much more.

[11 : 09] So, fathers, which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? If we give good things to our children, even though we can be evil, how much more with our Father in heaven?

Give good things to those who ask. How much more? Or the widow who just persists to an unjust judge in her town, who neither feared God or cared about people.

She just persists and persists. Please give me justice. Give me justice. And he's just like, okay, just go away. I'll give you justice.

If her persistence is answered, how much more will God give justice if we persist? So, there's how much more parables. I think these parables are how much more.

If this dishonest manager is shrewd, clever, how much more should we Christians be? So, a true story.

[12 : 26] Michael Burry. He was an American investor, a hedge fund manager. He started a company in the year 2000.

And by 2004, he's managing \$600 million. You know the saying, safe as houses. Housing market, reliable investment, right?

But in 2005, he made a bet that the housing market in the US was going to crash. Like, everyone else is relying on the housing market.

Safe as houses. Michael Burry. He uses all his investors' money to go, no, it's going to crash. And his investors panicked.

Some of them sued him because he's just put all their money into this that everyone else thinks is wasteful and ridiculous. Others withdraw their money, but the global financial crisis came.

[13 : 31] And those who stuck with Burry made \$700 million profit, 500% return.

Clever. Very clever. Very shrewd. He was spending other people's money. It's easier to spend other people's money.

People thought it was wasteful. It was laughable. But he saw the crisis. And he acted. He acted very cleverly. That's the kind of shrewdness that this guy in this parable is like.

He's got a rich owner that he's managing his possessions. And he's been charged with wasting the possessions.

You're fired, is the meeting. You're fired. You've got two weeks, however long it is. You're going to be audited and then you're gone. He considers his future.

[14 : 39] He doesn't have the trade skills. He doesn't have the strength to be a tradie. I can relate to him on that. Anyway, I won't go down that rabbit hop.

It doesn't really matter. Now, when workers come to get their labourers for the day, he thinks he's going to be looked over because he doesn't have the skills. So he might be just left to beg.

He's too ashamed to beg. He can't look at himself in the mirror. What will that say about God's rejection of him? What will people think of him? Crisis is coming. But he comes up with this really clever strategy.

He's still manager of his master's money. He has the authority to write new contracts. And so he does. These are like multiple years worth of income that he's just going, let's clear that debt.

Quick, let's write a new contract. 100 measures of oil, make it 50. A couple of years income. The clients would have been so happy with him.

[15 : 54] Wow, you are generous. Wow, you're rich man that you're managing his money. Wow, that is incredibly generous. You're asking nothing in return.

Now what did the manager do? He was furious. He came and he took his manager and called the police and put him in prison until he pays every last penny.

His reputation destroyed in prison. No, he doesn't do that. He goes, that's clever. Well done.

He's not condemned. He's commended. Well done. This rat bag manager should be in the gutter, but he's acted generously with my money and now everyone is so grateful to him.

If even this scoundrel is commended for strategically making friends in light of the coming crisis of unemployment for the remaining years of his life, now that's a crisis, but how much more should we Christians be strategically making friends in light of the crisis coming?

[17 : 27] We know money is going to fail and then don't we believe that eternity is coming? How much more should we be strategic?

There might be another reason we're struggling to understand this parable.

Maybe it's verse 14. Maybe we've got more in common with the Pharisees in verse 14 who were lovers of money and they heard all these things and they ridiculed him.

They love money because they're justifying themselves.

There's a mum. She's got the perfect social media page. She's ticking all the career goals. She's got the selfies in wearing a power suit with really influential people.

[18 : 54] She's got the two kids, perfect images. She's wearing the Lorna Jane. She's wearing the Lorna Jane, I think that's the brand, Lorna Jane running outfit, pushing a pram, smiling with the perfect hair.

She's throwing really cool birthday parties, like \$500 birthday cakes and just all these costumes. She's dropping off the kids at school in the SUV.

She's so busy justifying her worth. God sees the heart.

Isn't so much advertising trying to get at us going, if you own this, if you wear that, if you eat here, if you drink this, if you live here, you'll be a somebody.

You'll be someone. You'll be... You won't be a nobody. You'll be someone. I think we too can love money because we think it can justify our worth in the sight of others.

[20 : 18] But what people praise, God sees as an abomination. There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

Which of these men does God approve of? The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.

The rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus by his side. And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue.

For I am in anguish in this flame. Having good things says nothing of God's approval.

[21 : 43] It says nothing of his approval. Hoarding good things to justify ourselves in the sight of others. God sees as an abomination.

It's blinding us to the suffering and needs of others right in front of our nose, sitting at our gate, to try and prove our worth.

Not having good things says nothing of God's rejection. God sees someone who puts their hope in Jesus and we've got the name here, Lazarus.

This is the only time in a parable that a character has a personal name. This lowest of the low has a name that will last forever and he's got Abraham as a friend in the kingdom of God.

Having nothing doesn't not justify you. Money can't justify you.

[22 : 55] It can't justify your worth. People might praise it but if we're trying to use money to justify our worth, God sees that as abomination.

It's got, it's empty of his compassion for people. Here's what can justify us.

We're told that Pharisees and sinners are listening to Jesus at this point. What can justify you is that and sinners are rushing into Jesus' kingdom because they see God as a father.

A father who they've used the things God has given so selfishly and they know it and they're coming back expecting God to condemn them.

But this father, when he sees them, when he sees his lost son coming back, he runs to him. He doesn't let us repay him but he embraces us and kisses us.

[24 : 13] He puts a ring on our finger and the best robe on us. He throws the biggest party sparing no expense because he's just so joyful to have us back. That kind of lavish love of the father, free, absolutely free.

Money can't justify you but that love can justify you. My worth isn't in what money can clothe me in. It's the father's love that he just freely pours out on me.

That can justify me. When we see how much it costs for God to bring us into the eternal home, we don't have to envy those with more than us.

We don't feel superior to those with less than us. It frees us to treat money as what it is. Whose it is, what it's for, and the times that we live in.

Because we're not using it to justify ourselves anymore. We can just treat money for what it is. It's going to fail.

[25 : 22] We know that. So let's just use our master's money to maximize friendships for eternity.

So verses 10 to 12. 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.

He's not approving the dishonesty. He's careful to clarify that here. God doesn't want 10% of your money. He doesn't want 10% of your money.

It's not your money. It's all his. We're just managers. He's given his son all heaven and earth.

It's Jesus' money. It's all his. He wants all your heart. He doesn't want 10%. He wants all your soul, all your strength.

[26 : 36] We're managers, and we're called to be faithful. It's easy to spend someone else's money if we look at it for what it is. And he said, all the possessions he's entrusted to us, it's a little thing.

If you are faithful in a very little, it's little. If we can't be faithful in serving Jesus with a little thing like money, why will he entrust us with greater things, like being a fresh leader, influencing his little ones towards heaven or hell?

That's a great thing. Like someone in despair or in grief or overwhelmed in guilt, that opportunity to pray for them.

Or that mum who's trying to justify herself with the career goals and the social media. We've got the gospel to give. That's a great thing. This money, it's a little thing.

I'm not saying I've fully grasped this, okay, I've got a long way to go, but we've got to learn to see it as a little thing. It's unrighteous wealth.

[28 : 04] I don't think he's saying it's inherently evil. I think he's, he knows the Pharisees' hearts trying to justify themselves. I think unrighteous wealth is just saying it can't, it can't, win your righteousness, your approval.

It's got zero value for that. It's a little thing. And it will fail. We know it will fail. We know we can't keep it. Any position, any power, any opportunity I've got right now, it's going to be gone.

So what's strategic? How do we be faithful? What does it mean then?

I think verse 9 is, is the main command. 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.

when our neighbours are maximising their holidays and their house and their boats and their gadgets and their drinks and pub meals and their possessions and education for their children and they're working the system to get the most out of all this.

[29 : 28] Maximise pleasure, minimise pain because eat and drink, tomorrow we die. they're outdoing us at what they believe in. He's calling us, let's maximise the system in a sense, not dishonestly.

We Christians are children of light. We see the true crisis coming. There's eternity coming. There's eternal dwellings. We're called to be more clever than Michael Burry.

Just not maximising the dollars as an end in itself but that children's talk, I love to invest in people who will never end. Our master has, I don't think he's got any interest in guilting us.

He's telling us, go, be reckless with my money. Go be strategic. Scheme, be creative, be purposeful.

I think this is a call to be a driving principle in everything we do. Not just, like we've got Mission Month coming out, it's not just the donations we give to, for missions.

[31 : 03] It includes that, obviously, but I think this is a, this should be a driving principle in all our life. Go be strategic. Make friends, eternal friends.

Like in terms of who are these friends? Even the money I spend on my family. isn't, isn't Emma and my children, don't I want them to be friends with me in eternity?

Shouldn't I use all the money I need to spend on family matters with that goal in mind? I think we need to have a broad view of friendship, who these friends are.

A broad view of all of life generosity. Like some of the biggest financial decisions we make aren't about donations. They're about the values we have as believers.

Like what career are you doing? Is it because you're serving people, because you believe that's serving Christ? Or are you just trying to get the top dollar? Where we live and why?

[32 : 18] Some of these decisions, how many children you have and how much does children cost? But some of these are the biggest decisions we make. All of it in mind with being strategic for making friends for eternity.

I think it can be overwhelming, the choice. My recommendation, I suppose, is let's trust God's providence of the needs he's put in front of us.

Who's sitting at our gate? Where are the needs? And just meet those needs. I think being strategic is like with our house.

Are you going to get a house with two, three, four bedrooms? Do you need a spare room for guests or can you choose a smaller house? You can give more money away.

I don't know, you've got the freedom. Be strategic. Are we trying to have the perfect house or are we okay with marks on the walls and marks on the coffee table? We've lent out our place for someone having a holiday and we came back and a kid had ran the skateboard into the wall.

[33 : 35] It's like, was that a mistake to lend it? No, who cares? It's just a wall. I need a tradie to fix it for me because I don't have the skills but it's just a wall.

Use it for making friends. Let's be strategic as a church even. The way we meet each other's needs as we see in the early church.

We've got to be a counter community. The money is just not a big deal. We know there's inequality in this church. We don't care. We don't care because we're busy trying to serve Jesus with wherever we're at, meeting each other's needs.

I think we've got to think corporately in this as well. Can I suggest being strategic? It will sometimes mean not giving because it might undermine the gospel.

I'm thinking of the Corderwoods when they were in PNG and they had other missionaries who were just giving goods and goods and it made it look like Christianity is about goods. They had to be wise in that.

[34 : 45] So we've got to be strategic. He's not just saying be guilted and be strategic. We've got freedom. I know of a local church.

They're trying to work out do we refurbish the building which is going to cost a lot or the debt, the interest that we'd have to pay on that refurbishment, that would pay someone's wages, a staff worker's wages.

What do we do? There's no clear choice there. You could do either for the sake of the kingdom but let's be strategic.

As we come into mission month, do we pay for the coffees when we're meeting with them or do we let them pay? I don't know. Be strategic. Do we pay for someone coming to Smoke and Joe's?

Yeah? That could be a good thing to do or maybe you don't want to make them feel like they owe you. I don't know. Be strategic. You've got freedom. None of those things are, I'm not trying to lay down rules because it's not about that.

[35 : 57] He's calling us to be strategic in making friends for eternity in all of life. money. So brothers and sisters, as we wrap up this series on money, can I just remind us of where we've been?

We don't need to worry about tomorrow because money can't give us security. We're safe in the daily care of our heavenly father.

we know where eternal gain is. We can have eternal gain whether we're struggling or whether we've got much because we have true riches in heaven.

So we can be content when we're struggling and we can be rich in good works. the generosity God is looking for is he loves a cheerful giver.

It's not the amount of money like the Macedonians. It's not about the amount of money that makes you generous. It's being full of Jesus. The fact that for our sake he became poor so that we might become rich.

[37 : 15] It's that fullness that creates a cheerful giver. And here we're called in light of the crisis in light of the fact that all people all of us stand on the brink of eternity.

Be strategic. Be clever. Be reckless. Just go and use Jesus' money to make eternal friends.

Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Father, I pray that more and more we would live in light of your return.

Lord, help us be set free from what this world lives for. And I pray that you would take us deeper into how rich we are in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, I pray that you would make us a community that people see our actions and our choices and they just wonder what we're living for that's different.

[38 : 37] So I pray, Lord, that you would use us to maximize those friends for eternity. Father, we've all got a long way to go in this. I thank you for the richness of the gospel that you're not motivating us out of guilt, but you're motivating us out of fullness in who we are in Christ.

So please, use us, God. Use us for eternal matters. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.