

Conference for Missionaries-1986 - Part 4

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of wise stewardship and investing in eternal relationships through financial decisions in his sermon.

Duration: 39:19

Scripture: Luke 16:1

Topics: "Conference", "Eternal Investments", "Stewardship"

Description

William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of wise stewardship in his sermon, drawing from the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16. He highlights that while the steward acted dishonestly, he was commended for his foresight in preparing for his future, which serves as a lesson for Christians to invest in eternal matters rather than earthly wealth. MacDonald encourages believers to use their resources to make friends in heaven by supporting the work of the Gospel, thus ensuring a welcoming community in the afterlife. He stresses that true riches lie in spiritual investments rather than material possessions, urging the congregation to prioritize their stewardship in light of eternity.

Transcript

Music. My theology has never gone any deeper than that. Jesus loves me.

This I know. Oh, how he loves me. Oh, how he loves you.

It's enough, isn't it? Could you turn in your Bibles tonight, please, to Luke chapter 16. Luke chapter 16. He said also unto his disciples, there was a certain rich man which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

And he called him and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship. I cannot dig to beg.

I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil.

He said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and

write four score, eighty.

The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely. For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. Therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and mammon. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your heart.

For that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to the sight of God." Before we turn to the passage, I just want to mention something. Brother Naismith was speaking this afternoon on reliance upon the Lord from Matthew 6, verse 19, and it made me think of an incident. There was a Christian family, and they had adopted a policy that mother could sleep in on Saturday morning.

Dad got up every Saturday morning, and he made waffles for the boys. And were they ever good waffles? Sometimes he served them with pure Vermont maple syrup. They were first drowned in butter, and then Vermont maple syrup.

Sometimes he used blueberry syrup. Very, very good. Other times he had crushed strawberries and whipped cream, and that was an event.

Every Saturday morning, Dad made the waffles. Now, there's a very interesting thing about the story. Those kids never laid up waffles in their bedrooms.

They never worried about whether they'd have waffles the next Saturday. They enjoyed the waffles, but they never hoarded any of them. Why? Because they just believed that Dad would provide waffles for them next Saturday, and he always did.

And I really think that's the attitude that our Father wants us to have, too, don't you? That attitude of trust in Him. Think ye first, the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. And His waffles are really the best.

Now, would you be surprised if I told you that the Lord Jesus spoke more about money than He spoke about faith? He spoke more about money than He spoke about prayer. The Lord Jesus spoke more about money than He spoke about personal salvation. In the Gospels, one out of every ten verses deals with money or possession.

288 verses in all. In the Bible, there are over 500 references to prayer, and less than 500 references to faith, but there are over 2,000 references to money and possession. It's a major issue.

There are 38 parables in the Gospel, and out of those 38, 16 are in regard to how we handle our money. That's a shocker, isn't it? Why did the Lord speak about money so much? Because He loved it? No, not

because He loved it. Because He knew the dangers connected with it, and also the wonderful ways in which it could be used.

Now, this is an interesting passage of Scripture that we read tonight, isn't it? The other night, we read about the laborers, and we scratched our heads, and we said, why is something like that in the Bible? And really, we come to another passage like that in Luke 16. You read a passage like this, and you're reading about a crook. You're reading about a shyster.

You're reading about an embezzler. I can't say very much good about this character, and yet it says, His Lord, or the Lord, commended the unjust steward. What is this? In the Bible? A Bible which is always standing for righteousness and honesty, and doing what is proper? Once again, as we said the other night, don't be afraid of difficulties like that in the Bible.

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, and if you read it casually, carelessly, you might run into problems. I grant that, but if you look carefully and see what the passage is teaching, you go away shaking your head and saying, what a wonderful book. But that's what I say.

What a wonderful book. Let's begin at the beginning of chapter 16. There was a certain man which had a steward.

A steward. What is a steward? Well, it was a manager. It was one who took care of the property of this certain rich man.

A steward isn't really noted for what he himself owns. His job is to care for somebody else's money, for somebody else's possession, and the Bible teaches us unmistakably that we are all stewards of the Lord. He's put us down here to be stewards.

He's put us down here to manage his affairs. All of a sudden, the owner gets wind of the fact something that the books aren't balancing. His money is being siphoned off.

The steward is dipping his hand in the drawer and taking some of the money. He's embezzling. He's stealing.

He's a cheat. He's a chiseler. And so, the owner calls the steward in, and he said, what's all this all about? What's this that I hear of you? The auditors are saying the books don't balance.

There's money missing. Some of my money is missing. What is going on here? He said, I want an accounting.

He said, you're fired, and before you leave, I want an accounting of what has taken place. Now, in the King James Version, it doesn't sound as if he were finally fired. It says, thou mayest be no longer steward.

It almost sounds as if there's some doubt. You may or you may not be steward any longer. But, dear friends, it was final.

He got his walking papers that day. You are fired, and I want an accounting of this whole matter. Problem.

Steward says, what am I going to do? What shall I do? My lord, take it away from me, the stewardship. I cannot dig, and I'm ashamed to beg. And then a light went on in his brain, and he said, I know what I'll do.

I'm determined that when I'm out of a job, when I'm on the list of the unemployed, I'll be able to go up and knock on doors, and they'll say, come on in. Glad to see you. Have a cup of coffee.

Have lunch with us. That's what he would say. He looked forward to the time when he would be unemployed, and he made provisions for that.

So, he started to call his creditors, his owners, the owner's creditors in, and he said, how much do you owe to my master? He said, I own 100 gallons of oil, let's say. What he said, really don't worry too much about it. He said, you have the bill there, and he said, cross out 100, write in 50, pay for the 50, and we'll call it even.

Was that all right? Terrible. It wasn't his oil. He had no right to do that.

So, he did it. He did it. And so, he called another creditor, and he said, how much do you owe to my employer? And he said, well, I own 100 bushels of wheat.

And he said, well, don't worry about it. He said, look, cross out 100, and write in 80, and pay for the 80, and we'll call it even. Now, the shocker is, in that next verse, it says in the King James, and the Lord commended the unjust steward, and in other versions it says, and his Lord commended the unjust steward, which is right.

It doesn't make a bit of difference which is right. It doesn't make any difference whether you read his employer commended him, or the Lord of life and glory commended him. It's equally true in either case.

Because what? Because he had done wisely. You say, he did this honestly. Just hold it.

Just a minute. Everything will come out all right. He commended him because he had done wisely.

What? For the children of this age are wiser in their generation than the children of life. There are two keys to understanding this difficult portion of If you put these two keys in the door, it'll open every time. The first key is this.

The Lord, or his Lord, doesn't make any difference, didn't commend him for his dishonesty. He commended him for his foresight. He commended him for looking to his future.

He commended him for providing for his future. When I'm out of a job, I'm going to have a lot of doors swinging open to me. I'm going to have a lot of friends, the predators, that he had reduced their bills.

Remember that he was not commended for his dishonesty. He was not commended for his crookedness. He was commended for looking forward and making provision for his future.

F-U-T-U-R-E. Very important, that word. The second key is this.

The child of God's future is never said to be in this life. Our future is in heaven, and what the passages say, the children of this world are wise. They make provision for their future in this world.

The only future they have to look forward to. Christians aren't wise. We don't make provision for our future in the world to come.

Oh, yes, we make provision for our salvation, but that's not what this passage is about, and you must keep that in mind. Let me just go over that once again. The two keys that open up the passage.

The man was not commended for his dishonesty. He was commended for looking forward and making provision for his future. Secondly, our future is not in this world.

His future was in this world. Our future is not in this world. It's in heaven.

Now, the Lord really brings it all together in verse 9, where he says, And I say unto you, make friends to yourselves of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation. Let's go over that slowly, because this is really the crux of the matter. First of all, the mammon of unrighteousness.

What is the mammon of unrighteousness? I am holding in my hand some of the mammon of unrighteousness. It's money. Why is it called the mammon of unrighteousness? I don't know.

Maybe because money is so often used for unrighteous purposes. It doesn't have to be. Money can often be used for very righteous purposes, but it very often is used for unrighteous purposes.

I think, again, of the 30 pieces of silver that were used in the betrayal of our Lord. But the Lord is saying, although it's the mammon of unrighteousness, which we call sometimes filthy lucre, and although it's often used for unrighteous purposes, it doesn't have to be, you can make friends to yourselves of the mammon of unrighteousness. What does that mean? Well, it's a wonderful thing that these coins that I hold in my hand tonight, by a wonderful chemistry, for instance, they can be chained into gospel literature.

Is that wonderful? You can invest money in gospel, in bible, new testaments, tract, Christian literature, distribute these, and see souls saved for eternity. Those are friends. Those are friends.

What a vision! Well, I never thought of that. Well, that's what the passage is teaching. Make friends to yourselves of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Invest your money in the work of the Lord so that people will be saved through your wise financial management. That's what the passage is saying. Then it goes on to say, so that make friends to yourselves of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, what does that mean? It means when you die.

Or, if you have a modern version of the bible, it probably says that when it fails, what does that mean? It means when the money fails, when money no longer has any value, and it both happens at the same time. Did you ever think of that? When you die, your money ceases to have any value for you. It will not be put in your casket, and even if it were, it wouldn't do you any good.

So, read it either way. That's the wonderful thing about this passage, so that when you fail, when you die, or when your money fails, which happens at the same time, they may receive you into everlasting habitation. Who's the they? Well, the they refers back to the friends, doesn't it? You've used your money to make friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, and you die, and you've got friends in heaven.

The poet said it well. He said, and when in the mansions above the saved all around me appear, I want to hear somebody saying it was you who invited me here. That's lovely, isn't it? What a vision! What a vision! You know, I often think it's a wonderful thing to be a messenger of mercy to people as far as their bodies are concerned, as far as their teeth are concerned, helping people in sickness and distress in life, ministering to the body.

But, I know something even more wonderful, that's ministering their souls. I think it's a marvelous vision to think that you and I can be used to do a work in human souls that will go on for all eternity, and that's what this is talking about. Make friends to yourself by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, so that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation.

Harold Wilde used to tell about a distinguished English gentleman who was reaching his 80th birthday, and his family decided to do something special for Dad on his 80th birthday, and they wanted to get a special gift for him, too, on that illustrious date. But, what do you get for a man that's 80? You know, I mean, his needs were supplied. They lived a fairly affluent life, and the sons and the daughters, they just racked their brains to find out what to get for Dad, and they just couldn't think of anything.

Well, it was supposed to be a surprise, but they gave up on the surprise feature, and they went to him, and they said, Dan, your 80th birthday's coming up. We really want to commemorate it. We really want to do it upright, and they said, we want to get a nice gift for you.

What would you really like on your 80th birthday? And, he thought for a while, and he said, I would like to see a portion of the word of God going into a language it's never been in before. Well, that wasn't exactly what they had in mind. I think they thought maybe an electric razor, or something like that, but that's what he said.

And so, they thought, well, we'd better be good sports about it, and they went down to the Bible Society, and they told about this quaint request of their father. And, the Bible Society said, well, that's an interesting thing. They said, we're just about to put the Gospel of John into an African dialect it's never been in before.

And, with some trepidation, the sons and daughters said, how much would that cost? And, the Bible Society told them how much it was really more than they had been planning to spend for an electric razor. But, they thought, well, we'd better be good sports about it, you know. And so, they started to collect the money.

And, on his birthday, that was the presentation. Not that it was finished by then, but that was a presentation that this money from his family would go to put the Gospel of John into a dialect that had never been in before. Now, project yourself forward a hundred years.

Dad, of course, is in heaven. He's been in heaven a long time. One day, he's walking down the streets of glory, and he sees a brother in Christ coming the other way.

And, they talk together without being introduced. You don't have to be introduced in heaven. There are no strangers in heaven.

And, Dad says to him, well, where did you come from? We said, I came from Africa. He said, well, how did you ever get here? The man said, I'd like to tell you how I got here. He said, somebody really cared for us.

He said, we were there living in darkest Africa. And, he said, somebody was interested enough to get the Gospel of John into our language. And, he said, I'll never forget the day that shipment came, he said.

He said, I could read. And, he said, I read the Gospel of John. It was distributed.

I read the Gospel of John, the sweet story of God's love. And, he said, I bowed at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I acknowledged him as my Lord and my Savior. How do you think Dad felt? He had a

friend in heaven, through the wise investment of his funds, through the wise use of a birthday gift, he had a friend in heaven.

That's what this verse is saying, isn't it? Make friends to yourself by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails, they, the friends, may receive you into everlasting habitation. I think it's silly to think of the child of God going up, up, up to heaven, and he gets close to heaven, and over the ramparts of heaven there are people looking eagerly, waiting to welcome him home, because he was the one who invited them there. What a vision! Dear friends, my training in life was in investment banking.

It really was. How to invest money so that your principle is safe, and your income is satisfactory. Well, I want to tell you, I found the best investment in all the world.

That's investing material things in the souls of men. The principle is absolutely safe for eternity, and there's no income, there's no rate of interest quite like it. It really is wonderful.

I thank God for the Christian men and women who have this vision, and who are living sacrificially for the spread of the gospel, so that they'll have a welcoming community in heaven. Maybe I should pause here and just share with you some little guidelines that we might use in connection with our giving to the work of the Lord. I don't press these on you, I just use them as guidelines that I myself follow, and hoping that they might be of help to you.

First of all, I like to give especially to those who are working in accordance with New Testament principles, building and strengthening New Testament assemblies. I feel I have a prior obligation to them. Let me say that again.

A prior obligation to those who are building New Testament assemblies, strengthening New Testament assemblies, working in accordance with New Testament principles. Secondly, I like to give to those who've gone out looking to the Lord alone for the supply of their needs. I don't know about you, but my mail is filled with begging letters, and I have a special file for them, and it's round.

I do not care for that whole business of begging, begging, begging. I like to feel a responsibility toward those who look to the Lord for the supply of their needs. I feel obligated to them.

I think it's a nice thing, three, to remember those who are going out for the first time. The first year in the work of the Lord can be sometimes a little bit lean, which is good. I'm not opposed to that, but it's good to think of those.

You read Missions Magazine, for instance, and you read about young people, and incidentally, there's a real moving of the Spirit of God among young people today. I wish I had the time to stand here tonight and tell you some of the wonderful things that God is doing among young people, and brothers at CMML will tell you that. There's a movement of young people out to the mission field.

Hearts ablaze for Jesus. I think it's nice to keep track of them and remember them during that first year. Good idea.

I like to invest in works that are accomplishing something for God. I really do, and this is true all over the world. I like to give where the need is greatest, and, of course, I like to give where there's not a lot of money spent on overhead.

You know, many Christian organizations today, they talk about the orphans, and they talk about the anti-communist activities, and all of this, but when the truth is known, an awful lot of their money is spent right here in the United States on luxurious buildings, or glossy brochures, and all the rest. Watch out for heavy overhead. I personally don't want to be investing in that.

Somebody might say to me, should I give anonymously? Well, it's a very good thing to give anonymously, but I just, I think it's a good idea to send, for instance, if you're sending to a missionary, send the first time and give your name and address. What? You get on their mailing their prayer letters. You can keep up with them by prayer, intelligently, and then from then on give anonymously, not letting your right hand know what your left hand is doing.

I suppose most of us here today are familiar with forwarding agencies, but I'm not sure we appreciate them as much as we should. CMML. You can send money to missionaries of your choice going out establishing new tents and assemblies, and CMML sends the entire amount to that missionary.

Most mission boards don't. Most mission boards deduct a portion for office expenses. Most mission boards, when they drive a missionary to the airport, he pays the charge for that.

CMML doesn't. Our missionaries are really taken care of, and one of the mysteries of the 20th century is where all that money comes from. But, I think you and I know that some brothers are dipping in their own pockets to make it possible for that type of work to go on.

You can write, you can send gifts through Christian missions in many lands, you can specify to whom it goes, or if you don't know, if you're not aware of the needs, you can let them make the distribution. They will make it, and the whole amount will go out to the mission field, and you will get an income, a tax, a receipt that's valid for tax purposes. In this country, you can send, for workers in this country, especially pioneer workers in the United States and Canada, you can send it through letters of interest.

Once again, they forward the whole amount. They don't deduct anything for office expenses or overhead, and I'd just like to say this. Men going out in this country to establish new assemblies, to do pioneer work, are largely forgotten by the church.

That's quite an indictment, but it's really true. They're largely forgotten by the church. You can also send through Christian workers' fellowship in Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Same thing. Forward the whole gift. They'll make no deduction.

Our Workers Together, which is a missionary service organization with sisters, are carrying on. So, I just mentioned those things. They might be of practical help to someone, but the basic thing is make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation.

Let's look on. It says in verse 10, and I smile when I read these verses. They're so beautiful.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. Now, question. What is that which is least? The mammon of unrighteousness.

That's not what most people think. Most people think the mammon of unrighteousness is that which is most, but I like the value that God puts on it, and he's saying here, look, I allow a certain amount of money

to pass through your hands, and I stand back and I watch how you handle it, and if I see you faithful in that which is least, then I know I can commit greater things to your care. What kind of things? Spiritual things.

Spiritual things. Did you ever think, is it possible that my understanding of the scriptures might be related in some respect to how faithful I am in handling money? That really searches my heart. The way I handle money might have something to do with how passages of scripture blossom open to me like a rose.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. He that is unrighteous in the least is unjust in much. If God sees me squandering this on self, on selfish pleasures, he says, well, if I can't trust him in that, I can't trust him with to be a steward of the manifold grace of God, ministering the grace of God to others.

Notice, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? Mammon isn't true riches. Soul prosperity is the best prosperity, isn't it? Sure, soul prosperity is the best prosperity, and God says, if you haven't been faithful in handling money, how can I commit to you true riches? What are the true riches? Well, I think they're spiritual treasures and rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. It'll all come out in that day, and if you have not been faithful in that which is another's not another man's, another's whose? God's.

If you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? What's your own? What you take to heaven with you. What are you going to take to heaven with you? Well, the nation that was speaking in that verse, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

We don't take a lot to heaven, but we take souls to heaven, don't we? We take friends to heaven, we take Christian character to heaven, and we'll have rewards in heaven as a result of faithful stewardship. Verse 13, No servant can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and man.

What does that mean? It means I either love God and hate money, or I hate money and love God. And it's a great thing to be able to hate money. Once again, it's a comparative.

I know that. The same comparative you have in connection with hating father and mother, wife and children, and so forth. It means that you love God so much that your attitude toward money is hatred by comparison, but you still value it because of what you can do with it in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, wouldn't you know it? The Pharisees, the Pharisees who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they scoffed at him. You know, and people are still scoffing at the teachings of the Lord Jesus. They love money so much they say, well he and his followers want to follow that kind of a philosophy, let them do it, but we're going to get just a little of the roots of all evil, and we'll grow the rest ourselves.

It's the attitude. Can't you see that? Can't you see the Pharisees scoffing at the Lord Jesus because of these wonderful teachings? Shows you the value that they put on the mammon of unrighteousness, and the value they put on human souls, not very much. And Jesus' answer is wonderful.

He says, you are they who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your heart. That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination to the sight of God. What's highly esteemed among men? Mammon

of unrighteousness.

What does God think about it? Abomination, except when it's used for the souls of men. What a wonderful passage of Scripture, isn't it? What a vision to put before us. I wish I could convey to some of our young people the joy of Christian stewardship.

Years ago I was out in Hong Kong, and I got a letter from a young brother in Colorado Springs, and he enclosed a hundred dollars, not for me, but for the work of the Lord. And he said, would you see if you can put this to work for the Lord? Well, I was staying with a man named Michael Brown at that time in Hong Kong, and I said to him, Michael, is it ever possible to get money into the believers in China? And he said, well, he said, I wouldn't say it's impossible, he said, but it would take some time. So, when I left, I left a hundred dollars with him, and I said, see what you can do with it from a young brother in Colorado Springs.

By the time I got back to the United States, that young brother had heard from Michael Brown. The money got in to needy saints in China, and some of it got in to the widow of Watchman Lee. Some of you know that Watchman Lee was a dear Chinese brother who spent, well, most of the closing years of his life in prison.

He died in prison in communist China. And here's a young brother in Colorado Springs, and he made friends of the mammoth of unrighteousness, and some of that money got in to Mrs. Watchman Lee. And when I got back, that fellow was so happy that he had spent that money on anything material.

He would never have got the same happiness out of it. One time I was speaking down in Crown Point, Indiana. I was speaking on how Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fishes, and I said, you know, he's still doing it today.

He's not doing it by Blue Galilee, but he's still multiplying the loaves and the fishes. And, you know, a young fellow came up to me. He was a student in high school, and he gave me a sizable gift.

I was really astounded that any high school student would have that much money. I never had it when I was in high school. But anyway, I went back home, and I was with Emmaus at that time, and I started figuring how many copies of What the Bible Teaches, the correspondence course, that would reach, the money he gave.

And it wasn't hard to see that cheap editions of What the Bible Teaches overseas could reach 5,000 people. And I wrote him that. I sent him the statistics, and told him that, you know, you don't limit it to one person.

More than one person in some of those villages read what's sent to them. Or, one fellow who can read sits down and reads it to a bunch of people who can't read sitting around. More than 5,000 people as a result of his gift.

God is still multiplying the loaves and the fishes, and it's a wonderful vision. And so, that's the thought I'd like to leave with you tonight. Make to yourselves, friends, of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

When in the mansions above, the saved all around me appear, I want to hear somebody saying, it was you who invited me here. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you that you've deigned to make us stewards of

yours. What a dignity! What a privilege! We don't want to be like this steward in the Bible who was a cheat, a chiseler, a imbezzler, a crook.

But, we'd want to imitate him in this, that he looked forward to his future, and made friends for himself, for his future here on earth. That our future is in heaven, Lord. We want to look forward beyond this veil of tears.

We want to look forward to the time when we're going to be there at the feet of Jesus, and when others will crowd around, and be able to say, thank you very much. Thank you very much for investing your money in the work of the Lord. Make this real in our lives.

Blessed Lord Jesus, we ask in your precious name. Amen.

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