

Christian Stewardship

Luke 16:1-15

- This parable has been greatly misunderstood because it seems as though our Lord is commending a crook (16:8).
- As Christians, we must understand that we are commanded to be good stewards/managers!
- AT Pierson- The basis of Christ's teaching about money is the fundamental conception of stewardship (Luke 12:42; 16:1-8). Not only money, but every gift of God, is received in trust for His use. Man is not an owner, but a trustee, managing another's goods and estates, God being the one original inalienable Owner of all. The two things required of stewards are that they be 'faithful and wise,' that they study to employ God's gifts with fidelity and sagacity – fidelity so that God's entrustments be not perverted to self-indulgence; sagacity, so that they be converted into as large gains as possible" (The Fundamentals, Volume IV)
- Let us look at the context: Our Lord was dealing with many of the erroneous attitudes of the Pharisees- specifically their covetousness (v. 14-15)
- Some people think it's not spiritual to preach on money. But consider this: our Lord spoke often on the subject, as did the other preachers in both the Old and New Testaments.
- Many preachers shy away from the subject of money because it has been badly abused by some TV preachers. But we must teach on stewardship!
- I will be borrowing from John Wesley's famous outline on stewardship

I. **GAIN ALL YOU CAN/ EARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN**

- a. Wesley: Despite its potential for misuse, money in itself is something good. There is no end to the good it can do: "In the hands of [God's] children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked. It gives to the traveler and the stranger where to lay his head. By it we may supply the place of

a husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless. We may be a defense for the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain. It may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame: yea, a lifter up from the gates of death!" So earn as much as you can!

- b. I said earn, not beg or wait for the government!
 - i. According to Scripture the method of provision for God's people is a little four-letter word: WORK
 - ii. Not gambling, or get-rich-quick schemes- there's no such thing! Proverbs 13:11 - Wealth [gotten] by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.
 - iii. See: II Thess 3:10-11, I Tim 5:8 (unable vs. unwilling)
 - iv. This is the problem with socialism- we cannot remove the incentive to work hard!
 - v. Here in America, everyone has the opportunity to succeed- with hard work!
- c. Wesley also noted the warning not to damage our souls as we gain money!
- d. When we consider this parable- the master did not approve the steward's conduct, he commended the steward's shrewdness. Work hard, and work smarter- v. 8
 - i. Now, it is true that this steward was a crook but when we look at this story carefully we see that our Lord was certainly not praising him for his dishonesty. We should earn an honest living!
 - ii. Interesting contrasts in the Bible (Eph. 5:18- drunkenness)
 - iii. Jesus added the thought that the businessmen of his day (sons of this world) were more wise, bold, and forward-thinking in the management of what they had (more shrewd) than the people of God were with managing what they had (the sons of light).

II. **SAVE ALL YOU CAN**

- a. Let us look more closely at this parable:

- i. The master returned for an accounting of his servant's stewardship- v. 2
 - ii. The steward/manager was guilty of misappropriating funds- he wasted his master's goods! V. 1
 - iii. This steward was doing a poor job, and was losing money for the rich man either by incompetence, stealing, or both.
 - iv. It seemed to him that he had only two viable options and he did not like either one: hard, manual labor ("I cannot dig"), or begging, which was humiliating to him ("to beg I am ashamed"). Note he was ashamed to beg, but not ashamed to lie and steal!
 - v. He comes up with a plan to make friends so that he secures his future after he loses his job
 - vi. He went to his master's customers and settled their debts for less than they actually owed. (talk about a black Friday sale!)
 - vii. Shockingly, when his master found out he commended him! And our Lord commends him as well! V. 8-9
 - viii. Why would anyone approve of such dishonesty? Jesus commended the man's **foresight!** He acted prudently, **looking to the future** and making provision for it! He sacrificed his present gain for a future reward
- b. The application for us: save your money! Learn to invest, and plan for a better future!
 - c. Wesley: The believer must provide for his family but also insure that the family has enough to live on if something were to happen to the breadwinner. (Emergency Fund) Don't live crisis to crisis, or paycheck to paycheck. Have a plan!
 - d. V. 13- Master your money, don't let money master you! We need to have a plan (budget). We are not in Congress! Don't fall trap to **Mastercard**, American Distress
 - e. Financial guru Dave Ramsey says, "Live like no one else today, so that later you can live and give like no one else."

- f. The temptation of debt- Rom 13:8, Prov. 22:7, Ps. 37:21
 - i. The average American decides whether they can afford an item by whether they can afford the monthly payments.
 - ii. Wesley urged his hearers not to spend money merely to gratify the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye, or the pride of life.
 - iii. We cannot live above our means! “Act your wage”
 - iv. Instead of earning interest on investments, many Christians are drowning in paying interest on consumer debt! Ever notice the bank, auto dealer, malls have nicer furniture than you do?

III. GIVE ALL YOU CAN

- a. Studies consistently show that giving, not buying, makes you a happier person
- b. It affects our mental health, our physical health, and can even help you live longer!
- c. Let’s circle back around to the parable
 - i. Jesus is praising sagacity, and shrewdness because the steward wisely planned for the future
 - ii. The proper interpretation of the text goes beyond earthly dividends
 - iii. Jesus is ultimately saying that worldly businesspeople are more wise in securing their future in this world, than believers are in laying up treasure in Heaven!- v. 8, 11
- d. The best investment- invest in eternity!
 - i. V. 9 We should make friends, or we should use money other material resources in such a way as to help spread the Gospel, winning souls to Christ. Then when we fail (die) we will form eternal friendships, and have a grand welcome into Heaven. Illustr- welcome committee II Peter 1:11- For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
 - ii. Money can be used to buy Bibles, tracts, missions, etc.
 - iii. What are the true riches? V. 11 Eternal rewards! Spiritual blessings!

- iv. V. 10 Earthly finances vs. heavenly rewards. Money is that which is least in God's estimation!
- v. Heaven's stock market always shows a gain for eternal riches, never a loss! See I Tim 6:17-19
- e. The stewardship question: How much belongs to God?- All of it!
- f. So we should be excellent managers, that we may excellent givers!
- g. How much should we give?
 - i. Tithe- is just the 1st floor
 - ii. Offerings- missions, special needs like our building loans
 - iii. God wants us to give systematically, on the Lord's Day (I Cor. 16:2). Notice the words, "as God hath prospered him." This indicates that for some people a mere tithe is insufficient. I would say that Luke 6:38 suggests more than a tithe.
 - iv. Not only does God want us to give systematically (as opposed to haphazardly or impulsively), He also wants us to give cheerfully (II Cor. 9:6-8). Many people give with the wrong motive.
- h. To whom should we give- the local church is God's storehouse today! Mal 3:8-10
- i. A.T. Pierson: Our Lord's teachings as to money gifts, if obeyed, would forever banish all limitations on church work and all concern about supplies...

Conclusion:

- Some are like the unjust steward and have been robbing God, and wasting his goods!
- If we pursued the Kingdom of God with the same vigor and zeal that the children of this world pursue profits and pleasure, we would be reaching the world with the gospel! It could be said that it is to the shame of the Church that Coca-Cola is more widely distributed than the gospel of Jesus Christ. Simply, it is because the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.