

Disciples Resist Greed

GENEROSITY 1

September 22, 2019

Theme: Love God more than money, time, resources...Scripture: Luke 16: 1-13

¹ Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property.

² So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.'³ Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴ I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.'

⁵ So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'⁶ He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.'⁷ Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.'

⁸ And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

¹⁰ "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹ If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you

what is your own? ¹³ No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."



Two weeks ago, when we began this sermon series called "What Disciples Do", I began by talking about what Jesus Christ asks of us. Jesus first asks us to

count the cost of discipleship – to know what we are signing up for. Then, once we are willing to assume the cost, then we are to pick up our cross in order to follow Jesus. Two weeks ago, we learned that carrying the cross is really about self-denial – the willingness to place God above all else in our lives. Last week I spoke about seeking and engaging the lost. The Pharisees and other religious leaders accused Jesus of "eating with sinners". Last week we were also reminded that we are or were once all lost, but now are found.

I closed last week by sharing three practical steps or three ways to evangelize. As a reminder, the three ways were lifestyle evangelism, relational evangelism,



and invitational evangelism. For those who were not here last week, can someone who was here tell us what lifestyle evangelism... is? Looking back at my past week, I had some success. And some failure. Like me, I am sure we all had times when we modeled Jesus well. I'm equally sure that we also all had times when we failed to model Jesus well. Anyone have a story of relational evangelism from this past week that they would be willing to share this morning?

Or, does anyone have an experience with invitational evangelism that they would be willing to share this morning? With that, let us pray...



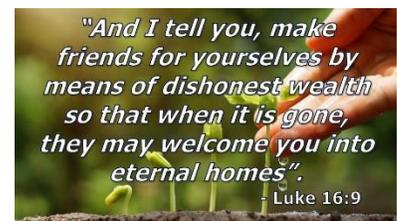
Our passage from Luke 16 opens with the story of a dishonest manager. As I begin this morning, I invite you to open your Bible to Luke 16. The rich man hears rumors that the manager has failed to properly handle his affairs and summons the manager for an explanation. Then, knowing he is about to lose his job, the manager frets, saying, *"What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg"*. The manager has gotten soft. He has become a freeloader; he is lazy. He decides to continue use some dishonest practices, hoping to secure a better future for himself. One by one he calls in those that owe debts to his boss and lowers each debt, ingratiating himself to all of these people. For the one that owed a hundred jugs of olive oil, he says, *'Make it fitty'*. To the one who owed one hundred containers of wheat, he says, *'Make it eighty'*. The manager is trying to continue to live on another's expense. He is hoping these discounts will earn him some credit with these folks after he is fired.

When the master finds out what dishonest manager did, he commends him for being so shrewd. The rich man recognizes how well the manager has played the game. He compliments this imaginary manager, saying, *"for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light"*. People of the world are better at taking advantage of the world for their own gain. In other words, the world does worldliness much better than the

Christians does. This is simply the way of the world. If someone immoral learns about an insider trick to make a little more in the stock market, will others not want to know how to do that too? If someone finds a way to earn just a little more profit, don't many others in the industry try and follow suit? If someone finds a tax loophole, isn't the secret worth something? Yes, in the me-first world, these are the realities that many live by because it increases their wealth, their status, their position, and/or their feelings of self-worth and security.

In verse nine, Jesus gives us a little perspective. Here we read these words:

"And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes". In this verse, *"dishonest wealth"* means "worldly wealth". Jesus tells

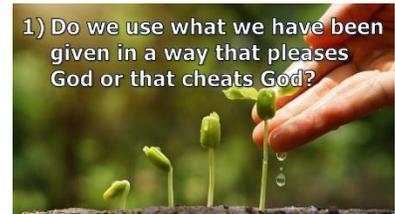


us that the money and the possessions of the world should be used to make "friends". But these friends are not what we are thinking. It is not my wife and my friends from school and my friends from the church. Jesus is encouraging us to make friends that will outlast this earthly world. These friends will then invite us into "eternal homes". Who are these friends? Only God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have a home that lasts forever. The Christian who stewards this world's wealth to do God's work God's way will have God as a friend and heaven as a home.

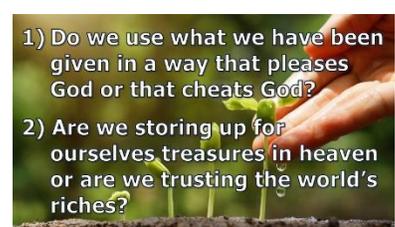
If we are to be good stewards of all that God has blessed us with, then our first step must be to recognize that all we have belongs to God. God is the owner and we are merely stewards or caretakers. We cannot be good stewards unless

we are able to see beyond these earthly dwellings and possessions and on into the home that is coming in the future kingdom. As God's stewards, we must be shrewd in how we handle God's possessions. We need to handle them in a way that gets us that eternal home. So, to frame the conversation moving forward, two questions. First, do we use what we have been given in a way that pleases God or that cheats God? Second, are we storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven or are we trusting the world's riches?

Treasures in heaven will last. The world's riches will surely fail. How we choose to spend our time, our resources, our gifts, our presence, and our witness surely matters to God. Where and how and to whom we allocate our time, our resources, and so on can either be pleasing to God or can be like cheating God.



1) Do we use what we have been given in a way that pleases God or that cheats God?

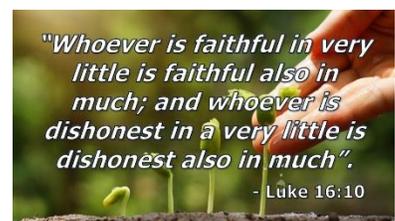


1) Do we use what we have been given in a way that pleases God or that cheats God?

2) Are we storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven or are we trusting the world's riches?

As we turn to verses ten through thirteen, we hear the call to be faithful. In this world, one can be wise and unfaithful. That was the case with the dishonest manager. He was shrewd or crafty but he was not faithful or true. He did not handle his master's business correctly. In verse ten Jesus separates the good steward from the bad steward. In this verse Jesus says,

"Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much". Jesus is saying that we can



"Whoever is faithful in very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much".

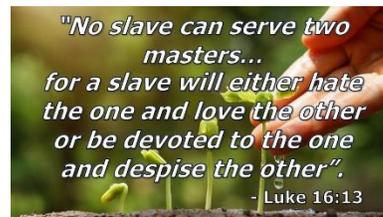
- Luke 16:10

predict what people will do with great responsibilities by looking at how they do with smaller responsibilities. If one is faithful with little, they will also be faithful with much. If one is dishonest with little, they will also be dishonest with much.

Here Jesus is talking about character as much as with ability or about what we have been given. When a disciple fails to be a good steward, it is like promising God to take care of his things but then not doing so. It is like cheating God.

Verses eleven and twelve speak to us of the consequences of our stewardship. Jesus first poses a question: how can we be trusted with true riches, with heaven's treasures and glories, if we cannot be faithful with worldly wealth and with the blessings that God has given each of us? If we cannot please God with the time, resources, gifts, presence, and witness that we have been given here on earth, why in the world would God entrust us with an inheritance in heaven? In heaven we move from being stewards to being heirs or coheirs with Christ, owners together of the kingdom God has promised to us. To be good owners, we must first be good stewards.

The crux of the matter comes down again to carrying our cross. Are we willing to pick up our cross and to carry that cross? Are we willing to deny our own self-interest and self-will to please God? Are we willing to forsake our own glory and recognition and wealth to bring all the glory to God? Verse thirteen opens with these words: *"No slave can serve two masters"*. This is so true. Why can't we serve both the world and God? It is simple: *"for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other"*. We cannot worship two gods. We must make up our minds. We must make a decision in our lives.



The question comes down to this: will we serve the false gods of money and possessions or will we serve the one living and true God who owns all things?

This is really what determines whether we are good stewards or dishonest stewards. The verse concludes with these words: *"You cannot serve God and wealth"*. Money is our greatest struggle, but this is not just about our money. There are no two ways about it. Every time we make a decision about our time, our resources, our gifts, our presence, and our witness to Jesus, we declare who our God is.

A man once came to Peter Marshall, former chaplain of the United States Senate, with a concern about tithing. "I have a problem," he said. "I have been tithing for some time. It wasn't too bad when I was making \$20,000 a year; I could afford to give up \$2,000. But now that I am making \$500,000, there is no way I can afford to give away \$50,000 a year."

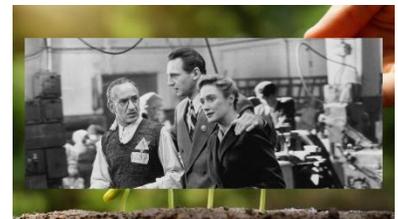
Peter Marshall reflected on this wealthy man's dilemma but gave no advice. He simply said, "Yes, sir. I see that you have a problem. I think we ought to pray about it. Is that all right?"

The man agreed, so Dr. Marshall bowed his head and prayed, "Dear Lord, this man has a problem, and I pray that you will help him. Please reduce his salary back to the place where he can afford to tithe."

The shrewd manager was skilled at wheeling and dealing in the ways of world to insure his own earthly comfort. Do we do the same? Or... is our wheeling and dealing in alignment with God? We cannot serve two masters. Jesus' teaching today about stewardship brings our faith down to real life. The rubber of discipleship meets the road of practical decisions about money and time and resources and all else. The Lord teaches us today that our relationship with God should be displayed in our decisions and actions as caretakers of his blessings to and upon us.

In the me-first, instant gratification world that we live in, it is easy to get stuck in the materialistic lifestyle and to be convinced that we deserve to decide how to allocate our time, our money, our resources, and so on. Striving to accumulate more and being stingy with our blessings are cancers to true discipleship.

Disciples must resist greed in all forms. Last week I used the movie Finding Nemo to illustrate the theme of being lost and then being found. This week I turn to another movie to illustrate what it means to be all-in for God. The main character of this movie lives out the gifts of humility and true generosity. Perhaps you are familiar with the 1993 movie Schindler's List.



This film chronicles the heroic efforts of a very wealthy German industrialist named Oskar Schindler. Through his unselfish activities, over a thousand Jews on the trains to Auschwitz were saved. After Schindler found out what was happening at Auschwitz, he began a systematic effort to save as many Jews as he could. For money, he could buy Jews to work in his factory which was

supposed to be a part of the military machine of Germany. On one hand he was buying as many Jews as he could, and on the other hand he was deliberately sabotaging the ammunition produced in his factory. He entered the war as a financially wealthy industrialist; by the end of the war, he was financially bankrupt.

When the Germans finally surrendered, Schindler met with his workers and declared that at midnight they were all free to go. The most emotional scene of the film was when Schindler said good-bye to the financial manager of the plant, a Jew and his good and trusted friend. As he embraced his friend, Schindler sobbed and said, "I could have done more." He looked at his automobile and asked, "Why did I save this? I could have bought 10 Jews with this." Taking another small possession, he cried, "This would have saved another one. Why didn't I do more?" This is a question we may ask ourselves. In real life, Oskar Schindler did all he could to rescue as many Jews as possible. This is true generosity. When the ordeal was over, he still wondered what else he could have done to save just a few more. This is true humility. We too are called to do all we can for the building of the kingdom here in this place. We are called to be generous with all that we have. And in humility, I hope we all ask the question once in a while: why don't I do more?



One day we know that Jesus is going to split the sky and come for His own. It will not matter then how much money we have in a mutual fund or how many bedrooms we have in our homes. It will not matter how much time we spent

perfecting our bodies or our self-images. It will not matter how many hours of life we spent online, boosting our status or our number of likes. The temporary satisfaction we have in vacations and nice cars and all other possessions we have will be fade and be gone forever. On that day, when we stand before Jesus, only what we have done for the cause of Christ will matter. The only privilege we have now is to use God's blessings and resources for things that eternally matter. May we each be willing to abundantly invest our time, resources, gifts, presence, and witness for the building of the kingdom of God. May it be so for you and for me. Amen and amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) Grow. Disciples resist greed by being generous. In what area – time, resources, gifts, presence, witness – should you be more generous?
- 2) Pray. Generosity and humility do not come to us naturally. Pray this week for opportunities for you to practice and grow in these areas.
- 3) Serve. We serve God by being good stewards of our time, resources, gifts, presence, and witness. Which ones will you give more of this week?