

The Unrighteous Steward

Luke 16:1-13

Kevin Laser, September 21,2020

If your Bible is not already opened to Luke chapter 16, I invite you to open it up there because we're going to spend a fair bit of time looking at the words of Jesus today. He gave a lot of parables in the Bible, and many of the parables were cloaked in such a way that people could not understand them. And yet, when his disciples came to him and said, "Can you explain what this means?" He quickly and generously and easily explained the parables to them.

We're going to take a look this morning at a parable that is perhaps one of the more difficult parables to understand, at least on the surface. This is a parable that seems to have some characters in it, that are a little bit not exactly upright, let's say. And yet at the same time, this parable also speaks to our pocketbook. And so there's a sense in which on a couple of fronts, this parable is a little bit touchy, so to speak; but these are the words of Jesus and we cannot ignore the words of Jesus. And so, we are going to take a look at them this morning, regardless. Roughly a third of the parables that Jesus spoke had something to do with money or treasures or possessions or the things that we have in this world. And yet, Jesus unashamedly spoke those parables. He unashamedly gave us those spiritual truths from many of those parables. So we're just going to look at one of them this morning.

Let me ask you what is a parable? What is a parable? Or basically a parable is a simple story that has a profound spiritual lesson to it. It has a powerful word pictures that basically illustrates a spiritual truth. And they're easy to remember and they give insight on a specific spiritual reality. Although parables were often cloaked with a mystery, to those who rejected him, Jesus brought understanding and gave clarity of understanding for His followers. And so it sort of had always two parts to it: a mystery to it, and yet a truth that could be found. Jesus used symbolism in his parables to hide the truth from the unbelieving, and the apathetic, those who didn't care, those who didn't want to know, which was actually a divine judgment upon them. For them, parables were like a riddle with no answer. While many scorned Jesus' teachings, His disciples genuinely wanted to figure out what the meaning of the parables were. And when they came and asked, He told them.

When Jesus taught in parables, he had two purposes. First, like I said, to hide the truth from the self-righteous, those who had no need for Jesus or thought they had no need for Him and His teaching. Second, it was to reveal truth to those who are hungry for truth and righteousness, to those who want it to grow and understand who He is and how they ought to live.

Many Christians, however, import their own truths into a parable. They read the parable, and they think, "What could this mean? Obviously, you've got some understanding of it, some truth

that applies to you, and you've got some truth to it, and I've got some truth to it; and let's all put our truth together, and wow, this has got just all sorts of amazing truth to it." And that's not what the parables are all about. Jesus, when He gave a parable, it was to give predominantly one or two spiritual truths that we ought to live by. And it's not a parable where we can bring our own ideas to it and impose or place our concepts into a parable. And so we need to kind of keep that in mind as we look at this particular parable, because it's easy for us to do that. It's very tempting at times.

Parables typically have one main spiritual lesson, and in reality, there's only one way to really understand these truths. And that is to have childlike faith. And we see this in Matthew 11:25-26 where Jesus prays to the Father, and this is what He says. He says,

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and the understanding, and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

You see, this parable can be difficult to understand, because none of the characters are really all that godly, are they? Or noble. You would think that Jesus would put honourable people at the centre of His parables, but this particular parable has two main characters, and they're not particularly ones that we ought to emulate in a variety of ways. The steward or the manager wastes his boss's money. And then when the manager slashes what the debtors owe him (he gives discounts), the boss commends the dishonest manager for being shrewd. That's strange.

Well, the master in this parable was rich. In fact, he was extraordinarily rich, I might point out. And we know this because of how much the debtors actually owed him. We'll take a look at that in a little while. These were not small or average amounts that were owed to the master, but they were large, hefty amounts actually. The master was extraordinary rich, and he hired a manager to manage his day to day affairs. However, one day he receives the bad news that his manager is squandering his wealth. He's being wasteful. We don't know exactly how he was being wasteful, how long it was for, how severe his wastefulness was; but it was severe enough that the manager or the owner decided to call him in for a special meeting. And give him the message that his time was coming up. This guy was bad for business, and he was called to give an account for what he had done, to explain why he had been so wasteful. The writing was on the wall, and he was going to be let go, and he had just enough time to meet with some of the clients and adjust their accounts. But his purpose for meeting them was not for the good of the master or the business I might point out, but rather was for his own good after he was being fired. He devised an exit strategy that wasn't exactly above reproach. As the manager considers his option, he says to himself, "I am not strong enough to dig. And I'm ashamed to beg." It seems that he didn't have much strength and physical stamina for physical labor. Or perhaps it was more based on the fact that he was more comfortable with a desk kind of job. And he didn't want to put the effort and

sweat into physical labor. He was not accustomed to manual labor, and so he dismissed that as an option even though physical labor was quite common at the time and probably easy to get a job in that sector. He also says that he was too ashamed to beg. And this tells us that he was a proud man who would not stoop or lower himself to be served by others to receive something for free.

We can see that his master likely provided him with a place to live because his main concern was actually that he wouldn't have a place to live after he lost his job. He was worried that he would be homeless, and so he devised a plan to avoid being without a home. He would rather cheat his boss by telling the debtors to pay less than what they actually owed and thereby secure himself a favor among the debtors. He would rather do that than to leave with integrity and possibly need to ask for financial help after he lost his job. His main concern in leaving the company was that he would have no home afterwards, a legitimate concern I might add. It seems that one of the perks of the job was that they gave him a place to live, a roof over his head. They provided him a shelter, and he knew that once he was fired, he'd be without a home. Bad situation, wasn't it? He says in verse four, he says, "I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management, people will welcome me into their homes." His exit plan focused on securing a shelter after he was terminated. Working for a rich man he had lodging included, but once he lost the job, no place to stay.

So, he had this strategy in mind and to accomplish his goal, he calls the debtors in and he offers to cut or discount or slash, what they owe to the boss, anywhere from 20 to 50%. These are large discounts, I might add, but they were not authorized by the rich man. Technically, he may have had authority to give these discounts, but since he had already squandered, he had already wasted so much of the resources of the rich man, this was morally unethical for him to do. The rich man was already upset that the manager was being wasteful with resources and squandering his wealth. And in slashing these debts, the manager continues to show that he is unethical by not looking out for the interests of his boss. He's not being loyal to the boss when he slashes what the debtors actually owe. Like I said, strictly speaking, he had legal authority probably to agree to such discounts. That power was given to him as a manager to some degree. However, morally and ethically his actions were wrong. They were not honourable. He was already being fired for being wasteful, and then he cheats his master out of what was still being owed to the master. He was already deliberately mismanaging his master's resources, and he wouldn't be able to hide it and he continues to be wasteful even right to the end. He was ignoring his conscience and he acted shamelessly upon his exit. His focus, I might add, was only on himself. He was self-driven, and he did not leave with integrity. These discounts though, as I already mentioned, were exceptionally large anywhere from 20 to 50%. The first client owed 100 measures of oil, which was equal to 875 gallons. And the price in that day would have been 1000 denarii. A 50% discount would be equal to an average workman's wages of about a year and a half. That's a lot. A hundred measures of wheat was equal to 1000 bushels, which would require 100 acres to grow, the full value would require a farmer an average of eight to 10 years to grow. That means

that a 20% cut would equal roughly two years of wages, two years of pay. Again, this is a substantial flash, substantial cuts or discount given to the debtors, which I'm sure they appreciated. We're talking about large sums, huge discounts. And those clients were only actually a sampling of the clients that he met. Securing favours for many of these clients of this magnitude meant that the boss was actually losing a fortune. And the manager was easily able to set himself up financially for when he lost his job. And even though the steward, the manager encouraged them to agree quickly to the discounts, they would likely be trusting that the manager was acting in good faith. Where the clients used to be indebted to the master, the clients were now indebted to the manager because he slashed what they owed.

Consider the master's response. You would think that when the master finds out what the manager did, that he gets angry and do everything to bring him to court, fire him right away, seek justice, but he doesn't. In a strange twist he says this. Well, it says a verse eight,

So the master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.

One would expect him to be angry and seeking justice, wouldn't we? Yet he's not fixated on how he was cheated out of what was owed him. Instead, he actually praises the manager for being shrewd. For being astute for being forward thinking, for being canny, for planning ahead. Jesus says, "for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light." Think upon that for a second. At this point in the parable, it was easy to side with the rich man because he'd been losing money. His resources were being wasted. But notice, what the master does, and does not praise him for. He does not praise him for cheating him out of money or being wasteful. Rather, in this secular business scenario, he admires the manager for finding a way to set himself up after being fired. He has shrewdly shifted the debtors of the clients to himself, and in so doing, he's got himself many places to stay for a long time. He set himself up, it's good to go. Strictly speaking on an earthly level, he was ingenious; he's brilliant because now he has nothing to worry about. Within a day or two, he had many businessmen that owed him many debts, and he'd have a place to stay probably for the rest of his life. The manager was very forward thinking. And even though he was unethical, he finds a way to provide for himself and he had a certain ingenuity that the master admired. His boss goes so far as to say that the manager was actually shrewd, which means prudent and canny. The word has the idea of being cautious, being keen witted. Although it's underhanded and wrong what he did, there was a certain earthly worldly cleverness to it. He may have been wasteful with the master's resources, but when his own future was on the line, he knew how to make money work for him. He knew how to profit. He figured out how to make the transactions that would benefit him, and the manager was laying up treasures for his earthly future, which was actually a shrewd thing to do despite his sinfulness. How he did that, unethically was plainly wrong. He knew that he couldn't

hide his wastefulness, so he focused rather on securing his future by putting the debtors in debt to him.

So first, we see that the manager is unethical by wasting the master's wealth. Secondly, we find out that he's prideful, he is not willing to be put in a position where he's at the mercy of others. Thirdly, he ends his employment by cheating his master of what was rightfully owing to his master. And so that begs the question, doesn't it? How is it possible for Jesus to draw any spiritual truth from this parable here with these unethical actions happening in this parable? How's that possible? Where's the spiritual truth going to come out of this mess, so to speak? And fourthly, I might add, the master commands him for what he did. How ironic. Upon examining both characters in this story, I would beg to say that neither are found to be completely unethical.

Now that we've looked at the parable, from all these angles, what is the lesson that Jesus is trying to communicate? What is the truth that He wants us to take to heart? What is it that He wants us to change in our lives, so that we're living in honour of Him? Jesus begins to explain the parable like this. He explains it in verse eight, when he says,

For the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.

Sons of this age means unbelievers, frankly, they're products of this age of wickedness of cheating, wastefulness, dishonour, self-serving interests, at the cost of others. The sons of this age is a phrase that, frankly, refers to this world that does not know God. They don't listen to His commandments, they're not living for Him, they don't think that there's any value in investing in things that are eternal, they don't believe that there are eternal treasures from God and that you actually have to prepare for our life after. But here's the main point of the parable. This is where the punch line comes. Jesus explains to his parables to His disciples that the unbelievers are incredibly shrewd to provide for themselves on an earthly level. They're incredibly canny, incredibly prudent, incredibly forward thinking, smart I might add, on a very earthly level to provide for themselves. I like how John MacArthur, explains that. He says it like this. "Sinners tend to be more clever and forward thinking with regard to their short term well-being than saints are in the work of laying up treasure for eternity." You see, sinners have no part in laying up treasures for eternity. And yet Jesus points to them as if saying this, "Look at the sinners, look at the world. They're clever to provide for themselves in this world. They work hard at it; they find ingenious ways and creative ways to provide for their earthly well-being. They find ways to lay up temporal treasures. And aside from the fact that they're sinning along the way, they're doing well at accomplishing their task."

Listen again to what Jesus says when He contrasts the unbelievers use of money for earthly things to the believers use of money for eternal things. He says this, "For the sons of this age are

more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.” Think about that contrast for a second. In essence, He says that the unbeliever typically invests better for themselves toward earthly treasures, and security than Christians do for eternal treasures. Sinners expend lots of effort and energy on all sorts of temporal things. They bring all kinds of skills and focus in preparing for retirement or leaving a bunch of wealth for their kids. Their vision is limited though, to the temporary, the here and now, the earthly, that's all they have to live for. Even if they're trying to create a legacy for the grandchildren, which is great as nice as that is, it's all earthly. It's all short lived. We need to remember though, what it says in 1 John 2:17, and it says this, “The world is passing away, and also it's lusts.” Unfortunately, that is all that the world has to look forward to. We though, as Christians, we are the sons of light. We are redeemed from darkness and made to be the light of Christ in this world. Sons of light refers to somebody who was a disciple of Jesus, a true follower, somebody who has been redeemed, somebody who dies to themselves and lives to the Lord for His glory. We recognize that our citizenship is not based here on this earth, but our citizenship is based in heaven. It's already there. It's established. Our name is written in the Book of Life. It says in Colossians 3:2 that Christians should set their minds on things above, not on things of this earth.

So, Jesus does not commend the sinners in this parable for their worldliness and their temporal focus, rather their shrewdful resourcefulness. Since the believer knows that this world will pass away with all this treasures and fading trinkets. How much more ought we the believer be zealous and hardworking to invest in the things that are eternal. We of all people ought to have eternity in mind when it comes to using our money, our time, our possessions, our talents, everything God's given to us. We can lay up treasures in heaven, like the world can't. And these treasures, I might add, will never be stolen, they will never rust, they will never fade, they will never break, and they will never become out of fashion. Jesus explains, though, why we need to have this eternal focus. He gives not only the aspect of we have to do it, it's good to do, it's the right thing to do, it's the best thing to do. But He explains why. He gives a reason. He says in verse nine,

And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into eternal dwellings.

In essence, we are to use our money to make friends for eternity, not focusing on earthly friends, but eternal friends, who will one day welcome us into heaven. These are friends who are going to be with us forever in heaven. These are friends who we've evangelized, and they've come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These are friends who we've invested the gospel into, we've invested the Word of God into, we've invested our money, our time, our resources into, and they're thankful and they're grateful to see us in heaven. Simply put, He says this, “Make friends for eternity.” Make friends for eternity because one day you're going to be in heaven. And if you invest in people, and you invest in God's word, and things that are eternal, there will be friends in heaven

to welcome you there. Who doesn't want to be welcomed by friends in heaven? Now, of course, we're going to see the Lord Jesus and that's going to be the greatest joy in our heavenly experience, to see our Lord, our Creator. But Jesus here himself says, "Have friends waiting for you in heaven."

Well, that leads me to a question though. How can believers be shrewd with our possessions and with our money? How does God want us to do that, to be that, to live that out? Do we need to do what the manager did? No, that was unethical, we can't do that. We've got the straight and narrow road that we need to stay on. We can't veer to the left and we can't veer to the right. It begins though, to be a good manager, a good shrewd manager means that we need to be recognizing that God owns everything. God owns everything in this entire world. It begins with having that right perspective. This is foundational to our thinking and our understanding of money and possessions because it says in Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's and all that it contains. The world and those who dwell in it." Haggai 2:8 says this, "The silver is mine and the gold is mine declares the LORD of hosts." Whatever you have, whether it's a little bit or whether it's a lot, it's all ultimately God's. We tend to forget this, and we think that all this stuff all this money, it's ours. We can do with it whenever we want. For our comfort for our pleasure, I've earned it therefore I can kind of spend it however I think is right. But we forget that all these things that we have, all the money that we earn, it actually belongs to Him. Whatever we have, whether we earned it, whether we found it, whether it was given to us, it's God's; and we are simply the managers of it. All these things, your wallet, your bank account your investments, your RV, your toys, even the car, though its second home is often the repair shop, is entirely His. He has set you up to be the manager of His possessions that He's placed in your care. And He's the one that ultimately determines how much you and I get. Ultimately, He's the one that determines that.

Jesus's parable is meant actually to spur us on toward love, and good deeds toward others. God wants us to see that, because our possessions and our money is His, we are "merely" and I put that in quotes, merely stewards, merely managers. And I emphasize that to draw our attention to the fact that it's a lowly position. It's not our stuff. We have no right to be prideful of it to be possessive of it, to be consumed with it. We are merely stewards. But on the other hand, we should be encouraged because we have the privilege of managing God's possessions. Imagine if the king came to you and said, "I've got all these possessions? Can you manage them for me?" "Wow, yeah, you're the king. I can do that. And yet I'm a nobody. Why would you want me to do that?"

Ultimately, though, so often are we not enraptured by the colorful trinkets in this world? New cell phones with updated features, new fashions of clothing, an updated car with all sorts of new options, new tools for the yard, or the kitchen, fun toys that are endlessly available on the shelves at Walmart, fancier, newer, updated, I could go on and on. The world runs after these things.

Sometimes we do too, and we need to confess that before the Lord and say, “I don't need to pursue that.” I'm not saying it's wrong to have these things. Don't misunderstand me. But if our heart is set on those things, that's where our treasure is, if that's what our heart is longing for, and looking for, and focused on, and God's out there somewhere and he's not at the centre, that's where our focus is, and that's wrong. The world is enraptured by these things, and they think that they can have an abundant life by getting these things, by having all of these experiences.

They're not grateful to God for giving them these things. The world doesn't even acknowledge that we are only stewards of these things. You see, the world is always looking for the shiny, the new, the things that are on the shelves that have new features, new colors, new sounds, new gizmos. There's always something novel about what the world offers, and it promises a lot. But if that's our heart's pursuit, and focus in life, we need to examine our life. If that's what we want the most, we need to say, “Lord, change me. You've commanded me very clearly to seek first You, Your kingdom and Your righteousness.”

So, if we're stewards or managers, though, of God's possessions that He's given to us. What does that mean? What does that look like? What makes a good manager? First of all, a good manager or good steward focuses not on himself. He has been entrusted with possessions, finances, talents, time, all these things God has given to us. He does not see these things as his own, but as his master's. He wants to maximize the return of the master. If we're going to be a good steward of what God has given to us, our focus isn't on “How can I enjoy it?” As enjoyable as all these things are, again, don't get me wrong, enjoy all the things the Lord has given to you. But our focus is on “How can I maximize what God has given to me to have the greatest eternal return. What is important to the master needs to be important to the manager. A good manager works hard for his master; he wants to please and honour him. He looks out for his interest first, above his own interests. When he has money to manage, he thinks of how he can use it to benefit and make it work for the master. He knows that how he handles the master's possessions and money reflects on his boss. If he's generous with the master's money, it shows the master to be generous, if he's stingy, it actually shows the boss to be stingy. And in the same way, how we handle our possessions and money reflects on God. The manager gets great pleasure not out of using the money and possessions for himself, but in furthering the master's plan. And that's how God wants us to be – managers who are wise with His money and possessions. He wants us to be focused on using our resources to build His kingdom.

At the heart, though of this parable is this message. Christians, brothers and sisters, friends, we need to be purposeful in the use of our money and possessions to store up treasures in heaven. As Christians, we need to be intentional about investing in people, and the spread of the gospel, and the preaching and the furtherance of the word of the Bible. God has the kingdom of believers, and the best return that you can get for your money, for your time, your talents, your possessions, is to invest that into God's work. Use it to serve His purposes. What's important to God, use what you have to meet those things that are important to God.

I hear the objection though. "I don't have much. I'm barely getting by. Financially, things are constantly a struggle. Whatever little I can give and use for God, it's not going to add up to much. With as little as I have, I don't think I'm going to get much of reward in heaven." Turn with me to Mark 12, please, Mark 12: 41-44 because Jesus understands that sometimes we feel this way. He knows that. Most of us are not blessed with lots of money. We're just the average folk. Let's read it together because Jesus speaks to this exact question and this exact objection when He praises the widow who gave money at the temple. It says this.

And he [Jesus] sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

Here's a widow, who the Jews in the synagogue was supposed to be taking care of. You see, she was supposed to be on the receiving end, but her love for God was so great that she was compelled to give everything she had to the Lord and His work. Everything. Jesus commended her not for how much she gave, because she frankly had the least of everybody, but he commended her for her generosity, her attitude, her love for the Lord, her eternal perspective in that, her (honestly) her dying to herself. At the end of the day, she wouldn't have money to buy any more food, right? Instead, Jesus commended her for that generous, sacrificial attitude. And Jesus says that she gave more than all of the other people contributed together out of the surplus of their riches. It doesn't matter how little we may have or how difficult our finances are, frankly, what matters is the attitude of our heart. Even a child, kids, listen to me here, even a child, if you are of faith, you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you are saved, even a child who has faith and gives a nickel out of a generous heart, knowing that God is going to do something with that nickel is going to get a greater reward than the average adult who gives so much more than the child could even give. Because they don't have faith, because they're not giving it out of faith. The reward for the small child who gives believing that God is going to do something great with it far exceeds the person who gives generously but has no faith and is not giving it out of faith and love. You see, a good steward recognizes ultimately that God owns everything.

Secondly, a good steward treats money and possessions as a resource to bless others. Money is a resource that we need to use for the good of others. You see, one day, money's going to fail you. We won't have it anymore. It will do us no good. When we die, all of our money and possessions, they're useless. It's left behind. And that's why Jesus said,

And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into eternal dwellings.

Now your money can make friends for eternity, but the day is coming when it will fail to do anything for you, because you will have none of it. It's a temporary gift and a tool that God has given to us. And it provides, yes, for our needs, which God says we need to provide for, to use our money for, but it also is something that we can use to store up treasures in heaven for all of eternity. But that leads me to another question, and that question is this. If we're going to give to the Lord, by investing in people and the gospel, what does that look like? If that's how we are to use our money, and our possessions and everything that God has given to us? What does that look like? Turn with me to Matthew 25 because we're going to read a few verses there in Matthew 25:34-36. This is where we see the sheep and the goats on Judgement Day. Their lives are being examined by the Judge of heaven. And, based on what they did and did not do. So Matthew, chapter 25, beginning at verse 34, says this,

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me."

You see Jesus points not to their faith. He doesn't say, "You have faith, come." Yes, they did have faith, but that's not what He points to. Did you notice that? As necessary as it is to have faith, but He points to what they did to others. He examines their lives and points out the fruit of their lives. The sheep had the fruit of righteousness and the goats didn't. We didn't read the goats' part, but you can read it later. The sheep had faith in Jesus, yet the goats had no saving faith. The sheep are generous, and they invested into people, particularly God's people, and they did that out of faith and love for Christ. When examined by the Judge of heaven, the sheep were found to be genuine believers. And to show that they are genuine, the Judge pointed to the fruit of their lives. Just like if I need to go and show you that, "Hey, yes, this is an apple tree." I show you the apple, not the plums, because that's the plum tree. The sheep were not focused on themselves, but others. They gave of themselves to love God's children. They're generous with their money, their possessions, and their time. That's what it looks like to seek first God and His righteousness. They were the ones that brought the things that that people needed. They were the ones that brought the gospel, brought the word of truth lived out to people's lives.

Our resources also need to go toward the spread of the gospel and the preaching of God's Word. We need to invest in the good news that the world needs to hear. It is supporting not only the local church, but missionaries around the world. It takes money, it takes time, it takes resources to get the gospel out there. You see, unlike the manager in the parable, who was supposed to

keep as much money as he could for the boss, to make as much profit as he could for the boss. We are commanded to be generous with our resources and invest in others with our resources and the gospel. This is one way that we are to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

But maybe, I might add, you're on the other side of the spectrum of the world's standards; and you're wealthy. If you're wealthy, don't be embarrassed by it. Sometimes we do feel embarrassed if somebody is you know, like, "Hey, I'm wealthy," that there's something embarrassing, almost like a Christian stigma that, "Wow, they've got lots of money." But if you're wealthy, don't be embarrassed by that. That's not wrong. It's not a sin to be wealthy, unless you got it by sinfulness, but don't forget, all that stuff you've got, it's God's. Just like all the rest of us that don't have much. If you're wealthy, you're in the same boat. It's all God's stuff, whether you got a little or a lot. And be generous with it for the spread of the gospel. Invest generously toward things that are eternal, people and the Word of God. Is it a sin to be wealthy? No. But is it a sin to hold on to it for ourselves and to not invest generously into the work of God? Yes. 2 Corinthians 9:2 says this, "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." Colossians 3:1 says this, "If then you are raised with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." Proverbs 3:9 says this that we are to "Honour the Lord with your possessions with the first fruits of all your increase."

You see in verse 11, Jesus says that if we are not faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, the worldly possessions that we have, the money, who will entrust true riches to you? He wants to entrust us with true spiritual riches and eternal riches. That's His heart's desire. No one, though, can serve both God and money. You see, the manager in the parable was unrighteous, dishonest, and wasteful of his master's resources; and there's nothing about his sinfulness that we are commanded to emulate. Nothing. That's the furthest thing from Jesus' mind when He gave this parable. Jesus' parable is addressing the tragedy of Christians who know there are eternal riches, but don't live like it. That's what Jesus is addressing. His heart breaks at the emptiness of Christians, who are so wrapped up in their own money and their own possessions and their own worldly experiences. The vanity and the disobedience of not investing our resources into things that are eternal is what Jesus is addressing. He reminds us that there are riches, that there are treasures that are eternal and long lasting, and that as a Christian is where our focus needs to be. Yet if we invest our money, possessions, and time into the things that are eternal, being the people in the Word of God, we're going to have the greatest possible reward that you could ever have in heaven.

Often, we can be discouraged because we don't see much fruit though from giving to others or giving our money toward the gospel. Not many people are maybe getting saved, that sort of thing; and we may sort of get discouraged. But Jesus says that the fruit of our generosity will be revealed in heaven. Just like in Matthew, when we read with the sheep, all of the fruit of your generosity, and my generosity is going to be revealed in heaven one day, it's going to be made

plain, it's going to be put out in the daylight so to speak. It's not how much we have that counts, but it's what we do with it. Are we investing in things that are eternal? Are we being generous? Are we giving to God's work? Are we investing in people, in their lives? Are we putting our money toward the spread of the gospel? Are we using our possessions to build God's kingdom? Brothers and sisters, we need to examine our heart, examine our life, so that when Jesus examines us, on judgment day, there will be much fruit because we invested generously in people and the gospel. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, please forgive us for the times when we've been selfish about the things that You've given to us, when we've been so focused, Lord, on our own trinkets, our possessions, our money, all these possessions that are worldly. We thank You for every single one of those things that You've given to us. But when our heart is so focused on them, Lord, we know that is wrong. And we just bring that up before us as a confession of sin. We don't want to do that, Lord, we don't want our focus to be on the here and now, the earthly, the temporal, the things that will fade away and burn up one day. I pray Father that we would each take to heart the challenge the command, the instruction, to use Your resources for Your good to bring about a maximum return for an eternal, lasting impact.

Father, I pray that we would each be willing to examine our hearts in light of this parable that You have given to us. And I pray that our lives would change. I pray that Your church here in Chilliwack would grow, that the gospel would go forth. I pray that we would give generously to one another as we see true need that each of us have, Lord, about different things. Lord, we each come across different struggles in life and we need each other for different things as a family of God. And I thank You, Lord, that You've given to us one another as family to love each other and to care for one another and to help provide for one another.

We thank You, Father, for the privilege of being a manager of Your resources, whether we have a little bit or whether we have a lot, we recognize Lord that it is ultimately Yours. And pray, Lord, that we would be wise and that we would be shrewd to invest in the things that are eternal. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.