

# A Parable That Confuses Many

by Erlo Stegen

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*The parable of the unjust steward teaches us the importance of thinking about the future and being wise in our decisions, as the unjust steward was, and not judging others based on our own understanding.*

**Duration:** 52:21

**Scripture:** Psalm 90:12, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 55:8-9, Matthew 6:24, Matthew 25:21, Luke 5:17-26, Luke 12:15, Luke 16:1-13, Luke 16:19-31, James 1:5

**Topics:** "Eternal Perspective", "Godly Discernment"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the parable of the unjust steward, exploring the confusion it causes as the man's actions are commended by the Lord despite being perceived as unjust. It emphasizes the importance of considering one's future and eternity, contrasting the mindset of the rich man who did not think ahead with the actions of the steward who planned for his future. The sermon highlights the need for discernment in understanding God's perspective on right and wrong, drawing lessons from various biblical examples and urging listeners to align their hearts and spirits with the Lord's.

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## Transcript

This is an amazing story. It's very interesting and I don't know if there's any other parable which the Lord shared that is as confusing as this one, or causes as much confusion as this one does. Many are confused when they read this parable because they say, but Lord, what this man did was not right.

He wasn't right in what he did and yet you commend him. And the title, or they call this parable, the parable of the unjust steward. And the Lord spoke this parable about this certain rich man who had this manager working for him.

And after some time he heard people saying that this manager was not faithful in his work. He's unjust. And yet afterwards the Lord commends this man for what he did.

That's why it's so difficult for many to understand this parable. This man was extremely wealthy. This manager had been giving people things, perhaps potatoes, or sweet potatoes, food, and so it happened after a while that the man heard these accusations against his manager that he was just giving away things and wasting his goods.

So the rich man called him in. And the man said to the manager, he said, I hear that you aren't faithful, that you're unjust and that you're just giving away things. And he fired him, told him that he's out of a job.

So after the manager got the notice of his dismissal, he thought about it and he thought, well let me do something quickly now. He said to the first man, how much do you owe my master? And he said, he owes him a hundred measures of oil. And then he said to the man, here, take your bill and write, sit down and write quickly that you now owe him only 50.

And then he called in the second man and he said to him, well how much have I given you? How much wheat have I given you? And he said to him, a hundred measures of wheat. Then he said, well sit down and you write down that you now owe 80 measures of wheat. That's the amount that I had given you.

So the manager, when he had heard that he was being dismissed, he said, I'm too old to dig, and I'm too ashamed to be a beggar to go and beg people to help me. Then he thought of this plan that he would reduce the debt which they owed. And he thought that if I do that, I'll make friends with them, and when I have lost my job, at least I'll have these friends who will take me into their homes.

And the master commended the unjust steward, and then he said, because the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. But the Pharisees, when they heard the story, they derided the Lord. They mocked him, they laughed at him, because they were lovers of money.

So they derided him. But the master commended this steward because of how shrewdly he acted. Because he paved the way that they would take him into their homes.

He had acted shrewdly. Now if you look at the story, you would say this man did not act in the right way. He was unjust, unfaithful.

Yet the Lord commended him. And commended that the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. Now I would, the master, commend this unjust steward.

Why did the Lord comment positively? Yet the Pharisees derided him. They cheated him for it. The Pharisees loved money.

The Lord said you cannot serve two masters, two gods. You cannot serve God and mammon or money. Now I think what the unjust servant did rightly and correctly, was that he thought about his future.

He considered what his future would be like. The problem is with so many people, they do not worry about the future. They do not care about the future.

They do not think of what the future holds and eternity. But this man when he was in a fix, he suddenly started thinking, what am I going to do? What is going to happen to me? Where will I end up? Where will I stay? that when he was burning in hell he suddenly thought about his five brothers and he thought they're heading straight for this place that I'm in. And remember how the Pharisees mocked the Lord, they derided him, they laughed at him because they loved money and they also didn't think about their future.

It's good to think about where you're heading, about your future. It's not good if you just think well I'm okay, I've got enough food to eat, I've got everything I need and you don't think about where you're heading, what your future holds. The rich man had the finest clothes, he ate the best food and Lazarus had nothing, he didn't even have food to eat.

Yet Lazarus thought about his future whereas the rich man didn't. When the rich man died he was taken to hell. And when he was in hell he lifted up his eyes and he called out to father to Abraham, he said father

Abraham I have five brothers they also headed for this place, send Lazarus to warn them that they don't end up here.

You see the rich man hadn't thought about his future, he was like a fool. His God was money and as it says you cannot serve God and serve money. Only when he was burning in hell he suddenly thought about his brothers.

While he was still on earth, while he was alive he didn't worry about his brothers in that way. But then we find that unjust servant that he was commended because he took actions in light of the future, thinking about the future what that would hold for him. The Lord commends someone who thinks about his future.

Moses numbered his days, he thought about death and what time he still had left here on earth and the Lord also commended him for it. If you just live for the here and now, just about today's needs, that you have food and that you have clothing and that's all you think about the Lord will say about you, you are not wise, you're a fool. So while we consider this matter and you may think that what he did was not right, yet what you can learn from it and learn from this man is that he thought about his future.

The rich man had heard from others, the talk was going around that they were saying that this manager is unfaithful, he's unjust, he's taking things. And even the rich man he could have approached it differently, he could have called in this man and he said I'm hearing these stories about you wasting my goods and just giving them away. And then given him an opportunity to respond and then he could have explained and said look I'm doing it because I'm thinking of my future and maybe saying to him that I'm helping these people because they are in need of help that they don't have a problem in the future.

But the rich man didn't give this man an opportunity to respond and explain his side of the story. Maybe if he'd have not just fired him on the spot he could have he would have heard what this manager had to say and maybe even bought into the idea and said but it's correct that's what we should be doing and that's what I should be doing too. There are things which you would consider unjust and when God looks at it he says it's justified.

That even God would say but there's it's not wrong what he has done. Because everyone else accused this man of doing something that was wrong yet the Lord didn't just condemn him and even said that he did something good. The pharisees had a problem with it though they said no it's wrong that they didn't like it at all but that was not how the Lord saw it.

We can look at a matter and say this is wrong and yet God doesn't say so. And then again we can say something is good and yet it's not good in God's sight. We need to ask the Lord for discernment um yet because otherwise we'll end up saying something is wrong and evil and the Lord doesn't see it in that way.

So you need to test the thing and have discernment um lest you say something is wrong and God says this is not wrong that's good. Dr. Campbell Morgan. He once visited a very wealthy man who was a believer Before they went to bed um they had a time where they read from the bible and prayed together.

And the host, this wealthy man, he prayed a wonderful prayer. He prayed for the missionaries and for the heathen, the unbelievers. It was a wonderful angelic prayer.

When he finished praying his teenage son said oh father that was a wonderful prayer. You prayed a wonderful prayer tonight but while you prayed I thought if I'd have your bank book I would answer only half of your prayers. Do you understand? He was a wealthy man.

He prayed a wonderful prayer. Because even though he prayed in that way praying for the missionaries and all the heathen people um yet the son said father I'd only answer half of your prayer if I was the Lord. God spoke through this child and to the father um when he said but father you pray for them but you've got all this money in the bank why don't you use some of it to help them as well.

I know I know a preacher who was sent posted to a place in the free state. He went there with some of his children who were still small at the time. They'd grown up now and some of them were here.

There were times when they had no food. And the mother went out into the fields just looking for any type of plant or weed which she could cook and to give the children something. So they were there without food yet there were people praying for them saying Lord help them and carry them through while they had nothing.

So this teenage son when he heard that wonderful prayer of his father that was his response. He said father if I was the Lord I'd only answer half if I had a bank balance like yours. Now some of those children they've grown up some of them are even helping here in the school I won't mention their names.

And God blessed those parents in spite of all that. Because they sacrificed their lives they gave their lives for the gospel. And so we can learn a lesson from all of this even these rich people who they pray that they do no more than that.

In the Bible we read of where the Lord Jesus was in the home of someone that was sick. While he was in this home he they heard that someone was busy undoing the roof. And they looked up and someone had opened a hole in the roof.

And they looked up and there were four men who were busy dismantling the roof opening this hole in the roof. I don't know what kind of a roof it must have been and I don't know what the owner of the house thought. There must have been dust and dirt falling as they dismantled it.

And then these four men lowered this paralyzed man down before the Lord they lowered him down on ropes. I wonder what went through the owner of that house's mind at the time. Did he perhaps think wow what are these people doing? What do they think they're doing? Cost me a lot of money to build this house.

I put so much money and effort into it now they're just dismantling it. But when they lowered that man down at the Lord's feet the Lord healed him. So there are some interesting things where we would think they are wrong and the Lord is happy about it.

The Pharisees scoffed they derided him for it but in the Lord's eyes it was different. So we need to be careful the way we see things that we don't see things in a way that's different to God that we actually go against God because we think it's wrong. The Pharisees were jealous and they loved money.

When they heard these things they derided him. They made a mockery of him. So we need to be careful the way we see things and judge things and that we don't just say oh that's wrong and when the Lord Jesus looks at it he says that's right.

Today's message is short it's not long. But it contains much I don't know whether we've grasped it. Do you have a heart like a Pharisee's heart or do you have a heart like the Lord Jesus? Are you like the rich man? Are you like the rich man who dismisses the man he writes him off and the Lord Jesus finds something

good in him? We need to be very careful brethren.

There are things which to man look wrong and yet they write to God before him. Where we as human beings and as people would say that's things are going wrong now and yet the Lord Jesus and God in heaven he's happy about it. And if we would have been presented with this case how would we have judged it? What would we have said? Would we have said oh no this man is evil and we just stop at that? Whereas the Lord looks at it and he finds something good to say about this man.

And so for all eternity it's recorded there's something good written about this man. But we people we look at it and we say no it's just all wrong. Each one of us should pray and say oh Lord give me a heart Lord Jesus like yours.

Give me a spirit like yours. Oh Lord give me a spirit that is your spirit and that he will lead me that I will never be at loggerheads with you. What will our future be like? Will we be commended when we get to heaven or will we be condemned? And that I'd rather be derided here on earth.

That the Pharisees deride me, mock me. But that at least when I get to heaven there will be good words to say where the Lord will thank me and say well done. That you pray and say oh Lord make me to be perfectly one with you.

That I'll have a heart like yours and a spirit like yours. Take this to heart, the story about this rich man, that steward and also about the Lord who related the story and then they derided him. They mocked him when he told them about it.

Number four. And this rich man in his time, people they looked up to him for what he was. But then later in hell he said Father Abraham send him to my brothers.

Now you could have said well that is a good thing, it's commendable. He's thinking of his brothers but the Lord said it won't help sending Lazarus to them. Because he doesn't even hear Moses and the prophets.

He won't even believe though one were raised from the dead. Sure enough not long after that the Lord was crucified. After three days he was raised from the dead and even then they did not believe.

So let us test and prove what kind of a spirit we have. Is it the Lord's spirit? Are we one with him? Or will it come out later that though we claim to be followers of the Lord yet we weren't one with him. So do you just take Luke 16, read it and ask yourself how you feel about it, how you see it.

Do you go along with the Lord Jesus and what he said, how he saw it? Or do you go along with what the Pharisees said? Jesus said the Pharisees spoke that way because they loved money. So pray earnestly and say oh Lord help me always to be one with you, never to go against you.

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