

True Discipleship - Part 4

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living for eternity and being faithful in our stewardship, warning against the dangers of serving two masters and living for material things rather than for God.

Duration: 24:43

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 16:1-4, Luke 16:10-11, Luke 16:13

Topics: "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living a life that is dedicated to God. He warns that it is possible for a person's soul to be saved but their life to be lost. The preacher highlights the idea that everything we have is a gift from God, but there will be a reward for our faithful stewardship at the judgment seat of Christ. He uses the parable of the unjust steward to illustrate the need for accountability and the danger of comparing ourselves to others. The sermon concludes with the reminder that we will be judged according to the principles of the Word of God, with Jesus Christ as our example and guide.

Transcript

Today we come to our final study in the subject of discipleship, and I wonder if we could turn to Luke chapter 16, please. Sixteenth chapter of Luke, and if you can't hear me at any time, feel free to raise your hand and I'll know that I should speak more loudly. Luke chapter 16, beginning with verse 1. And 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, or 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. If I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed.

I am resolved what to do. When I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's 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. He said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four score.

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely. For the children of this world are in their own generation wiser than the children of life. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the manna 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. And he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If 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.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Now this statement of the Lord Jesus spoken to his disciples, verse one, is one of the most perplexing and confusing portions of the gospel. Because it seems to commend dishonesty.

This steward was obviously a crook. And yet he is commended in the passage, there's no doubt in the world about that. Well like so many other portions of the word of God, when the key is found and the portion is unlocked, we find that it is rich with spiritual teaching for our own souls.

Now you have this interesting story of a steward, he was just simply an employee, that's all. He worked for a boss in some sort of a business, probably agricultural. And he was mismanaging his boss's property.

And the news came to his employer about it, and he called him in and he said, you're fired. It says in the King James Version, thou mayest no longer be steward. That almost seems to indicate a little doubt.

Maybe you will and maybe you won't, but that isn't what it means. It really means thou canst no longer be steward. You're fired, I'm giving you your walking papers right now.

So he said, what am I going to do? What am I going to do? Well he said, I'm resolved what I'm going to do. I can't dig, I don't have the strength left to dig in my age. And he says, I'm ashamed to beg.

So he went around to the bin who owed his boss money. Said to the first one, how much do you owe? He says, oh I owe a hundred dollars, in our language today perhaps. Well he says, write it down to fifty and just pay the fifty.

Said to the next, how much do you owe? He said, I owe a hundred dollars. Well he said, write it down to eighty, pay the eighty and we'll call it square. And it says his lord, not really the lord, but his lord commended the unjust steward.

He had done wisely. It doesn't say yet how he had done wisely, but he had done wisely. And then it says the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

That means ungodly people act with a wisdom oftentimes greater than the wisdom of the children of God. Now let's just go back over it and see if we can apply it to our own hearts this morning and see what the Lord has for us in it. I think it's clear from the word of God that each one of us is a steward.

Now really a steward is someone who takes care of the property and interests and affairs of another. Now that's exactly our position in the world. We're not here on our own behalf.

We're not here in our own interest. We're here as stewards of the Lord God Almighty. We're here to take care of his interest, to take care of what he has entrusted to us.

And everything we have is a stewardship from the Lord. You and I have a life that God has given to us. It's not our own.

It's not our own life to live the way we want to live it. And there's a day coming when we're going to stand before God and give an account as to how we live that life. Every one of us has a certain amount of possessions.

They're really not ours. They belong to God. We have a home.

We have children. We have time committed to our trust. All of those things are the Lord's, and believe it or not, we're going to give an account to him one day.

And I think this is a solemn part of this portion of the Word of God that it teaches that one day our stewardship will end. One hundred years from today, not one of us here will still be here. Fifty years from today, most of us will have passed off the scene.

And within twenty years, or even ten years, many of the people gathered here this morning will have passed into the presence of Christ and will give an account of his stewardship. Someone has said, a fool is a man all of whose plans end in time. We all have the illusion that we're going to be here forever.

We attend a funeral and we say, poor fellow, it happened to him, but it couldn't happen to me. And we're quite unaware of the fact that the same motions are working in our own bodies and in our own lives, and the dissolution will come sooner or later, and probably sooner. And really it's solemn to think about it, how short our little lives are anyway.

Just pick up a grain of the dust, or a grain of the sand, and that's what your life and my life is in reference to eternity. Just a passing speck. And it's of utmost importance that it be lived in the light of eternity.

It's of utmost importance that we not let it pass away dealing with things and not with the important matters. I always remember what Paul Little said one day. His mother was working in the living room and Paul went into the living room and he said to his mother, Mother, he said, I'm so glad God has given me a greater love for people than for things.

And what he meant was that he wanted to spend his life dealing with that which really counts and not with that which passes away. Well now I wonder, supposing you and I had to give an account of our stewardship today, what kind of an account would we give? The danger that we have is to compare ourselves with others. And if you compare yourself with others, you'll always find there's someone lower on the totem pole than you are.

But nowhere in the word of God are we ever told that we're going to be judged in reference to others. The Lord Jesus Christ himself is our example, our pattern, and our guide. And we're going to be judged according to the principles of the word of God.

Now, in our little parable before us this morning, this unjust steward was commended. And I think here we come to the crux of the matter. Why was he commended? Well, first of all, we know absolutely he wasn't commended because of his crookedness.

He wasn't commended because of his dishonesty and because of his deceit. There's one and only one reason why that unjust steward was commended. Do you know what it is? Well, the reason that he was

commended was that he acted in the present in the light of the future.

And that's the only reason why a word of approbation was spoken concerning him. He acted in the present in the light of the future. He didn't live for now, he lived for then.

And the Lord Jesus says that in this respect, the children of this world are wiser than the children of life. In their own generation, if you take the two, the children of this generation are wiser than the children of life. Now, you must be very careful in your thinking here.

What this passage of scripture teaches is that the children of this world prepare for their future in this world. Now, the future of a child of God is never said to be in this world. There's nowhere indicated in the word of God that a child of God should prepare for his future in this world.

The child of God prepares for his future in the world to come, or at least he should. But in this respect, the ungodly are wiser than we are. They prepare for their future here, we don't prepare for our future there.

And that's the whole gist of this portion of scripture before us. You say, well, how do you know? Because the verses that follow make it clear. Notice verse 8 again, just by way of connection, it says, His Lord, in the revised version, commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely.

How had he done wisely? Well, he said, my game is up anyway. My stewardship is gone. And all I want to be sure is that when I'm bereft of my job, I'll be able to go and knock on the door and have the door swing open and have a friendly voice say to me, come on in and have a cup of coffee and a piece of coffee cake with us.

His 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 life. Now here comes the Savior's commentary on it.

And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends by means of the manner of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation. You see the picture switches. Now he's speaking to a child of God.

He says, you so act that you'll provide in a very real sense for your future. Now it says, make to yourselves friends by means of the manner of unrighteousness. Now I think that we all know what the manner of unrighteousness is.

It means material things. It means money, if you will. It says, make to yourselves friends by reason of the manner of unrighteousness.

You know, it's an interesting thing, isn't it? That that dollar bill could be converted into precious, never-dying souls, one for the Lord Jesus Christ for all eternity. Could. Could be converted into other things.

Could be converted into personal comfort. Could be converted into pleasure. Could be converted into display.

And a million and one other things. But the thrill of this verse of Scripture is it can be converted into souls. You can make friends for yourself, and I can too, with the manner of unrighteousness, by means of a divine alchemy.

I can invest that in the service of the Lord and meet souls in heaven as a result of it. And that's how you make friends of the manner of unrighteousness. You convert it into tracts.

You send it to the servants of the Lord laboring in difficult places throughout the world. Christian literature, whatever you will, somebody takes up that tract, reads it, is converted to God and becomes a worshipper of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all eternity. Make to yourselves friends of the manner of unrighteousness.

What? It says that when ye fail, what does that mean? Well, just put it simply, when you die. When you die. What will happen? They may receive you into everlasting habitation.

Who's the they? The friends you made by means of the manner of unrighteousness. What is the verse saying? The verse is saying that you can so use the material things that God has given you down here that you'll have a welcoming committee when you get home to heaven. The poet has said, and when in the mansions above the saved all about me appear, I want to hear somebody saying it was you who invited me here.

Well, that's exactly what this portion of scripture is saying. God is saying, I put things at your disposal, things that you can use in a selfish way, for self-aggrandizement, for building yourself up in the world, for pleasure, for luxury, for ease, for comfort. But those things can also be used to see souls brought to the Lord Jesus Christ and worshipping him forever and ever.

Make to yourselves friends of the manner of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they, those friends, may receive you into everlasting habitation. Now the portion of scripture goes on to say, he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. And in this verse of scripture and the verses that are following, God seems to take material things and speak of them as that which is least, that which is most unimportant in this world.

We somehow seem to get our sights shifted, and the things that we can see and feel and touch and handle, well, they seem to be the important things to us. And the things of heaven and the things of eternity somehow seem to lose their grip upon our souls. But this passage of scripture is telling us that it's the things that are not seen that are eternal.

And that if we're not faithful with the little least things that God entrusts us with down here, how can he entrust us with greater things either here or then? And it goes on to say in verse 11, And if therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? Now that's a very incisive word of scripture, isn't it? If you haven't been faithful with the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? What are true riches? Well, they would be spiritual riches right here and now. And this verse teaches us, first of all, that if I'm not faithful in my stewardship with the things that God has entrusted to me, God will withhold true spiritual riches from me. For instance, if I'm not faithful with that single dollar bill that's in my pocket, this could result in the Bible being a closed book to me.

And I believe that with all my heart. I believe that the more devoted we are, the more sacrificial we are with the things of the Lord, the more he will open this book and make it a real living word to our souls. People today complain about the difficulty that they have with the word of God.

Well, it is a difficult book, but there are ways in which God will open it to us. And I really believe that one of the reasons why there's a famine of the word of God in the United States today is traceable in part to the

fact we haven't been faithful with that which is least. If ye, therefore, have not been faithful in the unrighteous manner, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And this not only refers to true riches here, but it refers to true riches up there, too.

It refers to the rewards that will be given out at the judgment seat of Christ. Then the next verse drives home the same lesson. If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who will give to you that which is your own? You know, everything we have down here is another person's, God's.

We don't have a single thing that we haven't received. And yet there is a sense in which there is to be something which is our own. And that something will be a reward that will be given out at the judgment seat of Christ.

That will be our own in a very real sense. It will be the reward for our faithful stewardship down here. And God is saying in his first scripture, I have given you certain things.

Every one of you is a king or a queen in his own realm. Every human being, every sinner saved by grace reigns over a certain empire. And that's true.

And I've given certain things to you to administer for me. These don't belong to you. They belong to me.

And if you haven't been faithful in that which is another's, all that you have down here, how can I give to you that which is your own? Who will give to you that which is your own? And then finally it says in verse 13, no serpent 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.

Now we all know that this is true in an earthly, material, physical sense. Even in an organization where people are working, it seldom works to have one person employed by two bosses. It seldom works to have a secretary working for two department heads.

There's a whole matter of divided loyalty and divided time. And we know these things are true in an earthly sense. And those of us who have ever been in business know that you don't frame a business structure like that.

It isn't done in human organization. Well, God is saying it shouldn't be done in spiritual things either. No man can serve two masters.

He'll love the one and hate the other, or else hate the one and love the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. And this tells us that we must be undivided in our loyalties to God.

Now the truth of this comes out, I think, in our everyday conversation. It's interesting as we even talk to notice what spills out. You say, perhaps you're inquiring about a young Christian man and you say, how's he getting along anyway? And the answer is, my word, he's doing well.

You know, he's working his way right up to the top. You say, well, he's making good money just now. Is he making good money? He's up in the high brackets right now.

And doing well, he has a lovely home in a palatial residential neighborhood. You say, well, how's he doing spiritually? Well, I can't say too much about that. You know, he's kept so busy with his business that I just can't say too much about the spiritual side of life.

How did you say he was doing? Oh, I said he was doing very well. Yeah, well, that's just a giveaway, isn't it? That's just a giveaway. If we were really living in the light of Luke chapter 16, we wouldn't say he was doing very well.

We'd say he was doing very poorly. We would say he's living for mammon and not for God. We'd say he's wasting his life.

But you know, I do believe that that's one of the greatest tragedies of our day. We emphasize the gospel. We emphasize the salvation of the soul, and that's important.

But I'd like to emphasize this morning. It's possible for a person's soul to be saved and for his life to be lost. It's possible for a person's soul to be saved and for his life to be lost.

Every one of us who poses today as a disciple of Jesus Christ is going to stand before him. We're going to look into those eyes of love. We're going to see the marks of Calvary on his hands and feet and upon his brow.

And we're going to give an account. The closing thought I'd like to leave with you this morning, and the thing that burdens my heart, especially as I work among young people today, is this. Only the life that's lived for God really counts.

And these are the things that loom up so important. In the United States, they're not so important. They're not so important.

And I beg you today in the name of Jesus Christ, and as a servant of him, make to yourselves friends of the man of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation. Don't go through life hugging the subordinate. Don't go through life willing to be a minor official in a transient enterprise.

Go through life living for that which will count for all eternity.

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