

The True Discipleship Broadcast-1983-09 True Discipleship

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of looking ahead to one's future in heaven and using resources to make friends for eternity.

Duration: 22:46

Scripture: Luke 16:1-17

Topics: "True Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the parable of the unjust steward from Luke 16:1-17. The parable tells the story of a rich man who accuses his steward of wasting his goods and decides to fire him. The steward, realizing he is about to lose his job, comes up with a plan to secure his future by reducing the debts of his master's debtors. Surprisingly, the master commends the steward for his foresight, not his dishonesty. The preacher emphasizes that the key to understanding this passage is recognizing that the commendation was for the steward's ability to plan for the future, not for his unethical behavior.

Transcript

Turn today to Luke chapter 16, verses 1 through 17. Luke chapter 16, verse 1, reading from the New King James, And he also said to his disciples, There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.

Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? My master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig. I'm ashamed to beg.

I've 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 master's debtors to him and said 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 fifty.

Then he said to another, And how much do you owe? So he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said to him, Take your bill and write eighty. So the master commended the unjust steward, because he had done shrewdly.

For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much.

And he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, it really should be in what is another's, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things and they derided him. He said to them, You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your heart. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached and everyone is pressing into it. And it's easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.

Okay, we'll just stop reading there. There are some surprising passages in the Bible. This is one of them.

For some people it might even be embarrassing. For people who love the Bible, who believe it's the infallible word of God, this passage presents difficulties. The reason it presents difficulties is because it seems to commend dishonesty.

And a lot of Christians just pass over it blithely, apparently thinking if they don't look it will go away. But it hasn't gone away. It's been in the Bible all these years and will always continue to be in the Bible.

And you never have to be afraid. If you just read the passage, see and understand what it's saying, it's beautiful, not embarrassing. It's beautiful.

The wonderful words of our wonderful Lord. It starts off with the story of a rich man and a steward. What is a steward? Well, the steward was his business manager.

The steward was the one who took care of his affairs. That's what a steward is. A steward is not noted for what he himself owns.

It's not the idea at all. He's not supposed to be a bigwig, or an owner of a vast estate. He's an employee.

He's a servant, really. And he works for someone else. This steward, I would guess, was the business manager for this very wealthy man.

And we're all stewards, aren't we? He uses that expression, Paul, writing to the Corinthians. He says that we're stewards of the Lord. We're not supposed to be noted for what we own.

We're here handling somebody else's property. There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. Wasting! That didn't mean he used too much sugar in his coffee.

Wasting here means embezzling. The man was a crook. And he was.

He was really dishonest. This is not the first time it's happened in the history of the world, and it's not the last time either. So he called him, and he said, What's this I hear about you? You're through.

He fired him on the spot, but he said, Before you leave, I want an audit. I want to know exactly where I am financially. I want the books brought up to date, given account of thy stewardship.

It sounds in the King James, and maybe in your Bible too, as if there was still a possibility that he would stay on as the steward, but that's not the case at all. He says, You can no longer be steward. He gave him the pink slip.

He gave him his walking papers. You're fired. But he still had to give an account of his master's finances.

And so this threw the steward into a tizzy. He didn't know what to do. A crisis in his life.

He should have thought about it sooner, when he was embezzling his master's goods, when he was acting dishonestly. He said, What shall I do? My master's taking the stewardship away from me. I can't dig, and I'm ashamed to beg.

Maybe he was too old to dig, and too ashamed to beg. And then a light bulb went on in his brain. He began to think ahead to the days of unemployment.

And he thought, I know what I'll do. So the doors will swing wide open to me, and friends will say, Come on in and have a cup of coffee. So he called in one of his master's creditors, and he said, What do you owe my master? Well, you'd think he would have known.

I should think he could have gone to the accounts receivable file and found out. Maybe he didn't keep good records, for one reason or another. And this man said, I owe, let's say 100 gallons of oil.

Not Union 76, but olive oil. And he said, Don't worry about it all. You sit down, and you just cross off the 100, write in 50, pay for the 50, and we'll call it square.

Was that okay? No, that wasn't okay. He had no right. He's still up to his old tricks.

He had no right handling his master's money that way. Imagine the cheek of him, as they would say in the north of Ireland, right? Cheek, they don't use that word here so much. But he was really cheeky.

So he called in another creditor, and he said, How much do you owe? And he said, Well, I owe 100 bushels of wheat. Well, he said, Don't worry at all about it. He said, We'll make a deal with you.

Sit down, cross out the 100, write in 80, pay for the 80, and we'll call it even. Now, the surprising thing is the next sentence in verse 8. It says, So the master commended the unjust steward, because he had dealt truly. Well, that really is a shocker.

And this is why people have difficulty with this passage of Scripture. In the King James Version, the original King James, it's not clear whether the Lord or his Lord commended him. Frankly, it doesn't make a bit of difference.

It doesn't make any difference whether it was his own employer or whether it was the Lord Jesus who commended him, because the thought is still the same. Key number one to the understanding of this passage. He didn't commend him for his crookedness.

He commended him for his foresight. He looked ahead. He looked to the future.

It's going to become evident as we go along that this is one of the keys to the understanding of the passage. The master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. How had he dealt shrewdly? He was thinking ahead.

He was thinking to the days when he wouldn't have any regular income coming in, but he'd still have friends. No money, but plenty of friends. He had dealt shrewdly.

And then the Lord Jesus added those wonderful words, the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons alike. He's saying people of the world are clever. They look ahead and make provisions for the future whereas the children of the kingdom don't do it.

And you know, the people of this world are pretty clever when you start to think of it. When you start to think about their shrewdness in business, their cleverness in politics, they're way ahead. But that brings us to the second key for the understanding of this passage.

The first is that the master didn't commend him for his crookedness, but for his foresight, for looking to his future. The second key is the future of the child of God is never said to be in this world. It's in heaven.

You've got to see that for this passage to make sense. Put those keys in the door and the door will open. He didn't commend him for his crookedness, but for looking to the future.

And the second key is the Christian's future is never said to be in this world. Our future is in heaven. And so what the Lord Jesus is saying here is the people of this generation, of this world, they look ahead to their future in the world.

Christians don't look ahead to their future in heaven. Oh yes, as far as their salvation is concerned. But this is talking about stewardship and reward for faithful stewardship.

So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of life. And then you come to the key verse in the passage where the Lord Jesus says, And I say to you, make friends to yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, or maybe your Bible says when it fails, they may receive you into everlasting habitation.

Make friends to yourselves by reason of the mammon of unrighteousness. What is the mammon of unrighteousness? I'm holding some of the mammon of unrighteousness in my hands as money. Is it unrighteous? Well, it's quite neutral as it sits there in my hand.

Why does the Bible call it unrighteous mammon? Why is it referred to as filthy lucre? Because that's generally what it's used for, unrighteous purposes. For the most unrighteous use of money that ever occurred was the betrayal of the Lord Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. It doesn't have to be used for unrighteous purposes, but the Lord Jesus calls it the unrighteous mammon because when you think of the use of money in the world today, all the crookedness, all the bribery, all the chicanery, all the embezzling, all the theft, that's a good name for it, unrighteous.

And when you think of how men have worshipped money and men love money, it's well to call it filthy lucre. But, Jesus says here there's a way you can make friends with it. How is that? Well, by a wonderful

chemical process, you can take money, for instance, and convert it into gospel literature.

And gospel literature can reach people on their way to hell and convert them into saved sinners who will spend eternity worshipping the Lamb of God. That's what he's speaking about. Make friends to yourselves of the mammon of unrighteousness.

You can invest money, for instance, in radio broadcasts. Let the message go out throughout the world. See people saved.

You can invest money in correspondence courses. Pretty soon you find people writing in and saying, I found Christ through that course you sent to me. Friends.

That's wonderful, isn't it? Do you ever think of that? That that money that you have in your pocketbook or your wallet can actually be used to make friends for eternity. That's what the Lord Jesus is saying here. I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon that when you fail, well, that means when you die.

But some Bibles say that when it fails, that means when you die and money is no longer any use to you. It's the same in either case. There's a case where it doesn't make any difference which translation.

Apparently the manuscripts of the New Testament allow either you or it. And it doesn't make a bit of difference because when you fail, it fails. Do you ever think of that? You say, oh, I have \$500,000 tucked away.

Really? Tomorrow if you die, you don't have it anymore. And it's no longer yours. No longer yours.

It fails you. And I think that's one of the tragedies of people living for money. It fails them when they need it most.

It won't do a thing for them. How much did he leave? He left everything. Fire destroyed a bank and safe deposit boxes and a woman wailed in horror.

I lost everything I had. Well, this is a reminder that when we come to the end of the journey, we leave empty-handed when it fails. When you fail, when you die, and money is no longer any use to you, it has no value to you at all.

Life is really interesting. You see that, you know, when you see people dying in the hospital, and here's a woman, and she lived for furs, and she lived for fancy clothing, and she lived for tours, for pleasure trips, and now her wizened body is lying there on that hospital bed, and those things don't mean a thing to her, do they? They don't mean a thing to her. Don't talk to her about furs.

She's about to go out and meet God. It says that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation. It doesn't say who they are, but it's obviously the friends that you've made with the mammon of unrighteousness.

And what the Lord Jesus is saying is, use your money, use your material things, not for selfish pleasure, but so that when you get to heaven, there'll be a welcoming committee there at the ramparts of glory. Say, wouldn't that be wonderful? To arrive at the gates of heaven and have a crowd of people saying, thank you very much. It was you who invited me here.

I did? Yes, through the wise stewardship of your money. That's why I'm here. When in the mansions above, the saved all around me appear, I want to hear somebody saying, it was you who invited me here.

Years ago, there was a man approaching his 80th birthday, and his adult sons and daughters decided that they wanted to do something special for him on his 80th birthday. And they began to think, what do you get for an 80 year old man? Would you tell me? What do you get for the man that has everything? And, you know, how much more life does he have anyway at 80? And they racked their brains and they couldn't think of a thing to buy for this dear Christian gentleman, their father. He had an electric razor.

He didn't have an electric toothbrush, but he didn't particularly want one. So they went to him, and they said, Dan, we wanted this to be a surprise, but it's not going to work. They said, your birthday is coming up, and we wanted to do something special for you.

We wanted to get something special for you, but we can't think of what to get. Well, what would you like on your 80th birthday? And he thought for a while, and he said, I'd like to see a portion of the scripture going into some language that it's never been in before. That wasn't exactly what they had in mind, you know.

They thought of gimmicks and gadgets and something out of the Sears catalog. But they thought, well, we'd better be good sports about it. So they went down to the Bible Society, and they said, you know, our dad's approaching his 80th birthday, and we wanted to get something.

The Bible Society said, well, that's really interesting. We're just about to translate and publish the Gospel of John in an African dialect that it's never been in before. And they said, well, how much would that cost? And braced themselves, and the Bible Society told them, and it was really more than they had intended to buy for a birthday present for their father.

But they thought, well, we'd better be good sports about it. So they scrounged, and they got the money together. And on his 80th birthday, that was his gift, to see the Gospel of John translated into an African dialect that it had never been in before.

So, transport yourself forward 100 years, and we're in heaven. And one day, that man walks down the streets of heaven, and he meets a brother coming the opposite direction. And they strike up a conversation, as everybody does in heaven.

And he says to him, where did you come from? Well, he said, I came from Africa. You did? How did you get here? And he says, well, somebody cared. Somebody cared enough to have the Gospel of John translated into our language and published for us.

And I'll never forget the day the shipment of the Gospels came to our area. And I got a copy of it, and I read about it. I read about the Savior, and I trusted Him as my Lord and Savior.

That's why I'm here. How do you think that man would feel? The 80-year-old. Well, he had done pretty much what Jesus says in verse 9, hadn't he? He had made a friend who's a mammon of unrighteousness, so that when he failed, this friend received him into everlasting habitation.

And you can do that, and I can do that. We can make friends in Ecuador or South Africa or India. I mean, really, I'll have to promise you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/23/SID23724.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/the-true-discipleship-broadcast-1983-09-true-discipleship/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net