

Ruth 3:1-18

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Preachers: Chris Matthews, Nick Lauer

[0:00] We have a great joy this morning of inviting Chris Matthews to come and bring the word to us.

Chris and his wife Micah and their three kids Ethan, Shiloh, and Sophia have come here. I guess Sophia came in utero, but they relocated here last summer to begin the work of Christian Union at Yale called Princeton, I'm sorry, called Yale Faith in Action.

And Chris has been a colleague, therefore, of mine on the campus ministry for the last year. We are just really thankful that he's going to bring the word to us this morning.

He graduated from Southern Seminary a few years ago. And we're just really glad to have you come speak to us this morning.

So come on up and bring to us. Thanks. Well, good morning.

[1:08] If you have your Bible or you want to grab one in front of you, please open to Luke 16. It's on page 740 of your pew Bibles there. It is a great joy and a privilege to get to preach today.

It's also very humbling, as you would imagine, to get to do that. We've very much benefited from this church. The first year for Micah and I here has been so much better and richer because of being a part of this church.

And you truly have been an instrument of God's grace to us here as we've made our home. This summer, we've been preaching through and we're continuing to preach through in the mornings the parables of Jesus Christ.

And parables make up a very large part of Jesus' teachings. About a third of all the teaching we have in the Gospels from Jesus is in parable form. And a parable is just a short fictional story that illustrates a big truth.

And so, as we turn to these parables, we're always looking for what's God teaching. Today, we have the privilege and humbly, unfortunately, to look at probably the one of the most difficult and disputed parables in the Bible.

[2:17] If you were to pick up three commentaries or hear three sermons on this parable, you'd probably hear three slightly different interpretations of its significance. So, with great humility and great trust in God's Spirit to guide us, let's read this and ask for Him to help us.

So, beginning in 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 that I hear about you? Give an account of your management because you can no longer be manager. 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 too 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 the master? 800 gallons of oil, he replied. The manager told him, take your bill, sit down quickly and make it 400.

- [3:26] 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.

For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourself so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

Whoever can be trusted with a 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 would give you property of your own? No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he'll 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. He said to them, you are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts.

- [4:44] What's highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight. The law and the prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached and everyone is forcing his way into it.

It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the law. Okay, so most likely when you hear that parable, there are at least one or two or ten questions that pop in your mind about the parable.

The most obvious one is why in the world is the master commending such a shady guy? This manager is shady from the start, and he becomes more shady as the story goes on.

So why is he commended? The second difficulty is really in verse 9. It's a very strange thing that Jesus tells us to do.

He says, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourself so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. What in the world does that mean? The other difficulty is the context in which it is in Luke.

- [5:56] The preceding chapter, you may know, is the chapter with the trifold parable of the lost coin, the lost—what was the other one? The lost sheep and the prodigal son, the famous parable of the prodigal son.

And that's in Luke 15. And how does that relate to—is it just a complete change of pace? And why does Luke include this parable after that? And then these verses that I continue to read after Luke, a lot of commentators and scholars are just like bewildered as to why these verses are included here.

Were they part of his address to the Pharisees? And how are they related? They seem to be somewhat unrelated. So those are some of the difficulties we have up against us today that we'll hopefully address.

And I wanted to begin just by looking at the two characters, the two main characters of this parable. So you have the master and this dishonest manager. So first, let's look at the master. And there's a couple of things I just want to notice about him.

First, he is a strict master, okay? He is—he does demand right performance of his manager. And so you see that as he gets word from someone else that his master—his manager has been squandering his possessions, he calls him to account for this.

[7:11] So this is not a master who's very lax. It's not a master who has no standards of what his manager should be doing. He calls him to account, and you see that he actually dismisses him from his job.

But the second thing I want to see about the master is probably a little harder for us to pick up in the story in our context. We're used to a kind of a boss-employee relationship where getting fired is pretty much the worst thing your boss can do to you normally.

But in this context, in the ancient world, this would be a very common kind of position for a rich man to have, is to have either typically a slave or a bond servant, but also maybe a hired man would be in—would be the manager of all of their house, of all of their possessions.

This man was probably extraordinarily wealthy, and so this was a very important position to have. And it was absolutely shocking that all he did is fire the guy, is dismiss him.

You know, in the ancient world, that would have been something that they immediately heard and said, you're not sending him to prison, you're not requiring him to pay back all that he embezzled. And we see this also in other parables of Jesus, this kind of expectation.

[8:24] So, to think of a contemporary example, think of the example of Bernie Madoff a couple of years ago. When it was discovered that Bernie Madoff had embezzled the money of all his investors to the tune of billions of dollars, \$36 billion invested.

How would you have felt if the news story that you read about Bernie Madoff said, so, all the investors decided to invest elsewhere? And that was all that happened to Bernie Madoff.

That's kind of the way this story reads, is that, okay, you know, we've given you \$36 billion, you've wasted it all, we'll invest our money somewhere else. It's shocking the mercy of the master here.

Bernie Madoff is instead serving 150 years in prison and is required to pay \$18 billion back. And so, justice dictates that that would be what would happen.

So we see a radical mercy here in the master. And then we see this manager actually depends upon that. So now let's look at the manager.

[9:32] What are the key things that we see about him? First he is dishonest, okay? So in dealing with the tension of the fact that the master commends him, some commentators, some people in this passage try to explain away the bad behavior of the master, I mean of the manager.

But it's almost impossible to explain away. First off, he's squandered his things that don't belong to him, his master's possessions. And this word that in our text is wasting here is, it only occurs with this meaning one at a time in all the New Testament.

And that occurs in the previous chapter in Luke 15 in the story of the prodigal son. So when the prodigal squanders his inheritance, that same word is used and it's the only place in the New Testament where that word is used.

So I think Luke is showing us here there's some comparisons between the prodigal son who selfishly wasted the possessions of his father, that which should not have belonged to him, and this manager who's also squandered what does not belong to him.

And also we see parallels between the next category, which is he's in a desperate position. So, so this shrewd manager is shrewd enough to know that now that he's being called to account, he's in a very desperate situation.

[11:06] He realizes he's not a strong guy, he's not going to go do manual labor, he's too proud to go out and beg for money. And so he realizes nobody's going to hire me.

I'm in a desperate position. So very similar to the prodigal son in that pig pen, he realizes I'm at rock bottom. I'm in a desperate position and I don't know how I'm going to continue to survive.

And like the prodigal, he turns to the mercy of his master. Now it's a little more difficult to see here, but think about this. Think about this, that you were fired for embezzling money and your instinct is to say, I'm going to sneak some more money out of what belongs to the master in order to provide for myself.

That's what he decides to do. So there's unbelievable confidence in the mercy of his master that's reflected here. He's desperate and in his desperation, he doesn't make excuses.

He doesn't, he recognizes his own failure and he turns to the mercy of the master. And the next, and that leads us to the last thing we see is that he was very shrewd. He was very clever.

[12:12] This was a very ingenious way to provide for himself, though very selfishly motivated. He heavily relies on the master's mercy.

And we see then the shocking kind of conclusion to the story. And that is that this master, who now twice has been taken advantage of by this dishonest man, commends the servant.

And you're left almost like wanting to go back and read the verse again. What the master commends this guy? But he commends him specifically for his shrewdness.

And so it's not as if the master says, I've been so pleased with how you've managed my funds, or I'm so happy that you've provided for yourself through ripping me off.

No, no. He says, I specifically commend you for your shrewdness. Now, why in the world would Jesus, now he's, these are fictional stories. So Jesus, if he wanted to, right, he could have come up with a story to, with a really noble person that was shrewd, right?

[13:22] So why does he take such a really shady, despicable kind of guy and, and point to him as an example for shrewdness? Well, we're going to look a couple of places in Luke.

This is not an uncommon thing for Jesus to do. In Luke 18, there's another parable of Jesus of the persistent widow. And you may remember this story where the judge is described as a judge who neither fears God or respects man.

He's not a nice guy, and he really doesn't submit to God in any way. And in that parable, the persistence of the widow, the nagging of this widow, finally breaks down this judge and he gives her what he wants.

And Jesus' conclusion to that parable in Luke 18 is, if such an unjust judge can be convinced to answer the request of someone from their persistence, what do you expect from a loving God to do if you will persistently bring Him your requests?

Right? So he's arguing here, it's a thing he does where he argues from the lesser to the greater. If somebody this shady is this wise, how much wiser should we be?

[14:31] Another example of this which is always, it always sticks out in my mind because it's such a strange question to ask. But in Luke 11, Jesus asks, which of you fathers, if their son asks for a fish, will give him a snake?

Right? It's such a weird question to ask. But you know, your son's hungry, he says, hey, I'd like some fish, and you give him a cobra, right? And he points out that we, earthly fathers, who are evil, he makes a point to put, he makes it clear to point that out.

If we know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more does God know how to give good gifts? And will He give us of Himself, His Holy Spirit? So Jesus frequently uses this kind of device to add to the urgency, the shame, of lack of shrewdness for those who claim to be righteous, okay?

So that's why He makes such an example out of such a wicked guy. And you see that in verse 8. You see Jesus kind of bemoan the situation.

So in verse 8, after He commends the dishonest manager for his shrewdness, it says, for the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than the people of the light.

[15 : 44] So you can see, again, He's arguing from the lesser to the greater. So what is the point of this parable, right? This is where you get so much difference of opinion about what exactly is Jesus getting at?

Luckily, this is one of those parables. Some of the parables, we have the parable and it just ends and you stop and you have no idea. You're left to kind of figure it out on your own. But this is one where Luke thankfully includes the teaching of Jesus to His disciples about this parable.

And then he also includes an interaction that Jesus has with the Pharisees who were also eavesdropping in this situation. So from that we see three lessons I wanted to think about today.

The first one is probably the most obvious one. And you see it in verses 8 through 12. And that's that Christians should be more shrewd in using God's resources to serve kingdom purposes than those outside God's kingdom in serving themselves.

And so we read verse 8 that says, for the people of this world, which is literally the sons of darkness, are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of light, which is literally the sons of light.

[16 : 56] So who are the sons of darkness and who are the sons of light? Well, the sons of darkness are people like, obviously, the dishonest manager, who are very shrewd, but their goal, their motives are very wicked.

You know, when Jesus sends out His disciples in Matthew 10, He tells them to be as shrewd as serpents, but as innocent as doves, right? So the dishonest manager is very shrewd, but he's far from innocent.

So these sons of darkness are people that use their creativity, their ingenuity, their resources to serve themselves. And who are the sons of light?

Well, from the word light and from the sons of light, and also knowing that all of Jesus' parables are all fundamentally about the kingdom of God and those that enter it, we know that the sons of light are God's people, are the people that have God's revelation, God's law, and they should be seeing clearly what God's purpose is, right?

And they claim to serve God's purpose. So in this verse, Jesus is bemoaning the tragedy that there is more industrious shrewdness being demonstrated by those who serve themselves than there are by those who serve things that affect all of eternity.

[18 : 17] That is a weighty, weighty burden. All the creativity that gets wasted in this world just trying to buy an iPad or, you know, get a big retirement account.

All these things that are so temporary and so little shrewdness by those who know what eternity is all about in building the kingdom of God.

That's what Jesus is bemoaning. That's what He is, why He uses such a horrible example of a man as a way of telling us to be more shrewd.

Now verse 9, so verse 8 tells us we should somewhat be, we should be like or exceed this dishonest manager in shrewdness. But verse 9 tells us how we should be not like the manager, right?

So let's look at verse 9, now verse 9 is a very strangely worded verse, so we're going to spend a little time here. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourself so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

- [19:25] Now what in the world does that mean? The words here, so first let's look at worldly wealth. The actual literal words there are unrighteous wealth or untrue riches.
- So what does He mean by unrighteous wealth? Well one thing we definitely know from the passage, both because it says that it fails and because of the parable, is that this is what we have in this world, right?
- This is our stuff, this is our possessions, it's our talents, it's our time, it's the resources we have. So anything in this world that we would think is valuable is included in this unrighteous wealth.
- Now but it's called unrighteous not just because it's worldly. Now that's why the NIV translates it here as worldly, because that's one implication of unrighteous. But the other implication of unrighteous is it doesn't belong to us, right?
- And that's one of the main points of the parable. Psalm 24, David says, the earth is the Lord's and everything in it. So your car, your house, your body, your talents, your time, they don't belong to you.
- [20:33] Like this man, it's embezzlement when we use those things for selfish motives. Okay, so it's unrighteous for both of those ways. Now what Jesus doesn't say is what we might expect Him to say is, stay away from unrighteous wealth, right?
- Don't get wealth unrighteously. He doesn't say that. Instead, He says, no, the unrighteous wealth that you have, use it for the right purpose. It's unavoidable that we are stewards of something that doesn't belong to us, right?
- It's unavoidable that we are stewarding something that belongs to someone else. It's unavoidable that we have worldly possessions. So Jesus doesn't say, flee unrighteous wealth. He says, use it for the right reasons.
- Now what does He say is the right reasons? Clean friends who will welcome us into eternal dwellings. Now the manager's mistake is very evident here. Okay, the manager's recognition of his desperate condition led him to do what?
- I got to look out for my future on earth. So he was very short-sighted just this time on earth, and he was very self-seeking. And he was willing to embezzle more money from his master in order to do it.
- [21:49] So Jesus is correcting us here and saying, the sons of light are not self-seeking, they're God-seeking, and they're not short-sighted, they're eternally sighted. They're thinking about how do I use every moment, every dollar, everything that God's entrusted to me to maximize my own enjoyment of eternity, and who else is there with me?
- The people that come into God's reward. Now that is a tall order. When you plan your schedule, when you balance your checkbook, are you thinking, am I using every bit of this for eternal significance, and am I doing it shrewdly?
- So not just simply by, well, God says I need to give this much, you know, I'll give that much. No, carefully, thoughtfully investing in eternal things.
- So God's people should be the most shrewd, the most creative people with the resources they have on earth, and they should be doing it for God's purposes.
- Now, is that what we see when we look in our lives? Is that what we see when we look at Christians as a whole? That people that take everything that they have and very creatively and shrewdly use it to further the kingdom of God?
- [23:06] I don't think it is. I know it's not what I see in my own life. So why? What are the reasons why we're not shrewd like this? And I think Jesus highlights at least three reasons here.
- And the first one is we ignore our responsibility. Now, I'm the one in our house that manages finances, that pays all the bills and does all of that stuff. And one of the main reasons for that is because I really like being shrewd when it comes to finances.

I really like finding the best deal on things. I'll wait for weeks or months and shop on the internet forever to try to find the best, you know, \$5 more off, you know, whatever I can. And I get great joy out of that.

And the same with planning for the future, figuring out what we should do, where we should invest, how we should be the wisest. I really enjoy that. And for that reason, it's better for me to do the finances because I get such joy out of that.

And there's nothing wrong with that. But I almost never think that way about investing in the kingdom of God. Almost never. And it was about—it was the first of this year that God really started to work.

[24:12] I had no idea I would be preaching this, of course, later. That's the way God works. But it was the first of this year God really started to talk to me about that. And, you know, we moved to a very expensive place to live and living for a minister's wage.

And so, it was very tempting to, well, we can't afford to do that, and how do we do it? And so, Micah and I, about every three months or so, I come to her with a new idea of some small way that we can be more shrewd in investing in the kingdom of God.

And I'm pathetic at it right now. I'm just coming up with tiny little ideas, and we have so far to go. But God has been showing me that I've been just ignoring that kind of shrewdness.

I'm very careful to think about, well, how am I going to pay for my kids at college? I'm very much trying to just figure that out and trying to be as wise as I can about that. But I don't think that way about the kingdom.

So, we just ignore the responsibility. Second, we feel like we have little or nothing to give because we're barely making it.

[25:24] Or we just, we feel like, well, we're in the bottom 5%. We just don't have anything to give. And, you know, I went through a lot of this in seminary over the last four years. We had little to no income.

And the honest truth was, is in my mind, the fact that we were still giving to our church, was like, well, that's heroic. You know, we're living off virtually nothing in our savings.

And so, I never thought about how could I be more wise or shrewd in maximizing the impact on eternity with what God's given me. I just didn't think about it because I thought I don't have enough to even consider that.

Maybe you're just afraid. You're afraid I'm not going to make rent, much less think about generosity. So, that's a reason. You see that in verse 10. Jesus addresses this.

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with very much. Whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So, Jesus doesn't let you use that excuse. Jesus is just as pleased, maybe even more so, with the widow's mite, with the impoverished Macedonians who gave beyond their means.

[26:36] Who knows how little they gave. He's just as pleased with that for somebody he's equipped to give millions of dollars. It's about stewardship and faithfulness with what you've been entrusted.

So, don't let that deception come in. Well, I don't have the resources to be that kind of Christian. And the last thing is probably the most important, and that is that we fail to recognize the eternal significance of what we do with our stuff, with our time.

We just fail to understand that. In verses 11 and 12, Jesus says, Now, what does this mean, true riches, our own property?

We know from countless other references in Scripture that he's referring to eternal inheritance. He's referring to that which will not pass away, that which will be ours, not just stewarded to us.

The inheritance we have in Christ. So, Jesus is saying eternity hangs in the balance of your stewardship. If you're unfaithful, it affects your eternity.

[27:58] And not just yours, it affects the eternity of your friends, of those around you, if you're unfaithful. Now, is this a works-based righteousness or salvation?

Is he saying that if we're good stewards, then we've somehow earned an inheritance, we've earned true riches? No, and we see that in verse 13. And that moves us to the next, I think, big lesson from this text.

How we use God's resources reveals where our heart's allegiance lies. Okay, so look at verse 13. No servant can serve two masters.

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 both God and money. So, Jesus isn't saying that our stewardship earns us anything.

Instead, what he's saying is our stewardship shows you who's Lord. Lord, we love to think, or at least to act, as if we can do both of these.

[28:57] We just love to do that. As if we can say, you know what, 90-95% of our money, I can be completely thoughtless about if it's being invested for the kingdom.

Because I give 5 or 10% away. And the 5 or 10% I give away is very pretty much thoughtless. I just write a check, drop it in the—I'm not thinking about the needs of the person beside me.

I'm not looking to the human suffering that's right around me. I'm not thinking about who around me needs to be in the kingdom of God and investing in that way shrewdly. No, I'm just writing it off.

That is how I honor God. That is how He is Lord. And I can still, you know, I can still pursue my own comfort, my own security, my own future with the rest of my wealth.

That's what we love to do. And Jesus is saying, no, there is a binary situation that's happening in your heart. And if you are the type of person who embezzles from God's provision for your own comfort, it shows you what you really worship in your heart.

[30:04] Our love for God and His kingdom will either rule or it won't. Our time and our possessions and our bank statements are constantly expressing our allegiance.

Our time and our friends, we're going to be able to do that, and we're going to do that. The last week I've had the privilege of studying the sermons of Jonathan Edwards at Yale Divinity School. And we went through several of his parable sermons.

So if that won't humble you to preach on a parable the coming Sunday, I don't know what will. Probably the greatest mind of American history preaching on parables.

But one of the things that stuck out with me in relation to this was from his preaching on the parables of the ten virgins. You know, five virgins that were ready for Jesus' coming and five that were caught unaware.

And, you know, he says those were true Christians and false Christians. Christians that were truly, you know, serving God from their heart. And Christians that thought they were Christians.

[31:04] They had their lamps. They went out to meet Him, but they were unprepared. And he talks about some of the reasons why there are always so many false Christians in the church.

And one of them is very compelling for this. I wanted to read from you. The first reason which respects the false members in the church is the dreadful proneness there naturally is in the heart of man to hypocrisy.

We are told in Jeremiah 17 9 that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Men are naturally exceedingly prone to deceive themselves in the opinion they have of themselves because of their pride and their self-love.

Their pride makes them prone to entertain high thoughts of themselves, to look on themselves through a magnifying glass, and to give honorable names to themselves, to think themselves virtuous and religious.

As they have a high thought of themselves, so they are ready to think that God has a high thought of themselves. And hence, those that are indeed no Christians look on themselves as Christians and profess to be such.

[32 : 16] Now, this is the part that really stands out to me. And their self-love makes them exceedingly prone to flatter themselves, that they have the necessary qualifications for heaven.

They are very ready to think themselves free from what they heard inevitably exposes them to ruin. So, this is one of the temptations we come to in this verse, is the temptation.

Do you feel that temptation in your heart to flatter yourself? To justify, well, this is why I know, you know, I give this, I do this. To let yourself off the hook of the weighty thing that Jesus is saying here.

The Bible is saying your credit card bills, your daily planner, they show you where your allegiance is. Don't tune that out and flatter yourself.

That's the risk. And Edwards points out that that's why there's so many people that think they're Christians that aren't, because they ignore the obvious evidence. They see a warning like this in Scripture that you cannot serve money and be a Christian.

[33 : 22] And they flatter themselves. Such love of money is what led the Pharisees to sneer at Jesus. And that leads us to the final, what I believe is the main point of this parable, in his interaction with them.

So, let's look at verse 14. The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. And he said to them, You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men.

But God knows your heart. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight. So, there's something about the dishonest manager that's different than the Pharisees.

And that is that the dishonest manager, when he was called to account, when he took a hard look at how he was managing things, because the master was coming, he knew his desperate condition.

The Pharisees, on the contrary, sneer at the teaching of Jesus. No, no, no, no, that's ridiculous. They viewed prosperity and money as a sign that God would please with you.

[34 : 33] You know, to place this kind of hard duality between you can't love wealth, you can't love to be prosperous, and truly love God and be devoted to Him.

Oh, that's just crazy. And we still have people in churches preaching that. That the greatest indicator that God's happy with you is how you're blessed financially and how much you have to comfort yourself.

Jesus says those were the ones that were deceived. This really shady guy was at least wise enough to recognize the desperate condition he was, just like the prodigal son, recognizing in the pigpen, what have I let myself get to by depending on myself and seeking for myself?

The Pharisees trust in their own reputation and an outward righteousness. And the love they have for money reveals, just like it says in 13, where their heart's true allegiance lies.

And so, the fact that the Pharisees were looked at as, well, these are the people God's most pleased with. They trusted in that. The fact that they read the law meticulously and tried to outwardly conform to it.

[35 : 44] They said, well, that makes us acceptable to God. And Jesus comes and says, no, what men approve of, including you, what you think is righteous enough, is an abomination to God.

He completely rejects it. So, that's what we see in verse 16 and 18. So, a lot of people struggle to understand how is 16 through 18 related to what Jesus is saying?

Because he seems to change gears and start talking about the law. But let's look at that. In 16, it says, the law and the prophets were proclaimed until John. And since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached.

And everyone is forcing his way into it. It's easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the law. And in 18, he gives an example of one of the high standards of the law.

Talking about divorce. But what Jesus is saying is the law standard is inflexible. You cannot be righteous by that.

[36 : 46] So, the third big lesson, I think, and the main lesson that Jesus has for this is you're the dishonest manager. That's you. You're in a desperate situation and you're completely dependent on the mercy of God.

The Pharisees did not want to admit that. They weren't willing to admit it. And so, you get this really debated subject here about the kingdom of God is being preached and everyone is forcing his way into it.

What does that mean? Why does Jesus point out that there's a battle, there's a struggle, there's a violence to entering the kingdom of God? Because he was talking to the Pharisees who thought they could just walk right in.

They were fine the way they were. And Jesus says, no, the law is inflexible. There's no way you're going to enter the way that you are. There has to be an overthrow of the idols of your heart.

There has to be a violent removal of the God that reigns right now. And you have to repent. Nobody enters as they are. There is a struggle with violence.

[37 : 49] And by the grace of God, we recognize, just like this dishonest servant, just like the prodigal son, we need the mercy of our father. We need the mercy of our master. So, if you hear this sermon today, just in closing, and the Holy Spirit is convicting you by something that was said, I am completely not a shrewd manager of what God's entrusted to me.

I am thoughtless in investing for the kingdom. I'm thoughtless in enriching my own experience of God and his kingdom and making sure that my checkbook reflects that I want to go to heaven. I don't want to play PlayStation.

You know, whatever you, you know, go to for comfort. And you're just broken by that. Don't tune it out. Don't flatter yourself. Respond by saying, I want to give full allegiance.

Overthrow those idols of the heart. Jesus is exposing the fact that your heart is divided. And there cannot be that in the heart of a believer. So, repent and turn away from that.

So, in closing, I want to read from the passage we read earlier in Philippians 3. And I hope that we can all rejoice and share in what Paul is saying here.

[39 : 07] Because it's the exact sentiment and the exact understanding of the law is reflected in what Paul says. But whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him.

Not having a righteousness of my own that can come from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ. The righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ.

Yes, to know the power of His resurrection, participate in His sufferings, and become like Him in death. And so, to somehow attain the resurrection for the dead.