

Luke 16:1-15
February 16, 2020

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: By this point in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus has told just shy of 40 parables. Interestingly, one out of three deal with money in some way. Why do you think Jesus focused on money a third of the time? [Let people engage.]

Transition: By this point in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus has told just shy of 40 parables. Interestingly, one out of three deal with money in some way. That is not surprising that money should have a dominant role in the teaching of Jesus, since it has such a dominate role in our lives. We spend, according to statistics, more of our waking time thinking about money than not thinking about money, how to acquire it, how to acquire more of it, how to spend it, how to save it, how to invest it, how to borrow it, counting it, sometimes giving it away, loaning it. Money and possessions, wealth are so much a part of this world's experience that they actually dominate, define, and determine an inordinate, if not a consuming, portion of our lives. Since we can be prone to a worldly view of money, our perspective of money can slip toward being diametrically opposed to God's perspective of money, if we're not careful.

In the previous parable of the prodigal son, the wayward son squanders his inheritance. Now Jesus delivers a parable about the use of resources. The main character is a household manager who appears to win the respect of his master by acting dishonestly. Jesus explains the parable in vv. 10–13. This parable is unique to Luke's Gospel. Let's read the text.

BOOK:

The Parable of the Shrewd Manager

16 Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.’

³ “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 ashamed to beg— ⁴ I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’

⁵ “So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’

⁶ “‘Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied.

“The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.’

⁷ “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 eight hundred.’

⁸ “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 are the people of the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

¹⁰ “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?

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.”

¹⁴ The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. ¹⁵ He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

In His portrait of the prodigal and the elder brother, Jesus described two opposite philosophies of life. Prior to his repentance, the prodigal *wasted* his life, but his elder brother only *spent* his life as a faithful drudge. Both attitudes are wrong, for the Christian approach to life is that we should *invest* our lives for the good of others and the glory of God. This chapter emphasizes that truth: life is a stewardship, and we must use our God-given opportunities faithfully. One day we must give an account to the Lord of what we have done with all He has given to us, so we had better heed what Jesus says in this chapter about the right and wrong use of wealth.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 238-240)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The *Wall Street Journal* quoted an anonymous wit who defined *money* as “an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider for everything except happiness.” The writer might have added that money is also a provoker of covetousness and competition, a wonderful servant but a terrible master. The love of money is still “a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10) and has helped fill our world with corruption and lust (1 Peter 1:4).

When you read our Lord's sermons and parables, you are struck with the fact that He had a great deal to say about material wealth. He ministered to people who, for the most part, were poor and who thought that acquiring more wealth was the solution to all their problems. Jesus was not blind to the needs of the poor, and by His example and teaching, He encouraged His followers to share what they had with others. The early church was a fellowship of people who willingly shared their possessions with the less fortunate (Acts 2:44–47; 4:33–37).

In His portrait of the prodigal and the elder brother, Jesus described two opposite philosophies of life. Prior to his repentance, the prodigal *wasted* his life, but his elder brother only *spent* his life as a faithful drudge. Both attitudes are wrong, for the Christian approach to life is that we should *invest* our lives for the good of others and the glory of God. This chapter emphasizes that truth: life is a stewardship, and we must use our God-given opportunities faithfully. One day we must give an account to the Lord of what we have done with all He has given to us, so we had better heed what Jesus says in this chapter about the right and wrong use of wealth.

Neither of the two accounts in this chapter is called a parable either by Jesus or by Luke, so it is likely that our Lord was describing actual happenings. However, whether they are actual events or only parables, the spiritual values are the same.

The Right Use of Wealth (Luke 16:1–13)

A foolish steward (vv. 1–2). A steward is someone who manages another's wealth. He does not own that wealth himself, but he has the privilege of enjoying it and using it for the profit of his master. The most important thing about a steward is that he serve his master faithfully (1 Cor. 4:2). When he looks at the riches around him, the steward must remember that they belong to his master, not to him personally, and that they must be used in a way that will please and profit the master.

This particular steward *forgot* that he was a steward and began to act as if he were the owner. He became a “prodigal steward” who wasted his master's wealth. His master heard about it and immediately asked for an inventory of his goods and an audit of his books. He also fired his steward.

Before we judge this man too severely, let's examine our own lives to see how faithful we have been as stewards of what God has given to us. To begin with, we are stewards of the *material wealth* that we have, whether much or little; and we will one day have to answer to God for the way we have acquired it and used it.

Christian stewardship goes beyond paying God a tithe of our income and then using the remainder as we please. True stewardship means that we thank God for *all* that we have (Deut. 8:11–18) and use it as He directs. Giving God 10 percent of our income is a good way to begin

our faithful stewardship, but we must remember that God should control what we do with the remaining 90 percent as well.

We are also stewards of *our time* (Eph. 5:15–17). The phrase “redeeming the time” comes from the business world and means “buying up the opportunity.” Time is eternity, minted into precious minutes and handed to us to use either wisely or carelessly. The main lesson of this narrative is that the steward, as dishonest as he was, used his opportunity wisely and prepared for the future. Life ceased to be “enjoyment” and became “investment.”

Christians are stewards of the *gifts and abilities* God has given them (1 Peter 4:10), and we must use those gifts and abilities to serve others. The thief says, “What’s yours is mine—I’ll take it!” The selfish man says, “What’s mine is mine—I’ll keep it!” But the Christian must say, “What’s mine is a gift from God—I’ll share it!” We are stewards and we must use our abilities to win the lost, encourage the saints, and meet the needs of hurting people.

Finally, God’s people are stewards of the Gospel (1 Thess. 2:4). God has committed the treasure of His truth to us (2 Cor. 4:7), and we must guard this treasure (1 Tim. 6:20) and invest it in the lives of others (2 Tim. 2:2). The enemy wants to rob the church of this treasure (Jude 3–4), and we must be alert and courageous.

Like this steward, we will one day have to give an account of our stewardship (Rom. 14:10–12; 2 Cor. 5:10ff). If we have been faithful, the Lord will give us His commendation and reward (Matt. 25:21; 1 Cor. 4:5); but if we have not been faithful, we will lose those blessings, even though we will be saved and enter heaven (1 Cor. 3:13–15).

Vance Havner often said, “God called us to play the game, not keep the score.” If we are faithful stewards, God will reward us generously, and that reward will bring glory to His name.

A wise steward (vv. 3–8). The steward knew he would lose his job. He could not change the past, but he could prepare for the future. How? By making friends of his master’s creditors so that they would take him in when his master threw him out. He gave each of them a generous discount, provided they paid up immediately, and they were only too glad to cooperate. Even his master complimented him on his clever plan (Luke 16:8).

Jesus did not commend the steward for robbing his master or for encouraging others to be dishonest. *Jesus commended the man for his wise use of opportunity.* “The children of this world” are experts at seizing opportunities for making money and friends and getting ahead. God’s people should take heed and be just as wise when it comes to managing the spiritual affairs of life. “The children of this world” are wiser only “in their generation”; they see the things of time, but not the things of eternity. Because the child of God lives “with eternity’s values in view,” he should be able to make far better use of his opportunities.

The application (vv. 9–13). Jesus gave three admonitions, based on the experience of the steward.

First, He admonishes us to *use our opportunities wisely* (Luke 16:9). One of these days, life will end, and we will not be able to earn or use money. Therefore, while we have the opportunity, we must invest our money in “making friends” for the Lord. This means winning people to Christ who will one day welcome us to heaven. Our lives and our resources will one day end, so it behooves us to use them wisely.

It is tragic to see how God’s wealth is being wasted by Christians who live as though Jesus never died and judgment is never coming. The old couplet is certainly true:

The only difference between men and boys
Is that men buy more expensive toys.

The heritage of the past must be used wisely in the present to guarantee spiritual dividends in the future. All of us should want to meet people in heaven who trusted Christ because we helped to pay the bill for Gospel witness around the world, starting at home. Thoreau wrote that a man is wealthy in proportion to the number of things he can afford to do without, and he was right. I once heard the late Jacob Stam pray, “Lord, the only thing we know about sacrifice is how to spell the word.” I wonder if today some of us can even spell the word!

Our Lord’s second admonition is *be faithful in the way you use your material wealth* (Luke 16:10–12). He makes it clear that you cannot divorce the “spiritual” from the “material.” Notice the contrasts:

The material

the god “Mammon”

that which is least

false riches

that which is another’s

The spiritual

the true God

that which is much

true riches

that which is yours

Why is our Lord so concerned about the way we use money? Because money is not neutral; it is basically evil (“the mammon of unrighteousness”), and only God can sanctify it and use it for good. It is significant that both Paul and Peter called money “filthy lucre” (1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7, 11; 1 Peter 5:2). Apparently by its very nature, money defiles and debases those who love it and let it control their lives. “We cannot safely use mammon,” writes Richard Foster, “until we are absolutely clear that we are dealing, not just with mammon, but with unrighteous mammon” (*Money, Sex and Power*, Harper & Row, p. 57).

People who are unfaithful in the way they use money are also unfaithful in the way they use the “true riches” of God’s kingdom. We cannot be orthodox in our theology and at the same time heretical in the way we use money. God will not commit His true riches to individuals or ministries that waste money and will not give an honest accounting to the people who have supported them. When it came to money, Paul was very careful that everything was honest “not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:21).

Finally, the Lord admonishes us to *be wholly devoted to God and single-minded* (Luke 16:13; and see Matt. 6:19–24). We cannot love or serve two masters, anymore than we can walk in two directions at one time. If we choose to serve money, then we cannot serve God. If we choose to serve God, then we will not serve money. Jesus is demanding *integrity*, total devotion to God that puts Him first in everything (Matt. 6:33).

If God is our Master, then money will be our servant, and we will use our resources in the will of God. But if God is not our Master, then *we will become the servants of money*, and money is a terrible master! We will start *wasting* our lives instead of *investing* them, and we will one day find ourselves “friendless” as we enter the gates of glory.

Henry Fielding wrote, “Make money your god and it will plague you like the devil!” Jesus said, “Make money your servant and use today’s opportunities as investments in tomorrow’s dividends.” Be a wise steward! There are souls to win to the Savior, and our money can help get the job done.

The Wrong Use of Money (Luke 16:14–15)

Jesus had been speaking primarily to His disciples, but the Pharisees had been listening, and their response was anything but spiritual. They sneered at Him! (The Greek word means “to turn up one’s nose.”) In spite of their strict religious practices, they loved money and cultivated values that were godless. They professed to trust God, but they measured life by wealth and possessions, the same as the unbelieving worldly crowd. *Far too many professed Christians today are making the same mistake.* With their lips, they honor the Lord; but with their wealth, they live like the world.

The Pharisees needed to stop “drifting” with the crowd and start “pressing into the kingdom” as many others were doing. The Pharisees had rejected the ministry of John the Baptist and permitted him to be killed, even though they knew he was God’s prophet. They were also rejecting the ministry of Jesus Christ and would ultimately ask Pilate to have Him crucified. When your life is controlled by the love of money, you open the door to every kind of sin.

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 246-247)

16:1–8a. Jesus told this Parable of the Unjust Manager to teach that His disciples must use their wealth for kingdom purposes. The application (vv. 8b–13) follows the parable (vv. 1–8a).

In the parable **a rich man ... called his manager to give an account of his dealings.** The rich man had heard that the manager was not handling the wealthy owner’s finances wisely. In Jesus’ day managers were often hired by wealthy people to care for the finances of their estates. Such a manager would be comparable to a modern-day financial planner or trustee who controls the finances of an estate for the purpose of making more money for that estate. The money did not belong to the manager but was his to use for the estate. Apparently, the manager was **wasting** those goods as the younger son had wasted his father’s goods (15:13).

At the beginning of the parable the rich man viewed his manager as irresponsible rather than dishonest (16:2). The manager was fired. But then, in order to make friends who might later hire him, the ex-manager charged the rich man’s two **debtors** less than what they actually owed—**400** instead of **800 gallons of olive oil**, and **800** instead of **1,000 bushels of wheat**. The manager’s thinking was reflected in his statement, **When I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses** (v. 4).

When the rich man heard what he had done, **he commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly.** The dishonest manager had not done a good thing. But he *had* been careful to plan ahead, using material things to insure a secure future. Jesus was not teaching that His disciples should be dishonest. He was teaching that they should use material things for future spiritual benefit. This was a good lesson from a bad example.

16:8b–13. In three ways Jesus applied the parable to His disciples who had to live with nonbelievers in the world. First, one should use money to win people into the kingdom (vv. 8b–9). Jesus said, **The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.** Here Jesus set His disciples apart from the dishonest manager. The dishonest manager was a person of “this world,” seeking a way to make his life more comfortable. The disciples, “the people of the light” (cf. 11:33–36; Eph. 5:8), should act in a shrewd (wise, not dishonest) manner. Jesus plainly taught that the people of light should **use worldly wealth** (Luke 16:9). Jesus also used the word “wealth” (*mamōna*) later (v. 13) when He affirmed that one “cannot serve both God and money.” In verse 9 Jesus was saying that one is to

use wealth, not store it up or be a servant of it. Wealth should be a disciple's servant, not vice versa. The disciples were to use wealth **to gain friends**, the same reason the dishonest manager used the rich man's wealth. The disciples would then **be welcomed into eternal dwellings**. The disciples' wise use of wealth would help lead others to believe the message of the kingdom and bring them to accept that message.

Jesus' second application is in verses 10–12. If one is faithful in his use of money, then he **can be trusted** with greater things. **True riches** (v. 11) seem to refer to the kingdom's spiritual riches of which the disciples will partake.

The third application Jesus drew from the parable was that a person **cannot serve both God and money** (v 13). As masters the two are mutually exclusive. Love for money will drive one away from God (1 Tim. 6:10); conversely, loving God will cause one not to make money his primary concern in life.

16:14–15. **The Pharisees, who loved money**, reacted negatively to Jesus' teaching about it. They **were sneering at Jesus** because they saw Him as a poor man being followed by other poor men and yet having the nerve to teach about money. Jesus responded that **God knows the hearts** of people and is not impressed with their outward appearances or their wealth. Though the Pharisees justified themselves (v. 15; cf. 15:7) **God**, who judges the inward man, will be the ultimate Judge. The Pharisees misunderstood the blessings of God's covenant. They apparently assumed that a person's wealth was God's blessing in return for his righteous conduct. They completely neglected the fact that many righteous people in the Old Testament lacked material things, while many unrighteous people had plenty.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1546). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

16:8–9 Jesus did not commend the manager's dishonesty but rather his foresight. The shrewdness of the manager is typical of the "sons of this age" toward their own kind, and Jesus' audience (and even the master in the parable) could, without condoning his activities, smile at how the fox got himself out of a jam. The manager used what resources he had to prepare for his inevitable demise. The point, then, is to ask, if the unrighteous know how to use money to win friends and secure a future, how much more ought the righteous to do so, albeit righteously, helping those in need, and with a view to God's reward? Verses 19–31 record a second parable illustrating this point.

Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 16:1-15). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

In the previous parable, the wayward son squanders his inheritance; now Jesus delivers a parable about the use of resources. The main character is a household manager who appears to win the respect of his master by acting dishonestly. Jesus explains the parable in vv. 10–13. This parable is unique to Luke's Gospel.

16:1 to the disciples Jesus is no longer addressing the scribes (teachers of the law) and Pharisees as in the previous chapter (15:2–3). However, they apparently are still listening to Him (15:14).

a manager Refers to someone who oversees his master's property and finances, often a slave born in the master's house.

was squandering his possessions Either foolishly mismanaging his master's money or spending it extravagantly; both would be grounds for termination. The Greek verb used here, *diaskorpizō*, often translated as "to squander," also appears in 15:13 to describe the activities of the lost son.

16:3 to dig Probably intended as a general reference: The manager considers himself unfit for manual labor of any kind.

16:4 they will welcome me into their homes The manager uses his current position not to help his current master, but instead to position himself better for the future. Nonetheless, his cunning also helps him with his master, even though that does not seem to be his intent (v. 8).

16:6 write fifty Before he is officially dismissed, the manager acts quickly to reduce the debts owed to his master. It seems that in doing this favor for the debtors, he hopes to receive their kindness after he is dismissed—and maybe even gain a place in one of their households.

16:8 praised the dishonest manager Although the reduction of debts cost the master money in the long term, the master recognizes the manager's cleverness. The manager also brought funds in right away for his master, resulting in a temporary gain.

he had acted shrewdly The Greek word used here, *phronimōs*, can be translated as "shrewdly," "wisely," or "prudently." The term is morally ambiguous, but the overall parable implies that Jesus does not endorse the actions of the manager.

are shrewder This is the point of Jesus' parable: There is a fundamental difference between the conduct of those who follow Jesus and those who seek after wealth.

the sons of light Refers to those who belong to the light—God's ways (1 John 1:5–10). Light and darkness are used frequently as metaphors for people's spiritual condition (Luke 11:33–36; John 12:36 and note).

16:9 unrighteous wealth Reflects the means the manager used to secure his future. Jesus seems to be speaking ironically here. People cannot offer salvation or usher others into eternity; only God can. Jesus makes this point earlier in Luke 12:4–7. Jesus also seems to be saying that wealth can be a means of helping others find the ways of God—a point He made with the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:34–37).

welcome you into the eternal dwellings Refers to life with God.

16:11 unrighteous wealth See note on v. 9.

true riches Refers to God's truth (compare v. 9). Jesus is calling His disciples to be faithful in everything God gives to them.

16:12 with what belongs to another Likely a reference to everything ultimately belonging to God. Jesus also seems to be emphasizing another point of His parable: His followers should be faithful when given any resources to steward.

who will give you your own Probably refers to true riches—eternal relationship with God (v. 9; compare Matt 6:19–21).

16:13 to serve two masters Compare Matt 6:24.

16:14 Pharisees See note on 5:17.

16:15 what is considered exalted among men Probably a reference to coveting or desiring wealth.

Butler, T. C. (2000). Luke (Vol. 3, pp. 262–264). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

A. Earthly Wealth for Heavenly Purposes (16:1–13)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *Kingdom living involves managing worldly goods for the good of heaven's purposes.*

16:1–4. Jesus focused his teaching back on his disciples (cf. 15:1–3). He shifted them to a place in society they had never occupied—the realm of the rich. This echelon centered attention on maintaining and increasing wealth. A poor manager raised concern. A crooked manager was cause for alarm. This one apparently managed a farm for a landowner who lived in the city. The manager managed to squander the landowner's assets much as the prodigal son had squandered his father's (see 15:13). A pink slip was in order. What did a manager without a job do? He knew he was too old and out of shape to go back to manual labor. He was too proud to beg for help from his friends, or worse, to sit on the street corner, hat in hand. Using all his managerial skills, he developed a plan. He would not have to beg. Friends would welcome him with open arms.

16:5–7. The plan was simple: a fire sale on debt. Perhaps the men he called in were tenant farmers who worked the land and gave a percentage of the crop to the landowner. The first owed one hundred baths of olive oil, a bath being about nine gallons. The manager reduced the 900-gallon debt to 450. The second tenant owed one hundred kors of wheat. The precise equivalent of a kor is not known. Scholarly estimates vary from six and one-half to twelve bushels. This debt was reduced by twenty percent. Certainly, these were simply examples. Other people also took advantage of the manager's situation and his debt fire sale.

What was happening here? Another example of squandering his master's wealth? Perhaps. The manager may have been illegally reducing debt. He may have been subtracting interest that had accrued on the debt in violation of biblical teaching (see Deut. 23:19–20). He may have been sacrificing his own commission for long-term gains. Jesus did not condone the man's business practice as legal or one to be imitated by others. This was a long-term plan by the manager to have friends indebted to him when he needed them. But how would the landowner react when he heard the news or saw the books?

16:8. Ironically, the landowner praised the man. Why? Because his business plan was smart, and it accomplished the purposes the manager set out for it. First, it made the landowner look good in the eyes of those who were indebted to him and who continued to do business with him. Second, it looked forward to the long term rather than being limited to the present moment. Third, it assured people would be indebted to the manager and thus honor bound to help him when he would need it, much sooner than they suspected.

Jesus put the parable in context. In this world the children of light—those who have become lamps letting God's light shine through them (11:35–36)—often are much more foolish in their

dealings with other people than are the secular people who have no concern for God. God's people should be as dedicated to living out kingdom living with other people in this world as the people of this world are in living out their own values to their own advantage in this world. The world's citizens, however, are only of this age. They have no future beyond the here and now. Children of light will shine through all the ages of eternity. Live now so you are assured of eternity.

16:9. Jesus drove the point home to his disciples: "Make use of the world's resources so friends will be there to help you when you need it most. Things of this world may be unrighteous in themselves, but they can be used for good. To do so, you must recognize that such worldly resources are temporary. One day they will no longer be available. Use them while you can, but do not make them the end, only the means. Used in this way, unrighteous worldly resources can help you prepare for eternity. By being generous with secular resources, particularly by sharing them with the poor, blind, lame, and crippled, you can store up treasures in heaven. Just as the grateful debtors would welcome the manager into their homes when he needed them (v. 4), so you will be welcomed to your eternal home when you die and material resources are no longer of value. Meeting you there will be those friends with whom you shared unrighteous worldly resources. They will show you to your heavenly resources."

16:10–11. The disciples dismissed this parable as not applicable to them. They had no worldly resources, so the message of this parable did not apply to them. Jesus disagreed. No matter how few resources you have, be trustworthy with them, he said. Only as you get in the habit of generous, trustworthy use of resources can you be trusted with more. That habit will lead you to continue to be trustworthy, no matter how high the value of your resources. Look out for the other side of this truth. You may think that it does not make much difference how you handle the little that you have. You can cheat and mislead and squander such resources. After all, it is just unrighteous money, not worth anything. Again, Jesus emphasized, the habit you form now stays with you. Be faithful in little; you will be faithful in much. Be unfaithful in little, you will be unfaithful and unrighteous if you get the opportunity to manage many resources. If you are unfaithful in unrighteous worldly goods, no one will trust you with heavenly goods.

16:12. Take the picture one step further. If you cannot prove trustworthy and faithful at managing someone else's money, what will happen when you receive money of your own? Will you mismanage, squander, and be unrighteous in dealing with personal funds? Who would ever trust you with them?

16:13. Take your choice: God or money. You cannot have both. One or the other will control you. Which is it? You cannot take orders from two masters, although apparently in Jesus' day some slaves were owned by two people and tried hard to please both. You have to listen to just one master. You cannot, likewise, do what attains wealth and what demonstrates kingdom living. Attaining wealth and attaining the kingdom represent two opposing goals. You must focus either on the kingdom or on wealth. Which will it be?

B. Self-Justification Does Not Work with God (16:14–15)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *Kingdom living seeks to please God, not people.*

16:14. The disciples (v. 1) were not the only people listening to Jesus. Pharisees, constantly on the watch to trap him, eavesdropped. Naturally, they scoffed at such teaching. They were in the upper financial and social echelons of Jewish society and wanted to do everything by the rules. Luke describes them with one phrase: lovers of money. They tried to serve two masters and thought they were doing a fine job of this. They had no intention of being generous with

their money except on those public occasions when it raised their esteem in the eyes of the public.

16:15. Their actions had one purpose—to win public approval and to make others think they were God’s favorite people. The public may see you as righteous, religious, and wise. God knows otherwise. What people admire, God detests. So take your choice. Who will be your master—the people or God? In whose eyes do you want justification: people’s or God’s?

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 16:1-15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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