

Luke 16:1-13 "Put Your Money Where Your Heart Is"

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[0:01] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us. Turn with me, if you will, this morning to Luke 16, Luke chapter 16.

Last week we finished up looking at one of the most beloved parables in all the Bible, the story of the prodigal son. And this week we turned the page to find another parable, but let's just say that it's a little less beloved parable by most people.

This is a hard one. It's a hard parable on actually two levels. First, just understanding what Jesus means in this story.

It's the parable of the dishonest manager. And yet the dishonest manager is commended? What's up with that? What does Jesus mean?

What does He not mean? But then, on another level, once we do understand it, it's hard for us because it challenges our hearts in ways that for many of us we'd just rather avoid.

[1:17] Chapter 16 talks a lot about money issues, rich and poor. But it does so not merely to talk about money, but really to address our hearts.

It's difficult. Now, we must always listen to God's Word, every part of it. But this week in particular, as I've been studying and praying for this, I feel like God has been saying, I must really listen to this. We really need to listen to this. We have this tendency, I think, when we hear God start talking about money to shut down here.

But Jesus keeps bringing it up. So let's listen to God's Word and then together ask His Spirit to give us tender hearts, to mold our hearts the way He wants to this morning.

This is Luke 16 at verse 1. He 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.

[2:31] 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 cannot be the manager any longer. 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 am 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, sit down quickly, and write fifty.

Then he said to another, And how much do you owe? He said, A hundred measures of wheat.

And he said to him, Take your bill and write eighty. The master commended 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.

[3:49] 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 another's, 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 God and money.

This is God's holy, inerrant, infallible, eternal word. Let's pray and ask him to help us as we look at it. Father, we are here this morning to place ourselves under your word.

So Holy Spirit, as we look at it, as we seek to understand, as we struggle to obey, would you break us? Would you shape us?

Would you inspire us, even inflame our hearts with passion and zeal for you and your kingdom? Do that work in each of us, and together as a group, for the sake of Jesus, we pray.

[5 : 02] Amen. Proverbial wisdom tells us that money can't buy happiness, right? But for decades, people have offered other reminders.

Money can't buy you happiness, but it can buy you coffee. Which is kind of the same thing. Whoever said money can't buy happiness simply didn't know where to go shopping, Bo Derek once said.

You can't buy happiness, but you can buy a plane ticket, which is kind of the same thing. See, there's a lot of things that you can get really close, right? What else? Oh yeah, money, not happiness, but it's much more comfortable to cry in a Lamborghini than on a bicycle.

You can't buy happiness, but real estate? That's just pretty close, right? And my personal favorite, you can't buy happiness, but you can buy donuts. And there is the real answer.

Donuts, therein is happiness. All of these things, that people use this regularly in advertising, right? Your money can't buy you happiness, can't buy you love, whatever it happens to be, but don't get down, don't get discouraged.

[6 : 22] We chuckle at these, but there's a lot of truth in what they show us about our hearts, isn't there? I would say most American Christians are functioning with this mindset.

The mindset that money can't buy happiness, but we pursue it. We cling to it.

We think about it as if it can bring us happiness. We're seeking to serve God, but we're trying to serve money at the same time, which this passage tells us in no uncertain terms means we are not serving God at all.

Yikes! And that can happen regardless of how much money we have. Whether we are clipping coupons or buying real estate, our hearts can start to grasp at money and the seeming safety, security, pleasure, control, whatever it is that it appears to offer us.

And money may not buy us happiness, but I think it is pretty good at showing us where we think happiness is found, isn't it?

[7 : 39] It does that real well. We use it to get what we value. That may be donuts. It may be clothes. It may be education.

It may be an organization or mission that you believe in and support. But the title of this sermon is actually kind of silly. No one has to tell you to put your money where your heart is.

You already do. We all do. That's why as Jesus talks to us about money, and actually it really is about all our earthly possessions and time and energy, that's what He's talking about.

He's actually pushing towards our hearts. Let's see how He does that. Let's talk about the parable for just a minute. When you're studying parables, it's helpful to remember that they usually have one primary point or meaning.

Don't look for hidden messages under every stone unless Jesus tells us to do so. Let's review what happens in the parable and then see how Jesus helps us with the main point.

[8 : 47] This manager has been entrusted to steward all his master's possessions, right? He's the guy who's been put in charge and he's been mismanaging, probably skimming off the top for himself among other things.

And so he's fired. There's no questions asked. He's done, but he's given a little bit of time to update the accounts and bring them up to speed to turn them in before he walks off.

So he's stuck, right? His job, his influence, his source of well-being, they're all disappearing quickly. Now caring for himself is this manager's top priority, right?

He feels that he can't do that well by manual labor for whatever reason or by begging. So he hatches a plan. He's got this idea of how he can take care of himself.

Jesus doesn't tell us for sure, but probably what's happening here is Jews were not allowed by law to charge interest to other Jews. And so what many people did to get around that law was work an extra fee into the original bill.

[10 : 02] Unethical, but on the razor's edge of illegal. Basically everyone did it. And the manager goes to some of these wealthy clients and he lowers their debts probably by that kind of interest-added amount that would have been worked in.

And so two things happen. What happens there? His master can't punish him further without exposing himself for these unethical practices, right? But secondly, he's made some new friends. He's got people who might want to help him out, give him a job, a meal, a bed to sleep in when he loses his and has nowhere else to go.

In his future, he's going to be taken care of. What a great plan. Even his master says, pretty sharp, man. Good thinking.

I didn't see that one coming. He commends his shrewdness. Verse 8. Now that word for shrewdness, when we say shrewd, usually means conniving, right?

[11 : 12] Less than ethical, which does fit here. But it really means wisely preparing or investing. In other words, carefully prioritizing what one deems valuable or important.

It's used in parables often. For instance, the wise man who built his house where? On a rock. It was a shrewd, a wise decision.

In other parables, for people being properly prepared for the coming of Jesus. So the point of this parable is not to say the ends justify the means or be dishonest as long as you make more money. No, no, no kids. No. The primary point of the parable is it is wise and commendable to use things of fading value toward things of longer lasting value.

The manager's money and position were fading, right? And he shrewdly, wisely, used them to secure something with ongoing value to him.

[12 : 24] In this case, his own protection and provision. Now Jesus has been teaching us all through this section as we've walked through the Gospel of Luke about the kingdom of God, right?

About the immense value of the kingdom. About its lasting value. In fact, its eternal value. So Jesus is not going to commend honesty.

Neither is he going to say, look out for number one. The manager's got his priorities straight. That's exactly what your priorities should be. No. He says this, verse 9, I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth so that when it fails, as it will, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

Jesus makes the first of his points of application for us. Invest eternally in what truly lasts.

Friends, welcoming you into homes is only a picture of being welcomed by God into an eternal home. An everlasting kingdom. Jesus says his followers could learn some things from the people of the world, right?

[13 : 44] About how this principle works out. Again, he's not commending the methods or the ultimate values, but rather the consistent strategic thinking of the world.

Verse 8, the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

What's Jesus saying? He's saying, why do the children of God fail to invest in what they believe is truly valuable? Everyone else seems to do that pretty consistently.

They figure out what their priorities are and they work towards them. They invest in them. We say the thing that we want most to see happen is the kingdom of God advanced in this world, right?

For people to come to know King Jesus, for Huntsville to experience the flourishing of justice and mercy, for the nations to be transformed by the power of the gospel of grace.

[14 : 43] That's what we say is most valuable. But do we invest in that like it's most valuable? Do we employ all the wisdom and skill God has given us toward kingdom ends?

The manager used everything at his disposal, right? To pursue what was most valuable to him.

Jesus says to his followers, you've got a kingdom that really lasts, that is most valuable.

Use everything at your disposal to pursue it. Pastor Ross Lester encourages us to think of our money specifically as mission ammunition.

I like that. Ammunition for God's mission in the world that we can use, he says, to blow holes in the gates of hell.

I really like that. That's good. When you worship God through giving this morning, you didn't just check a box, fulfill an obligation, make a charitable donation for tax purposes.

[15 : 54] You blew a hole in the gates of hell in Huntsville. You blasted through the gates of hell in India. that's how you invested the resources God had given to you.

But it's not simply about our money, is it? I mean, it's not less than that, but it's so much more.

Verse 9 again, I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth.

That word there that's translated unrighteous wealth sometimes translated money like in verse 13. It's the word mammon. It doesn't mean wealth that you got by dishonest dealings.

That's not the idea. It's a general term speaking of all your earthly possessions, all your worldly wealth, all the resources you have in this world.

Jesus is saying use those for eternal purposes. Use everything you have to pursue things that last. The manager used his position, his connections.

[17 : 01] Invest your time to pursue the eternal souls of men and women. Invest your relationships to see God's kingdom come in Huntsville.

Invest your vacation time to love the least of these. Invest your homes to help people experience the gracious welcome of King Jesus who gives freely and generously.

this leads us to Jesus next point. We must steward faithfully. Verse 11 if then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth and the mammon and the earthly resources who will entrust to you the true riches and if you've not been faithful in that which is another's who will give you that which is your own.

Jesus says all those things that you're to invest for the eternal kingdom you must do it because they're not actually yours at all are they? You are a steward that God has entrusted to manage his resources for his purposes.

He's telling us to be faithful with that which belongs to another. It's his. That's what a steward does right?

[18 : 25] Manages what belongs rightly to someone else. Is that how you view your money? Your time? Your home?

Are they yours or are they someone else's? I read this week of a man who bought a new car only to have it crashed into a couple of days later and he responded, well God I don't know why you want a dent in the side of your new car but you certainly have a big one.

John Wesley once said when told his house was on fire, the Lord's house burned one less responsibility for me. Now the triteness of those comments can seem to minimize genuine suffering but I use them to the point of how vital it is for us to have the right perspective on who owns our stuff.

if everything we have is a gift from God and it's merely entrusted to us then we must ask the question perhaps different from the question we usually ask what does faithful stewardship of God's stuff look like?

Not how do I want to use it but how would God want this used? That's the heart behind the leadership of our church as we consider our budget each year and as we in recent months wrestled through pursuing the sale of the White House property.

[20 : 04] How would God want us to use what He has entrusted to us? And the principle Jesus teaches is that we should be faithful in the small things like money before being entrusted with true riches.

Verse 11 In other words if we as a church don't steward our money faithfully for God's kingdom purposes pointing all our money there why would God entrust eternal souls for us to point them toward Him and His kingdom?

If we're not even pointing our money in that direction. But if we are oriented toward His kingdom in the little things what a great pattern that sets for us when He entrusts a new church plant a new generation of kids a new revival in Huntsville to us and we're looking towards His kingdom purposes.

God has entrusted every one of us in this room with so much hasn't He? Do we long for more so that we can pursue our dreams of a better lifestyle a better situation for our kids a better retirement? Or are we willing to say enough? God's given me what I need and whenever we see more we think kingdom whenever we get more we think others we think give it away and we start to get excited as we see God provide for us and He does it so richly and so generously and as what He's given us grows we think of the size of hole we're going to blow in the gates of hell right?

[21 : 51] Isn't that exciting? Don't you want to see what God gives you that way? He entrusts to us so much and that's the attitude He's calling us to. Martin Luther wrote we must use all these things upon earth in no other way than as a guest who travels through the land and comes to a hotel where he must lodge overnight.

He takes only food and lodging from the host and He says not that the property of the host belongs to Him just so we also should treat our temporal possessions as if they were not ours and enjoy only so much of them as we need to nourish the body and then help our neighbors with the balance. Thus the life of the Christian is only a lodging for the night since we have no continuing city but must journey on to heaven where the Father is.

Treat our temporal possessions as if they were not ours. Seems un-American. Steward them and why?

Why does He say? It's because of what's eternal, right? We have an eternal city. Another homeland where my possessions lie.

[23 : 14] But Jesus has one more point and it presses this into our hearts. He does care how we invest and steward our money, our resources.

But He especially wants us this morning to examine our hearts in light of how we live. Look at verse 13. 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. You cannot serve God and mammon. Worldly pleasures and possessions.

Notice He doesn't merely say that you should not. You probably knew that before you came this morning, right? He doesn't say you should not serve God and money.

He says you cannot serve both. They are mutually exclusive masters because God demands wholehearted worship.

[24 : 24] He must have the whole of my heart or He has none of it. that's really the crux for many of us I think because we would like to think that we serve God, wouldn't we?

That He's the one that we most value. But if we're honest we'd also like to think that we can manage chasing our own dreams on the side or if we're more honest chasing our own dreams Monday through Saturday which is more of a main course than a side but either way God says we cannot I've got to believe there are a lot of people sitting in churches like ours who are not serving God because they're serving mammon earthly things or eternal things what do we talk with our spouses about when we get time to talk together what do we plan for schedule around and prioritize with our time what purposes are we working for during the week when we're not in this building what are we most excited to tell our friends or show our friends earthly things or eternal things whom do our hearts worship see this is really where

Jesus wants to go here isn't it you thought he was meddling when he reached in and put his hands on your wallet earlier he wants to reach through that to your heart to what you really value he wants us to consider deeply this morning who our God truly is who's the one we love whose goals do we most pursue whose priorities actually shape how we use resources you know we won't invest our resources in something that our hearts don't truly value and love right I love to listen to people who love God's kingdom and have the gift of generosity I love to hear them just brim with excitement and joy over how they were able to free up some extra money to help out a seminary student in a tight spot how they were able to restructure some of their assets to make a special gift to the church how they were able to coordinate some friends with resources to help someone in need there's this joy there because they know they're investing in eternity they know they're stewarding what God has entrusted to them for his eternal purposes and nothing makes them more excited regardless of how many digits are in your paycheck or how many dollars are in your bank account would you be willing to ask yourself some hard heart questions this morning do you get more joy from buying a new car new clothes or from supporting a global mission partner do you get more joy from an evening of

Netflix a Saturday of college football or an afternoon spent listening to the pains of a hurting friend and praying for them do you get more joy from adding on to your home or having neighbors in your home which master do you serve God calls us to serve him wholeheartedly with every dollar with every minute with every decision why because his kingdom lasts forever one of the reasons we can't serve God and money is that these two masters are so entirely different they promise to provide us some of the same things but they do so through entirely different means listen to the differences this morning as we close and consider which one you want to serve money says you can't buy safety and security but but you can buy storm shelters education for your kids and insurance plans and that's pretty close

God says safety security keep your life free from love of money and be content with what you have for he has said why why how can we avoid the love of money God has said I will never leave you nor forsake you so we can confidently say the Lord is my helper I will not fear what can man do to me how do you pull your heart away from the love of money embracing God's promise to be with you and to care for you God offers himself always with you money says the secret to being fulfilled is to work hard get enough sit back relax and enjoy all the benefits of what you've worked for [30 : 15] God says Philippians chapter 4 in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger abundance and need I can do all things through him who strengthens me and my God will supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus true fulfillment in him money says you can't buy fame and significance but but if you get enough of me people will eventually respect you and come to you for help and then you will really matter you'll really be somebody God says the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want I shall lack nothing you have everything you need your 401k might disappear

I will make you lie down in green pastures your home might burn you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever your body may break down I will never let you down I will always be your shepherd you shall lack nothing which master do you love money says just a little bit more God says Jesus paid it all it is finished give me Jesus let's pray God might we see having you as the one we serve and worship as what we truly need you know the things that turn our hearts even in these moments away from you away from seeing you as worthy and valuable and eternal Holy Spirit would you fight for our hearts would you push back the evil one who would bring things in to kill and to destroy and to lie to us and make us believe there's something else that we really need to lie to us and make us think we can have our cake and eat it too we can we can serve God on Sunday morning and there's other things we can chase after at the same time father our hearts are complex they deceive us and it is hard for us to be single minded and wholeheartedly devoted to you Holy Spirit we need your help we ask for your help would you work in our hearts for the sake of your kingdom and our eternal good give us Jesus give us hearts that long for Jesus more than anything else we ask it in his name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org