Luke 16:14-18 PM

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[0:00] Heavenly Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Yeah, please grab a seat, grab a seat. Hello, everyone. Hello. If you haven't met me, my name is Aaron. And if you are new, let me just situate you. So we are partway through a series that is taking a deep dive into just a couple of chapters of Luke's gospel. And tonight, we come to this little section in Luke 16, just four verses. And you've heard the verses read, and it's a bit tricky, a little bit confusing. But our passage does contain the word abomination.

So you know there's going to be good stuff in there. So let's get into it. And also just so you know, this is not a three-point sermon. I'm just basically going to walk through the passage and and sort of follow the logical flow of it. And there is a logical flow to it. So let's just jump straight in there. Verse 14, the Pharisees, who are lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. Okay, so context is really important. Just before this, Jesus had told this parable about the shrewd manager. And it's a parable about money. And the main point is invest into eternity. You know, invest your resources into things that matter eternally. And it says at the start of the parables that Jesus spoke these words to the disciples.

But verse 14 here tells us that the Pharisees must have been an air shot. They must have been sort of like, you know, kicking around the edges there. Because they heard this parable, and they did not like it. They really did not like what Jesus said.

Now, this is not the first time they'd had issues with Jesus. Back in chapter 15, Jesus was, you know, hanging out with all the wrong sorts of people. He was hanging out with the tax collectors and the prostitutes. And verse 2 of chapter 15 says the Pharisees didn't like it, but they just kind of muttered under their breath to each other.

It's not very good as it's not very, it's a bit unsightly to hang out with, you know. A little bit of private sort of whining about it. But here in chapter 16, the response to Jesus' teaching here is much more visceral. They are way more obvious in their dislike.

[2:30] Verse 14 says they ridicule him. And the original language, it's literally a physical thing. It's like they wrinkled their noses, like, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Like when you open, like, mysterious tupperware container in your fridge, you know, something like that. It's like two-month-old rice or something. It's like, oh, what? This is nonsense. So why did this parable in particular upset the Pharisees so much? Well, it did that because it threatened the great idol of their hearts.

You know, when Christ was hanging out with sort of the wrong sorts of people, the Pharisees didn't like it. They got a bit whiny. But when Jesus starts talking about their wallets, well, that just tipped them right over the edge. It tipped them over the edge because the Pharisees, they really loved money. It says right there, verse 14, they were lovers of money. So they sneered and they ridiculed Jesus because Jesus had put his finger on the thing they loved the most, their true God. And their true God, the thing they'd built their life on, was being threatened, was being destabilized by Jesus. And so to make themselves feel better, they just mocked him. We don't have to listen to this guy. It's just nonsense what he's saying. Okay, verse 14. Verse 15 now. And Jesus said to them, you are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your heart, for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. So why did they love money?

What did money do for the Pharisees? You are those who justify yourselves before men. This is what money did for them. Made them look good in the eyes of others. And that felt awesome. Pretty simple, you know, like looking good in the eyes of others. I mean, that's a really fantastic feeling. We know from the rest of the gospel that, and we talked about this over the last sort of, you know, month and a half, it's the Pharisees, there's the religious elite back in the day, they loved being invited to all the right places, all the right parties, having good seats at these parties. They like to be thought of as serious people, competent people, those who've done well in life, financially,

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relationally. And this is something money can do for you. It puts you in the right places with the right people. It can give you a sense that you've made it. You can imagine that's a very addictive feeling. You wouldn't want to give that up. I mean, you'd want more of that.
[5:20] A few months ago, I hung out at a friend's house for dinner. This is not a St. John's person, you don't know them. And it was them. It was, and one other guest, a friend of theirs I'd never met before, didn't know they were going to be there. But this other guest was the Canadian ambassador to a very important country. And we had this lovely chat over dinner, and I got to know him, it was great. And it was so interesting, because over the next week, I just happened to drop it into a conversation with everybody I met that I was just recently, she knew it's funny, it's funny, well, I was just chatting to the ambassador about, you know, paper or something. And it just made me feel good. To be honest, I was just kind of in a sphere. Jesus says to the Pharisees, God the Father knows your heart. And you're supposed to be the God experts, you're supposed to be the lovers of God.

But you're more interested in justifying yourself to others. You're more interested in what others think of you. And you look to money to put you in the right places with the right people.
And you're building your identity on this. And you're building your house on sand. Verse 15 says, let me remind you of that last little part, that great word in it, for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. What does this mean?
It means an abomination is something that stinks up the nostrils of God. I don't know how to say it nicely. There's no nice thing about it. It stinks up the nostrils of God. And as God thinks about it, it's like it's gross to God. And there's a bit of word play here as well.
The Pharisees wrinkled their noses in disgust at the parable of Jesus. And God wrinkles his nose at their idolatry. Now, when God made us, he made us to have a face-to-face friendship with him.
[7:28] And he gave us this incredible world to live in, with all its resources and its gifts. And what happens is we give our hearts to the gifts of God. And we start to love the gifts of God more than we love God, and everything kind of gets messed up. And that thing that we love, it could be money, it could be career, it could be lots of different things, it could be anything. And it's an abominable way to live, Jesus says.

I don't know if you've ever taken a shot of tequila in your life, and I'm reticent to give this example. I never have. But I've seen it in the movies. And you probably know the drill, there's like a way you're supposed to do it, right? Well, come on, mate. Come on, mate. Come on.
And the way I've seen people do it is, what is it you put in your hand? Salt? Salt? Lick the salt, take the shot, and then you suck on the slice of lime. Is that right?
Yeah, a lot of people are nodding their heads. Talk to me afterwards, please. Talk to me afterwards. Here we go. So, when I was a younger man in New Zealand, there was something called the hard man, H-A-R-D, a hard man shot. I don't know if anyone's ever heard of this. Okay, hard man shot. I've seen people do it. On special occasions like your 21st would make people do a hard man shot of tequila. So, it's all the same element. Salt, tequila, lime. But we turn it into a complete debacle.
[9:14] And what you do is you snort the salt. And again, I'm not saying to do this. I'm not saying the shot of tequila even properly is a good idea. Don't do it. But anyway, you snort the salt up your nose.

You take the shot. And then you squeeze the lime juice into your eye. And again, this is the real thing. I don't know why it was, but it was a thing. And it's obviously completely unfathomable. Like, why would you do this to yourself? Why would you get this so wrong?
You've got all the right elements, but you completely mess it up. I hope you see the analogy here. Have I lost everybody? Are you with me?
God has made the world to work in a certain way, right? You've got all the elements, but we mess it up. And it's a debacle. Imagine building your whole life on your looks. Imagine building your whole life on a career that's going to end. Imagine building your whole life on accumulating money that you can't hang on to. Like, it's bonkers. Especially when you consider the alternative. We're made for this lifetime of friendship with God, our Creator, who knows you, who loves you, who knows what you need.
That's what you've got to be leaning into. Friends, be aware and be careful. Don't let these other things take the place of God in your life. Don't let these other things become the source of your justification. How you justify that you have value, that you're worth it, that you've made it. It's a debacle. It's an abomination. Stinks up the nostrils of God. Okay, it's verse 14, verse 15, verse 16.

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The law and the prophets were until John. Since then, the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. Okay, so what's going on here? Feels like it takes a bit of a turn. Jesus here, he goes really big picture for a moment. And he's saying, let's remember the big story that God wants you to be a part of. Let's remember the big story God wants you to be a part of. Okay, he says, God spoke to us in the past through the Old Testament, through the prophets. Then John the Baptist came. His job was to point us to the Messiah.
[11:46] Jesus has come preaching the kingdom of God. And Jesus here is claiming to say, as I split history in half. So that's a really big picture. But then there's this line at the end of it, and everyone forces his way into it. So there's debate about what this means.

The grammar of it could mean a couple of things. It either means, like the way it's translated in the ESV there, is that we force our way into the kingdom of God.
Or, it's more along the lines of, Jesus is forcibly urging us to become part of the kingdom of God. And if you have the pew Bibles open, you see there's a note to say, this is the alternate translation. And I think that probably makes more sense. Jesus' great desire is we be a part of what he is doing. And that's much more in keeping with what's been said in previous chapters.
Very recently, he's had the parable of the great banquet, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son. Jesus is saying, come in. Like, something amazing is happening. Come into it.
He's inviting you. He's urging you to be about the kingdom. Because what you're living for right now, it's not working. It's not working. It's the wrong way to live.
[13:17] Okay, let's move to verse 17. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot. That's like the tiniest, you know, like in some languages, these little dots above letters and stuff. That's what it's referring to in Hebrew. Of the law to be become void. So how does this fit in?

It does feel like it's taking us in this whole other direction again, right? But it's not. I think likely what's going on here is that verse 17 and 18 are a clarification.
So Jesus has just said something new is happening and how God relates to it. Something new is happening. But Jesus doesn't want us, doesn't want them to think that the law somehow doesn't matter anymore. So he assures them, and he says it very plainly, that God's demands for holiness will outlast heaven and earth. And then he goes on to give an example. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. This is not the only thing the Bible says about divorce, but he kind of lands quite hard on this. And he doesn't pick this divorce and marriage example randomly. What's going on here? Likely what's going on here is that, well, we know this, that the Pharisees back in the day, they liked to add to the laws of God. They kind of had all these addendums to it. And to put it just plainly, they just fiddled with the laws. They just kind of fiddled with them. And they liked to fiddle with the marriage laws. So in the Old Testament, there were reasons given for divorce, but the Pharisees were just kind of just adding to them, right? For whatever reason, they just, they got really good at helping a dude get out of a marriage and make it kind of legit. The ancient records have examples of this. There's, you know, there's Pharisaic laws that say, you know, a guy could divorce his wife if she burnt the dinner. It's like an easy out, but we wrote it down. So it's kind of legit now. There's another guy who said you could divorce a wife if he just finds someone prettier. Like just awful. Quite modern.
Quite a modern thing, but quite awful. They've just gotten pretty loose on the divorce. So when Jesus says, look, I don't want you to think just because this new thing is happening, this era of grace, I don't want you to think that God is all of a sudden light on holiness.
And I know you guys are fiddling with the whole marriage divorcey thing. So I'm just going to lay down, I'm just going to lay it down here and say, yes, you know, there are reasons of divorce in the Bible, but it doesn't mean God's happy about it. The law still matters.
[15:55] So he just says, verse 18, with no qualifications, and he lets the weight of God's intent for marriage just fall on their shoulders because they had forgotten God's grand design for it. You can summarize it like this. Jesus is saying this new era has begun, but God still cares about holiness. Okay, that's it. Those are the four verses. I'm going to finish up very quickly here. What are the main things Jesus is trying to communicate? Don't be tempted to justify yourself before others with things like money or anything else. Don't make your whole life about being in with the right people, having the right things, being invited to the right parties. You're building your life on sand. It stinks up the nostrils of God. And it stinks up his nostrils because he cares for you. He wants you to be part of his kingdom.

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He's urging you. Christ is urging you to be about his thing that he's doing, to be part of his kingdom, with his values, with God's values. So what's the action point? If you like action points, here it is. We need to continually, daily come to Jesus and say, be the center of my heart God and nothing else. Amen.

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