

# Luke 16:1-13 AM

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Preacher: Canon David Short

[ 0 : 00 ] Heavenly Father, we ask now that you would open our eyes, that we would see what is eternal, and show us yourself so that we might see who we are and who we can be.

For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. So if you're visiting with us today, we work through parts of the Bible consecutively, and we come today to this passage in Luke 16, if you'll take up your Bible and turn back to it, that was just read for us on page 875.

I say that because we come out of the happiest chapter in Luke's Gospel last week, chapter 15, which I deeply resent someone else preaching, but I had to do it.

The parable of the prodigal son and the lost sheep. More joy in heaven, party in heaven, when one person repents than 99 religious people who don't think they need to repent.

Then we come to a chapter on money. It's a little bit of a surprise, but Jesus knows exactly what he's doing. So chapter 16 begins and ends with parables that begin, there was a certain rich man.

[ 1 : 17 ] And if you look at verse 1, you'll see Jesus said to his disciples, so this is for us, and if you look down at verse 14, the very verse at the end, the Pharisees, who are lovers of money, heard all these things and they loved it.

What does it say? They ridiculed him. They listened to what Jesus said about money and they thought it was utterly ridiculous, laughable. It's part of the job of Jesus' words to cut like a sword, surgically opening the diseased areas in our lives so that they might treat them.

And this is one of the most exposing and dangerous infections that we have, the love of money.

And so the teaching of Jesus is a great kindness to it, to us, because money takes on a kind of a spiritual significance.

And you know it's taken on a spiritual significance because it steals joy in Jesus and then it tries to replace Jesus. That's why he says what's so uncompromising in verse 13.

No servant can serve two masters, as Will read to the kids. Either you'll hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other.

[ 2 : 37 ] You cannot serve God and money. And most of us think Jesus is exaggerating. You know, we all struggle with the materialist urge.

Jesus does not say it's suboptimal to love God and money. Or my advice to you is not to love God and money. He says you cannot.

It is utterly and completely impossible. And that was the problem in chapter 15. You remember?

You see, the two sons thought they loved the father, but their hearts were slaves to the resources that the father had, his money, and they were consumed with what they deserved here and now, and they were lost.

They had no real love for the father. If you ask the younger brother, do you love your father? He would say, of course I do. But the truth is, he only wanted his father so he'd have the money.

He believed that his happiness and his joy and his satisfaction came from the money. And the irony is that when he went off into the far country and was wasting that money on lavish living, every cent he spent on every party was from the father.

[ 3 : 53 ] And when he even writes his sorry speech to go back home, he's not returning to the father because, for the sake of love, but to make a deal, to make a transaction with the father so that he can earn his way back again.

Look, look, look, just take me back and I'll be a servant and earn my wage. He still wants to use the father for his own purposes. And as Jordan showed us last week, how wonderful it is that God overlooks the imperfections of our repentance and takes us back anyway.

And if you ask the older brother whether he loved his father, he would say, well, of course I love my father. Look, I'm staying at home. I've worn my fingers to the bone. I've obeyed the rules. I've

earned my place. Thank you very much.

But as we saw last week, his heart is a million miles from the father. And like the younger brother, he only wants the father for what he can get out of him.

So you see, there's no joy at the return of the younger brother. There's no love for the father and what the father loves. So Jesus says you can't serve God and money.

[ 5 : 05 ] And the Bible makes clear that money itself is not evil. And the question then becomes for us disciples, what part should it play in our lives?

What is the right place for money and possessions? And that's the point of all of chapter 16. So this first parable in verses 1 to 13, it's not easy to grasp at first look.

We need to look at it humbly and carefully. I did this passage with the trustees on Wednesday night and a riot broke out. They kept saying, we don't buy it.

We don't agree with what you're saying. We don't buy it. So I've urged them to pray for more humility. Let's see how we go. I think there are two main points from this passage.

And the first is this. Be shrewd. Invest in eternity. Okay? Parable is simple enough. It's like five or six other parables in Luke.

[ 6 : 02 ] It begins, there was a certain rich man. But the focus is not on the rich master. The focus is on the manager, the steward, who acted as a COO and a CFO of the rich man's possessions.

And the fact that he's a manager means that he's investing money that's not his own. He doesn't own a cent of it. He enjoys all the benefits of the master's money and he uses it and distributes it. But he's not meant to treat the master's money as his own, which is exactly true of each of us. The money you think you own, the money that you've earned by your own cleverness, if you believe the Bible, it doesn't belong to you.

You and I, we're merely stewards. We're managers. It all belongs to God. And when we begin to think that the money we have in the bank or our possessions, our homes and whatever else, really belong to us, we also begin to lose joy and we begin to treat God transactionally rather than as our loving Father.

We use God for our money rather than using money for God. That's why every time we have an offertory in this service, we pray the prayer that David prayed back in 1 Chronicles.

[ 7 : 22 ] Blessed are you, Lord God of Israel, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty.

All that is in the heaven and above is yours. Yours is the kingdom and you are exalted as head over all. It's not just your cash that belongs to God, of course.

It's your abilities and your gifts, where you were born, the breath by which we live, the life, our opportunities. All things come from him.

And in verse 1, this manager, like the younger brother, was squandering, he was wasting the possessions that didn't belong to him. And suddenly, he's confronted with this reality.

The master calls him in and sacks him on the spot. You're fired. And the manager's future changes entirely. And there's this short gap of time between when he's sacked and when he has to leave.

[ 8 : 29 ] And so in verses 3 to 4, we're taken inside his thinking and he says, look, I'm too lazy to do manual labour. And I'm too proud to beg. And so he comes up with a brilliant scheme.

I know, he says, I'll cook the books. I'll use the master's money so that I can make friends who will owe me in the future.

Nothing like a hopeless future to focus the mind. And he brings in those who owe his master a lot of money. One of the debts is eight years' salary.

And he knocks off massive parts of each debt so that when he leaves his employment, there's a long list of people who he's done big favours for who will be happy to give him a future and do favours for him.

But the commentators are so surprised by the reaction that the master has and Jesus has in verse 8 that they resort to all kinds of gymnastics to explain it away.

[ 9 : 29 ] So have a look at verse 8. The master commended the dishonour student, sorry, manager. He would have commended the student, but he's a manager.

He commended the dishonour student, sorry, manager. I don't know why I've got that. For his shrewdness. Jesus says, the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

Now just pause. Think about this carefully for a moment. He's not commended for his integrity, but his ingenuity. He's not commended for his righteousness, but his resourcefulness.

He's not commended for his moral standards, but for his shrewdness. What he does is the definition of fraud, but it's brilliant.

And Jesus seems completely unafraid to use negative examples in his parables. He'll have another one in chapter 18 to make one point. Parables are not like similes or metaphors where you have to tie down all the details.

[10:35] See, what is so clever about what this manager has done is he takes what's not his own and transforms it to create a completely different future.

He transforms the debts of those who owe his master into a new and different kind of debt that these people owe to him. By writing off major portions of their debt, he's doing them all favours, and they will return the favours when he loses his job.

And at the same time, he's making the master looking good and generous. Verse 9, Jesus says, I tell you, here's the point, this is the message. Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth so that when it fails and it will fail, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

Now, unrighteous wealth is not money that's been made by bad means. It's just all things that belong to this world. It's mammon. It's our possessions, our savings, our earnings, our bank accounts, etc.

And Jesus says, one day it will fail. And it fails because it belongs to this world. So that everything you and I have materially, and it may not be much, belongs to this world, and you can't take it with you.

[12:07] There's nothing wrong with wealth in itself, but Jesus is saying this, that every time we make a decision about our material possessions or about our money, we are to do so with an eternal perspective.

We are so focused on short deadlines, five hours, five days, five months, five years. But Jesus is saying, there is no safe place.

There's no ultimately safe investment in this world because everything in this world will come to an end. Vancouver will one day sink into the ocean.

You and I, we live in two cities. We live here in Vancouver now, and then we live in the heavenly city, which is completely invulnerable, the city in heaven that will never be swept away by a tsunami or an earthquake or a flood.

And the only true safety is there. The only true safe place to invest our money is in eternity. And the wonder of this passage, the wonderful teaching of this passage, is that there is a way for us to use our money and possessions for something that will last forever, not just for ourselves.

[13:20] That we can transform dollars into something that reaches for eternity, so that when this world is passed, the effects of what we've done with our money will go on and on and on forever in the lives of other people.

It's amazing. I mean, last week we had Jeremy Graham come and report on King's Cross, right? And I don't know whether you've given anything to the church plant. But it's a perfect example of what Jesus is saying here.

Let's say you gave 100 bucks to the church plant. You take what doesn't belong to you, what belongs to God anyway, you give it back to him, to the work of the gospel, and it goes into that work of the gospel that will outlast this world.

And Jesus is not saying dig deep and be sacrificial. He's just saying be shrewd. And if you believe that Jesus has come to seek and save the lost and that he's brought the kingdom of God, we can make an eternal difference with our money.

With the money which belongs to this world, we can do something for others that will last into the next world. That's point one. But the second point is even more important.

[14:30] Be shrewd, says Jesus, make friends for eternity. He's not just saying, use your money to earn interest in heaven. He's not just saying, pay it forward and be specially generous.

He's not giving anything vague or abstract. He's talking about a very specific way that we are to invest in eternity. And it is this, make friends.

because there are two things that are eternal in the Bible other than God. One is people and the other is love. Verse 9, again, I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth so that when it fails and it will, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

So Michael Wilcock, who's a commentator, says this, although your property, your ability, your time, belong to this life only, Jesus says, yet what will happen to you when you pass into that life will depend on what you're doing with them here and now.

Make sure that you use them, that your use of them brings you into a fellowship of friends that will survive beyond death. Isn't that remarkable? We're not trying to build up this big fat bank account that's going to eternally compound with its interest.

[16:00] But the true riches in Jesus' mind are a fellowship of friends that last beyond death. This is the true riches we have in Jesus Christ.

The love that he has for us that is eternal and unbreakable and the fellowship that he builds around himself of loving people to each other.

You can have all the money in the world and be completely insecure. You can sit in your \$100 million yacht and not love anyone and not have anyone who really loves you.

But this is true wealth. It's to be surrounded by people who love you and whom you love. And we know this is God's agenda from the last chapter. What makes angels sing?

What makes heaven happy? What fills the Father's heart with joy is when someone who is lost repents and returns to the Father and enters by the narrow way into the feast of the Father.

[17:00] this is the shrewdest possible thing we could do with our resources to use them so that others could come to the heavenly banquet because Jesus is creating an eternal fellowship of friends.

Every unbeliever who becomes a disciple of Jesus enters into this circle of friends and the friendship that we enjoy is an eternal friendship. It means we'll never lose each other.

It means we're able to love each other without selfishness when we get there without selfishness and sin we'll be able to take joy in each other and bring joy to each other for who we really are without any impediment.

And if we do it in this life we become more like Jesus who though he was rich beyond all imagination yet for our sake became poor so that by his poverty we might become rich.

The end point of history is a church redeemed from every tribe and tongue and nation reconciled in love to God and to each other feasting on the love of God and the presence of the Lamb singing praise to the Lamb and your life and my life and our life here and now is tied to that great banquet then not just for ourselves but for each other.

[18:29] And I don't know whether you've got 10 years or 80 years left but in just a few days we will enter the joy of the Lord to be with Christ in glory along with all those who love him.

Amen.