

PARABLES OF JESUS

THE PARABLE OF THE DISHONEST (SHREWD) MANAGER, LUKE 16:1-15

A. The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (1-9)

1. The setting (1-2), *He also said to the disciples, There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.'*
 - a. There is a connection between Jesus' teaching in chapters 15 and 16.
 - 1) In chapter 15, there is the issue of squandering one's money (15:13) and in chapter 16, the wise use of one's money.
 - 2) The audience remains the same: sinners and the self-righteous.
 - 3) Now, Jesus turned to address His followers.
 - b. A manager was accused of wasting his master's possessions.
 - 1) Such managers may be found in the Old Testament, Eliezer for Abraham and Joseph for Potiphar.
 - 2) Today a stock broker, a banker, or an investment counselor serves his or her clients in a similar way.
 - c. The manager was removed from his duties.
 - 1) He was to give account of what he had done with the master's money.
 - 2) Christians will give account with what was done with the things God has entrusted to them, Romans 14:12, *So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*
2. The plan of the shrewd manager (3-4), *And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.'*
 - a. The manager did not try to defend himself but he chose a way to protect himself.
 - b. He knew his limitations so he chose to use what was available to him, the resources of his master.
 - 1) He was too weak to do manual labor and too proud to beg.
 - 2) He chose to help the master's clients so they would help him when he lost his job.
3. Implementation of his plan (5-7), *So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'*
 - a. He discounted the debts of those who owed his master money.
 - b. The manager was hoping that the benefit he provided the debtors would make them indebted to him after he lost his job.
 - c. Thomas Constable, *The amounts these debtors owed were quite large. Therefore the discount each one received represented a significant amount of money and drew the goodwill of the debtors to the manager.*
4. Response of the master (8a), *The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.*
 - a. The dishonest manager was considered shrewd by his master because the manager benefitted his master and himself.
 - 1) The master had not received anything from those debtors but now he got something.
 - 2) The manager would not receive his commission since he was fired but now he hoped to have people indebted to him.
 - b. The key point to this parable is how the shrewd manager used his resources for his benefit.

B. Application of the parable (8b-13)

1. Use earthly resources for heavenly purposes (8b-9), ***For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.***
 - a. *the sons of this world* are unbelievers and *the sons of light* are believers.
 - 1) Note Ephesians 5:8, *for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Jesus' point was that prudent dealings characterize unbelievers more than believers. Disciples can do well by learning from them as we anticipate the future.*
 - b. Their key purpose for this parable is revealed in these verses.
 - 1) As unbelievers wisely use their resources for their personal benefit, Christians should use their resources for heavenly benefit.
 - 2) Joel Green, *Children of this age...understand how the world works and use it to their benefit; why do children of light not understand the ways of the kingdom of God?*
 - c. Understanding verse 9
 - 1) *unrighteous wealth*
 - a) In the Greek, the word is *mammon* which means wealth or resources, money, talent, time.
 - b) The word *unrighteous* is associated with worldly treasure in contrast to heavenly treasure, Matthew 6:19-20, *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*
 - c) A better translation of *unrighteous wealth* would be *earthly resources*.
 - 2) *when it fails*
 - a) It is another way of saying, *when you die*.
 - b) Earthly resources are of no value to the one who dies so use them wisely for heavenly purposes.
 - c) *they* refers to those you ministered to spiritually who died before you.
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *Jesus pictured the converts as dying before the disciples and welcoming them into heaven when the disciples arrived.*
 - 2] This is a picture of the importance of investing in heavenly purposes.
 - 3) Jesus makes the point that earthly resources should be used for heavenly purposes.
 - a) He contrasted the temporal nature of money and the eternal value of investing in the work of the Gospel.
 - b) Note the widow in Mark 12:42-44, *And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."*
 - c) J. Dwight Pentecost, *A wise person considers the future and uses personal wealth to reap benefits in the future.*- 2. Faithfulness with earthly resources leads to greater responsibility in heaven (10-12), ***One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?***
 - a. Faithfulness is determined by character.
 - 1) A person with good character will be responsible with that which is small or great.
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Unfaithfulness does not just demonstrate untrustworthiness but unrighteousness.*
 - b. *unrighteous wealth*
 - 1) Again, it refers to worldly resources.
 - 2) The rhetorical questions demand the same response, no one on earth nor God in heaven.
 - c. *true riches*
 - 1) These are spiritual riches which are in contrast to *unrighteous wealth* (worldly resources).
 - 2) If I am unfaithful with my resources on earth, God will not give me authority over things in heaven.

3. God demands undivided loyalty (13), *No servant can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.*
 - a. Worldly resources and heavenly responsibilities each demand full allegiance (Matthew 6:24).
 - b. A choice must be made because it is impossible to fully serve both God and money.
 - c. The love of money is destructive, 1 Timothy 6:10, *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*
- C. Interaction between Jesus and Pharisees (14-15)
 1. The Pharisees heard what Jesus said (14), *The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.*
 - a. They ridiculed Jesus' teaching because they loved money.
 - 1) Jesus had been speaking to His disciples but the Pharisees had been listening.
 - 2) They sneered at Jesus because they saw Him as a poor man with poor followers who had no idea of the value of money.
 - b. Even now, the accumulation of wealth may be identified as a sign of God's blessing.
 - 1) More often than not, it is identification of one's serving mammon not God.
 - 2) John Martin, *They completely neglected the fact that many righteous people in the Old Testament lacked material things, while many unrighteous people had plenty.*
 2. Jesus responded to their rebuke (15), *And he said to them, You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.*
 - a. God detests those who justify themselves before others but have impure hearts.
 - b. Those who highly esteem wealth are idolaters because only God is to be exalted.
 3. Note: Jesus continued the discussion on material possessions in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in 16:19-31.

CONCLUSION

- A. God cares about how we use our earthly resources.
- B. A wise person uses his temporal resources for eternal purposes.
- C. Commitment and faithfulness to God will bring heavenly reward.