

The Unjust Steward

by Duane Troyer

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being faithful to God's promises, reflecting on the changing seasons as a reminder of God's faithfulness. It delves into the parable of the unrighteous steward, highlighting the need to be wise and shrewd in our stewardship. The sermon challenges listeners to consider their investments, urging them to store up treasures in heaven through giving to the poor with a heart of love and selflessness.

Scripture: Luke 16:1, Matthew 6:19, Ecclesiastes 5:13, Isaiah 3:14, 1 Timothy 6:6, James 5:1

Topics: "Faithfulness to God's Promises", "Wise Stewardship"

Description

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Transcript

Greetings in Jesus name. It's good to be here. Good to be here with you all for the beauty of God, for the beauty of the church, like we sang, for the beauty of the earth.

There's something, something about the weather conditions the last couple days that really make it feel like winter might just be over. Makes me think of what, what Solomon wrote in the Song of Solomon. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flower appears on the earth, the time of singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in the land.

The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vine with tender grapes gives a good smell. A lovely time of the year and I just think how, how faithful God is to his promises. It was thousands of years ago when God said that as long as the year stands, there will be no end to summer, winter, frost, heat, day, and night.

And somebody could maybe do a rough calculation how many days that's been, but think about how he's, how he hasn't forgotten that promise. He hasn't, he hasn't, he hasn't changed on it. He hasn't gone back on it.

He hasn't decided it's too, too dry, too boring, too worthless. And though he, as Walter and I were talking about yesterday, he, he put a lot of diversity in his creation, but it's also with a great deal of order. And

though sometimes, or not sometimes, but we never maybe know how the weather's gonna be, we always know that spring will come after winter, and summer will come after spring, and fall will come after summer, and night will follow day, and day will follow night.

God is faithful. Let's pray. Oh God in heaven, we thank you for your great faithfulness and your love to us.

And may we just learn from you to, to be faithful to our, to our commitment to to follow you, and as you've been to the promises you've made in, in seasons, and days, and nights. And help us, Lord, to learn from you. And we thank you for this pleasant weather.

We thank you for the, the goodness of your love, and salvation, and mercies. And we pray that you would help us now, as we look into your word, and that you would teach us. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

I'm gonna read first out of Luke chapter 16. I'd just like to share some things today that I don't, I don't think are new to any of us. But if, unless you're, unless you're really unlike me, you need to be reminded of these things like I do.

It's one of those subjects where it's, it's pricking. It's, if we just, if we just let the Bible speak for itself, it's, it's pricking to our hearts. Chapter 16 in Luke, this is, this is this parable.

It often is titled the unrighteous steward, or the unjust steward. And, and there are a few parables that leave people scratching their heads as much as this one. And just thinking like, what, what is this thing? It, it seems like God is commending or complimenting something that we would all think is wrong.

But let's go ahead and read it. I just, in the not so, or in the fairly recent future, I, a brother requested that he would sometime like to hear a message on this parable. And, and about the same time, somebody else, another brother, not from here, asked a lot of questions about, or asked some questions about this parable.

And we're going to use this one to start off. Now, he was also saying to the disciples, there was a rich man who had a manager and the manager was reported to him as squandering his possessions. And he called him and said to him, what is this? I hear about you.

Give an account of your management for you can no longer be manager. The manager said to himself, what shall I do? Since my master is taking the management away from me, I'm not strong enough to dig. I am ashamed to beg.

I know what I shall do. So that when I am removed from the management, people will welcome me into their homes. And he summoned each one of his master's debtors.

And he began to say to the first, how much do you owe my master? And he said, a hundred measures of oil. And he said to him, take your bill and sit down quickly and write 50. Then he said to another, and how much do you owe? And he said, a hundred measures of wheat.

And he said to him, take your bill and write 80. And his 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. 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.

Okay. So, uh, it appears like this man, uh, stole from his master's possessions in a sense like he, he, uh, it appears that way, but, but, but I'd like to give you some things to think about. First of all, he was found as an unrighteous steward before he ever did this thing.

So, so whatever it was that he was doing before, uh, is, is what he was counted unrighteous on. Um, he was squandering his master's goods. Secondly, I believe that this, this, this, uh, manager or steward, he had been given authority over these possessions.

He really had the right to do with them what he wanted. It's, uh, I believe it's something like a master who has a great estate and he's probably has a whole bunch of servants and, and one of his servants has been given the authority and responsibility to manage the, the, uh, the, uh, accounts receivable and, and payable and, and just manage the financial accounts and also been given the authority to probably make some of these decisions. And, uh, and now he gets the word, he gets the notice that he's about to lose his job.

I, I, uh, he, and, and, and he also realized that I'm going to lose my job. He was either unable or unwilling to dig, which was probably a job anybody could get if they were physically able to do it. Maybe he had a handicap.

Maybe he was, maybe he was old, maybe he was feeble, maybe, but maybe he was just weak from not working hard physically. Um, and he was also ashamed to beg. Uh, he probably didn't have any friends because seems like he had been living selfishly.

Seems like he had been, whatever means he was squandering his master's goods. He was, he was probably using them for himself and that usually doesn't make very good friends. Um, and so, uh, and so, so he would lose his job with having the reputation of being an unfaithful and unjust steward and it would be real hard for him to get another good job.

And so he, he came up with a clever idea. He, uh, he, as we'd read, he, he, he, he got some of the people that owed his master, uh, was it, uh, a hundred measures of wheat and he said, just, just take your bill that says you owe a hundred measures of wheat and write down that you just owe 80. So this man walks away with less debt than he had just, just, just because this man gave it to him.

Um, the other one, a hundred measures of oil he owed. And, and this, this steward says, just, just write 50. You only owe 50 anymore.

These guys were relieved of a, of a, of a debt, of a burden. And of course they love this man who, who relieved them of some of this debt. Um, and, and, and it would not be, uh, too likely that if, if this, if this same man that had relieved this debt came about looking for a job, uh, that these men wouldn't think well of him and think, well, this, this guy's been a friend to me.

I'll, I'll take him in. If I can give him work, I'll give him work. Uh, and, and he could have himself another job or another position or another habitation at least.

It says that the master praised this steward for what he had done. Now, whether, whether the master was pleased at, at the loss of his accounts receivable, uh, or not, at least we know that he praised him in that he was shrewd. He praised him for his brainy idea.

I would never advise a Christian or anybody for that matter to do this. Like if, if one of you were, were the steward for somebody taking, taking care of the accounts and, and, and you'd be in this situation and, and you came to me and said, can you give me some advice? Uh, I'm losing my job because I've, I've squandered my master's goods, but I would never give you this advice. I would, I would advise you, look, it was wrong for you to do that.

You need to, you need to apologize if you can keep your position and, and, and build up whatever trust back up good. But if not, you reap the consequences. And I would recommend if you're at all able, just go dig.

And, uh, and, and if you actually are handicapped and needy and are a brother, we'll, we'll take you in. We'll, uh, we'll make sure you don't go hungry or homeless or naked. Uh, that would be my advice.

But remember what, what it says here, these were the children of darkness. These were the children of this world. Jesus is simply using this illustration is like, look, these people who are of the world can, can think this through and come to this conclusion that, that I can do this.

Uh, and, and, and, uh, um, this man, um, he, this, this Stewart, he did it to be saved. In other words, he did it to be saved from the, the physical burden of digging the mental shame of begging. He did it to save himself, right? It was a, it was somewhat of a selfish motive that he did this for.

And yet he accomplished, I believe he ended up accomplishing what he, what he wanted to. He did it to his own preservation. He did it without his master's instruction and he did it at his master's expense.

But how, what are the, let's look at some similarities to, to how we are like this Stewart. We've been entrusted with property that belongs to someone else. We will give an account for our stewardship, just like he, we have been a given a notice that our position is coming to an end, just like he, our decisions will impact the life after we lose this position, just like his.

And it is in giving away that we secure a habitation, not in keeping it for ourselves. Unlike the story, our master has instructed us to do this. This servant came up with the idea on his own.

We have a master that has even instructed us to do this thing. The very thing that the worldly man who Jesus says he's wiser in his generation, because he shrewdly figured this out, a lot of us have been instructed to do it and we still can't find it within us to, to pour our hearts into that. It's not hard to see throughout the Bible that God has pity on the poor.

We see this through the Old and the New Testament. Now, every seventh year, the land was to be unplowed so that the poor men could go and get some food out of it unharvested. I mean, if it's supposed to be unharvested, so the poor could do something with it.

When they reaped, they were not supposed to reap all the way to the edges so that the poor can go out and get some of that food. If they were, if they were bringing in sheaves and they overlooked some sheaves, they were not supposed to turn around to go get them. They were supposed to leave them there for the poor and the fatherless to go, to go have some of that.

It says the poor will never cease out of the land. So open, open your hand wide to help them. This is, this is old, Old Testament stuff.

In Psalms, it says the poor man cries and the Lord hears him. In Proverbs, it says, he that opposes the poor reproaches his maker. It says, whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

We see those kinds of thoughts scattered all through the Bible, but there's another thought that we see here and there. And it's, it's not a very popular kind of thinking, but that, but that God will actually, like you might say, appeal to the poor in order to judge the rich. Like he will, there's no doubt in my mind that judgment will be done by Christ, by what all he knows.

And that I don't think the poor are going to be the ones making the judgment. And yet, and yet you get this picture, you get this picture, even in this account that we read, where he says in verse nine, and I say to you, make friends for yourself by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into eternal habitations. Into the eternal dwellings.

In Isaiah, it says, the Lord stands up to plead and stand up to judge the people. The Lord will enter the judgment with the elders of his people and his princes, for you set fire to the vineyards and the plunder of the poor is in your house. We see this idea presented in the Matthew 25 account where all the people are gathered before God on judgment day and he says to some, I was hungry and you fed me not.

I was thirsty and you gave me no drink. I was naked and you did not clothe me. I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me.

Um, maybe a few others there, but, but, but then he says, in as much as you have not done it to the least of these, my brethren, you have not done it to me. It, it seems like based on that is what, what, what Christ is, is, is dividing these sheep from, uh, and putting, putting some on the right and some on the left. This, this thought also comes through in James chapter five, maybe, maybe more than any of these others.

I think it's a powerful passage. It says, come now, you rich weep and howl for your miseries, which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth eaten.

Your gold and your silver has rusted and the rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure. Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields and which have been withheld, which has been withheld by you, cries out against you.

And the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabbath. You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure. You have fattened your hearts in the day of slaughter as in a day of slaughter.

Here we, here, here he gives this idea of like, a rich man with, with a great estate, living sumptuously and, and the servants who plowed his fields and brought in his harvest so that he could live this way are, are walking away without pay. Like that's kind of the picture you get here. And and he's, he's condemning this.

He's saying, you go weep and howl for your miseries. And I have often thought about this, this passage in, in light of the fact that God looks over the whole earth and he sees the rich and the poor and he hears the cries of the poor and he sees the life of the rich. And I, I know like in our day and age things have gotten global.

Like we, we probably every day we, we deal with either goods or food or something that comes from some other country across, way across the nation. Like people that we can't really connect with, right? Like we

can't, we can't touch them. We can't, we can't thank them.

We can't, it's, it's kind of weird. And I, I don't, I don't think, I don't think there's really anything we can do about that. I mean, it's, it's the way the world operates.

It's the way it's, it's somewhat what technology has, has done. Like it's just made this, it's shrank the globe, if you might say, to where we can, we can send a message across the world in no time. We can, we can get information from across the world in no time.

And, and, and, and material goods get transported all over the world. It is what it is, but here's what I have as of late thought about more. We cannot, we cannot really do anything about that.

I don't know that that is necessarily good. I kind of think it's probably not, but we can't really do anything about the fact that it is that way, but maybe it should make me stop and reconsider who's my neighbor. If, if, if it is so that we can receive goods from anywhere very conveniently, and we could also send things everywhere very conveniently, why is it that those poor people who are, are, are like, it's very accessible for us to help them, at least through funds, like how are they not the poor people who God hears their cry and, and their, their, the cry of their labor goes up and he hears it and he also beholds the, the, I guess ease or, or, or let's say, let's say it this way.

He also sees the rich man's goods rusting to the ground, his gold being moth eaten and mold covered, and how is that not a witness against us, if, if, if that's who we are. I understand the complications of figuring out how and where and who to give. I understand, I understand how, how there's checks in our heart about certain programs or, or certain institutions questionable to give to, but, but, but let's just ask ourselves this question, on which side do we want to err? Okay, like, would I, would I rather err on the side of having, of having given alms to causes that we, we weren't a hundred percent in agreement with or we just didn't know maybe, or because of unwilling to do that, uh, the moth and the rust and the mold and the thieves eat, eat up what, what we've gathered on, on which side do we want to err? I know which side I want to err on and I don't want to end up weeping and howling for my miseries and God is not here.

Let's go to Matthew chapter six, verses 19 to 21. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourself treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in or steal, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. We could try, we could try if we wanted to, to try to figure out fanciful ways to what's treasure, what's, how do we lay up treasures on earth, but you know, I think a simple little word search figures out that the word treasure here just simply means wealth.

Laying up just simply means storing it. And so he's, he's, uh, I mean a simple illustration, a simple interpretation would just be don't store up wealth on earth, but store it up in heaven, store up wealth in heaven. I think that's a fair and simple interpretation.

And then it would be fair to say, because where your wealth is, there's your heart going to be. So not only are we commanded to not lay up treasures or wealth here on earth, we are commanded to lay them up in heaven. So if, if there's any question like still in your minds about treasures, could it mean something else other than wealth? Uh, and if so, how would we store it up in heaven? Look at what Jesus said in Luke chapter 12, especially when he said in verse 33, but I'm going to start in 31.

Just get a little context here. But he says, but seek his kingdom and those things that seek his, but seek his kingdom. And those things will be added to you.

Do not be afraid little flock for your father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom, sell your possessions and give to charity, give alms. It says in, in, in King James, make yourselves money belts, which do not wear out and unfailing treasure in heaven where no thief comes nor neither where no thief comes near nor moth destroys for where your treasure is there, your heart will be also. So he makes it pretty clear that like, here's this, here's this very term treasures in heaven.

And then he says like, sell what you have and give alms. And that by, by doing that, you're, you're providing a money bag that does not wear out and, and storing up or laying up or, or investing treasures in heaven. In short, it is, it is reading ourselves of what we don't need and giving alms that we are storing or investing real wealth into a real place called heaven.

So when we make earthly investments, we exchange either currency or goods for something that, that to us is of more value. Uh, if, if it's just, it's just how we would make a wise investment. We would take, we would take a thousand dollars and exchange it for something that is worth more to us than those thousand dollars.

Or if it's a barter, we would take, um, 10 chickens and, and, and trade them on a goat because the goat is more value to us than the chickens or now it's a little hard for us people to see that, that, uh, that when we give alms, when we give, when we give to the poor, something that we'll never see again here on earth, that, that we're exchanging for something of more value. The only reason it's hard for us to see that is because we're just not very heavenly minded. If we were, if we were minded of heaven, if we had this, if, if, if we understood this concept, it would make sense to us that, uh, that we're, we're like, like really making, uh, uh, a valuable exchange here.

This is, this is a wise investment. Um, and, and it's secure, no thieves, no rust, no rot, no moth. But if we do this without love, without the right heart, as it says in first Corinthians 13, it's empty.

It's, it's just like a clinging symbol. If we give our poor, if we sell all that we have and give to the poor and have not love, it's nothing. But if we have love, there's a great return on the investment.

But here's, here's the catch. I think if we are doing it, God knows the hearts, God, God sees all things. But, but it would be my perception that if we are doing it in order to, to invest in eternals, in a, in a secure eternal future, it's questionable whether we really love, whether we're really rid of self and we love.

Like if that's the motive, if, if, if my motive is okay, so, so I, I want to be received into eternal habitations. Uh, I, I want to figure out how much I can invest in the, into that. How much can I give into the poor that would secure me a habitation in heaven? I just don't know.

Like that, that seems pretty self self-centered, um, motivated by selfish desires. But if, if we give expecting nothing in return, simply because out of our heart flows a sympathy for those poor people, there's probably more chances that, that we actually have a heart that is right the way God wants it to be. Remember in Matthew 25, those, those people that, that he said, um, I was hungry and you fed me.

I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was naked and you clothed me. They said, when, when did we see you like this? Obviously they were not focused in on, on, on calculating this thing.

They just had a heart and from their heart flowed this love and this sympathy and this alms and this, this, this goodness to their fellow man. God knows all things. I don't intend to, to judge a person's hearts and motives for those kinds of things, but I want to check myself.

I think it's a good, good thing that we, we all ask ourselves those questions. He says, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. This verse is not saying that make sure your heart is not set upon your treasures or your wealth here on earth.

No, he's just simply saying, it doesn't say where your heart is, there will be your wealth or anything else. Like it just simply says where your wealth is, there your heart will be also. Of course, it is very important that we consider where, where is our wealth? Where's our investment? Um, not for selfish motives, but just, just consider like if it's here on earth, that's where our heart is.

Cyprian said, how can they follow Christ who are held back by the chains of wealth? They think they possess, but they are possessed instead. What comes to your mind when you think about Sodom and the sin of Sodom? You probably think, we probably think of homosexuality, all kinds of sexual pervertedness. Ezekiel, in Ezekiel, God said this, he was talking to Judah or Israel.

He said, behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters. Neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. Doesn't mention any of that other stuff we think is so gross.

Usually long before those kinds of sins come, long before a church is trying to figure out what kind of stand they should take on homosexuality or abortion. God has found great fault with them long, long before that, long before that. In Ecclesiastes five, he says, there is a, there is a soul or evil, which I have seen under the sun, namely riches kept for the owner thereof to their hurt.

But those riches perished by evil travail. He begitteth a son and there is nothing in his hand as he cometh forth of his mother's womb. Naked shall he return to go to, to go as he came and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand.

And this also is a sore evil that in all points as he came, so shall he go. And what profit has he that has labored for the wind, labored for the wind? How would you like to labor day after day? And at the end of each day, your, whoever you worked for gave you your handful of cash and you took it home and you threw it in the wind and the wind carried it away. And yet if we're going to labor for what is not either our needs or to give alms, we're laboring for the wind.

Eventually every earthly investment we make will be reduced to a small pile of ashes. Once the whole earth goes up in smoke, what's left? When God gave manna to the children of Israel, they were supposed to gather what was needed, one omer per person per day, because that's what was needed. But there were greedy people there, people who had the physical strength and the greed to go out and get more.

And guess what happened? They didn't have more. Because whatever went, whatever they gathered beyond that omer got wormy and bitter. And they still had one omer to eat, just like everybody else.

We need to work. And by the sweat of our brow, we need to provide. But think about it.

Can we really eat more than three meals a day? I mean, we can eat more than what's good for us, but it's to our own hurt. Can we really eat, I mean, even just now in this present time, it's to our own hurt. But like

really, can we eat more than what's needful and it be of any good? Can we get more than one good night's sleep in a night? Can we wear more than one set of clothes at a time? Can we live in more than one house at a time? These people who gathered more manna, all they did was work harder.

And yet they didn't eat more bread. If we gather more than what we need for ourselves, all we do is labor harder and gather for the wind. But if we labor beyond what is for our need to give alms, it's not for the wind.

It's for treasures in heaven. There is another evil. In Ecclesiastes there, he talks about this evil that he's seen under the sun.

But there's another evil that I've seen. I'm not reading this out of the scripture, but it's an evil that I've seen. And that is, someone gets something of this concept about not laying up treasures on earth.

And whereas he was rising up early and working with earnest and working efficiently, now he's become lazy. And he gets up late and he's lax. I think that's a sore evil.

Is it not because we're selfish? Why is it that we can go about, and we can go about with earnest and zeal and wisely, and if we get a lunch break, fine. If not, fine. We keep pressing through.

Why can we do that when we're working for ourselves? When we're making money for ourselves. But once we're making it for someone else, we're unmotivated. Is it not because we're selfish? Remember what one of the sins was of Sodom? An abundance of idleness.

How is it that when we invest here on earth, if it's going to affect our income, we make wise investments. We are careful and we make sure that we're not just squandering. But when it's not for ourselves and it's for someone else, we're careless, unmotivated.

Is it not because we're selfish? I'm not talking about taking great care. We need to take great care and try to be real wise so that we can invest our business. And instead of making 50,000 in a few years, we'll be making a hundred or a couple hundred thousand.

Or instead of making 20,000, we'll for sure be making 50. That's a slippery slope. It's a slippery slope in which many persons have fell into temptations and snares and many foolish and hurtful lusts.

But I'm just talking about being diligent. Being willing to get up early and to invest our time wisely. And I'm also not talking about like sometimes when a person gets a concept of the kingdom, like he'll work less physical labor or less work that would generate income in order to invest more time in working for the kingdom.

That's good. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm simply talking about when we have, if we had been a motivated, hard-working, diligent, wise individual, and then we get this concept and we just turn into a lazy person, something is really, really wrong.

I just want you to know that I'm not, I'm talking to myself more than anybody else. Once again, I know all the questions and the things we got to work through on how, who, where, when, but which side are we going to want to err on. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

And if God hears the poor in our day, and if he appeals to them on judgment day, will we receive an eternal habitation? Let's close in prayer. Help us, Lord. Give us understanding.

We pray, Lord, that you would give us a heart that is right toward you in these matters. A hand that is stretched out and open wide to give. Help us to be that hand.

Be diligent. And we pray that you would help us to remember that you hear the poor and you're the maker of us all. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

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