

Where Your Treasure Is

by William MacDonald

The sermon teaches that Christians should plan for their future in heaven by investing in the work of the Lord and being faithful in the administration of material things.

Duration: 24:08

Scripture: Luke 16:1-12

Topics: "Mammon"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the parable of the unjust steward from Luke 16:1-13. The parable tells the story of a rich man who accuses his steward of wasting his goods. The steward, fearing unemployment, devises a plan to secure his future by reducing the debts of his master's debtors. Surprisingly, the master commends the steward for his shrewdness. The preacher emphasizes the importance of being faithful in small things and highlights the joy of investing in the work of the Lord, using a personal anecdote to illustrate the impact of supporting the translation of the Gospel into different languages.

Transcript

Um, would you turn to Luke's Gospel please? Chapter 16. Luke, Chapter 16. And I'll begin reading at the first verse.

Luke 16 and 1. He said also unto his disciples there was a certain rich man which had a steward. 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.

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's debtors unto him and said to the first, How much shall it cost unto my Lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil.

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

That's eighty. The Lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely. For the children of this generation are in their generation wise, the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the

children of life.

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the man 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.

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous, then who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another'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. He cannot serve God and mammon. The Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they belied in him.

Well, I think you'll have to admit it's quite an unusual passage of Scripture, and some people reading it might be tempted to ask, Is that really in the Bible? And other people might be tempted to think that if they don't look at it, it might go away. But it's been there for a number of years now, and it hasn't gone away, and it's not going to go away. Any time you have difficulty with a passage, instead of passing it over, just dwell on it.

The more you dwell on it, the more wonderful it will appear to be. And that's the case with this passage. Here's a wealthy man, and he has a steward.

He has this man who's managing his affairs for him, and he finds out that this man is a crook. Just put it simply. He's a crook.

And the word gets to the owner, and he calls him in, and he says, Look, you're fired. It sounds in the King James Version, Thou mayest no longer be steward. That might sound, well, you know, you may and you may not.

But that isn't what it means. It means you're through, and before you leave, I want an audit. I want to know just what the extent of my losses are.

And so, this causes the steward to have a real quandary. He's perplexed. He says, Boy, I'm really getting on in life, you know.

I am no longer at the age when I can dig, and I'm really getting out. I'm ashamed to get out there and beg. And then a light bulb went on in his brain, and he said, I know what I'll do.

I'll arrange things so that when I lose my job, there will always be doors that will open to me. Always be people who will befriend me. I'll always be able to go in and have a cup of coffee.

And so he called his master's debtors to him, and he said to the first, How much do you owe? And he said, Well, 100 barrels of oil. And that would be olive oil, not Quaker steak. Whenever you come to oil in the Scripture, it's, well, it's usually olive oil.

He said, I owe 100 barrels of oil. And he said, Well, look, don't worry about it. He said, You just take the invoice and mark it down to 50 barrels, and you pay me for the 50, and we'll call it square.

You know, how crooked can you be? It wasn't his money. He had absolutely no right to do that. So he did it.

And so he called another man in, and he said, How much do you owe to my master? Well, he said, I owe 100 bushels of wheat. He said, Don't worry about it. He said, Take the invoice and mark it down to 80 and pay for the 80, and the whole thing, the whole account will be squared.

I have no doubt that they were very glad to do that. Wouldn't you be? But the next verse is the shocker. It says, And the Lord.

It says in the King James, And the Lord. Now, does that mean the Lord Jesus, or does it mean his master? Well, it says in most modern versions of the Bible, and his Lord commended the unjust steward or the unrighteous steward. And that's the difficulty.

How could the Lord Jesus, or even his own master, commend a man who was as crooked as that? This man was an embezzler. That's what he was. He ought to be behind bars.

And yet it says that either the Lord or his Lord, and as far as I'm concerned, it doesn't make any difference which you choose. Now, there are a couple of keys to understanding this passage of Scripture, and I think if you put those keys in the door, they'll really make the passage live for you. Key number one, the Lord didn't commend the steward for his crookedness, but for his foresight.

He didn't commend him because he had, quote, wasted the owner's money, but he commended him because he thought ahead to the future and made preparations for the future. The second key to the understanding of the passage, I think, is this. The Christian's future is never said to be in this world, always in the next.

And I think if you keep those two keys in mind, they will help us in the understanding of this passage. The Lord commended the unjust steward, why? Because he had done wisely. He hadn't done honestly.

He hadn't done righteously. But he had done honestly. He said, I want to have houses that I can go to when I'm unemployed where I'll be shown fellowship and perhaps the occasional meal.

And then the Scripture says, for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. What that says is that the people of the world are wiser in that they plan for their future down here, whereas those who are believers in the Lord Jesus don't plan for their future up there, planning especially in the sense of investing for eternity. And then the Lord Jesus adds this verse of Scripture.

He says, And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation. What is the mammon of unrighteousness? I hold in my hand the mammon of unrighteousness. Why is it called the mammon of unrighteousness? Well, actually money is sometimes used for very good purposes and very legitimate purposes.

But I think that the reason it's called the mammon of unrighteousness is because so often it's used for wicked purposes. And probably the greatest example of that in the history of the world was when the Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. No wonder it's called the mammon of unrighteousness.

Now, the Lord Jesus said, Make friends to yourselves with that. Make friends to yourselves. How can I make friends to myself with it? Well, the Lord is thinking of a wonderful process by which, for instance, this can be converted into gospel literature, Bible, New Testament, Scripture portions, things like that.

As these are distributed, people are saved by the grace of God. And they are the friends that you make with the mammon of unrighteousness. People who come to the Savior through the wise investment of your money.

That's what he's talking about. Make friends to yourselves. Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.

And it says in the King James when they fail. But I think most modern versions will say when it fails. Now, that's an interesting expression.

When it fails. There's going to come a day when that's not going to be worth anything. In fact, if the Lord came tonight, it wouldn't be worth anything to me, would it? No.

And that's what it means when it fails. When it fails, they may receive you. Who's the they? The people you've won to Christ through the wise investment of your money.

They may receive you into everlasting habitation. What the Lord Jesus is saying here is to take your money, invest it in the work of the Lord, so when you get to heaven, there'll be a welcoming committee there at the rampart of glory to welcome you in. The poet said it very well.

He said, And when in the mansion above the saved all around me appear, I want to hear somebody saying it was you who invited me here. Those are the friends that you make through the wise use of the mammon of unrighteousness. You see, this unjust steward, he thought ahead so he would have friends in his future here on earth.

The Lord Jesus is saying, you and I should think ahead so we'll have friends in heaven. That's lovely, isn't it? We should so invest our money, or at least the money that he has given to us, so that when we do get to heaven, there will be this marvelous welcoming committee there for us. Harold Wiley used to tell the story about an aged man.

He was approaching his 80th birthday and his sons and daughters, adult sons and daughters, decided that they would like to do something special for his 80th birthday. And they tried to think, what would we give Dad on his 80th birthday? Well, it's a good question. What does an 80-year-old man need? You know, it's difficult, really difficult.

And they racked their brains and they just couldn't think of anything good to give to their father. So finally they broke down and they went to him and said, look, Dad, the secret's out. Your 80th birthday is coming up and we want to do something special for you and what would you like? And he thought for a minute and he said, I would like to see a scripture portion going into some language it's never been in before.

Well, that wasn't exactly what they thought. They were thinking about a Phillips razor, you know, something like that. But that's what he said to them.

So they went down to the Bible Society and they told the story about their aged father and he was approaching his 80th birthday and they wanted to do something special and how he had requested to have part in the publication of some portion of the Word of God in a language it had never been in before. And the Bible Society said, it's interesting that you should come because, you know, we're just translating the Gospel of John in a certain language, an African language. And so the sons and daughters said, well, how much would that be? And they told them and they kind of gulped.

But anyway, they were good sports about it. So they went out to the family and they collected the money. And that was a gift they gave to their 80-year-old father on his birthday, to see this portion of the Word of God going into that African language.

Now project yourself forward 100 years. And that dear old man is walking down the streets of Glory and he meets a black brother in Christ coming to him. And he says, Greetings, my name is so-and-so.

And the black man introduces himself. And this man says, How did you get here? And he says, Well, you know, somebody cared enough for us to get the Gospel of John translated into our language. And I'll never forget the day when the crates arrived with those portions of the Word of God.

And they were ripped open and the Scriptures were distributed. And we read the Scriptures and it was through that Gospel of John that I came to know the living, loving Lord Jesus Christ. You see, that man had made a friend to himself with a man of unrighteousness.

And when it failed, they would receive him into everlasting habitation. I don't know how to get across to people the wonderful thrill of investing in the work of the Lord. Some years ago, in 1970, I was traveling around the world with three young fellows.

And when I got to Hong Kong, I got a sizable gift from a young couple in Colorado. Some of you would know them. It was really quite a nice gift.

And it wasn't for me. It was for the work of the Lord. And at the time, I was staying with a missionary named Michael Brown.

And as we sat there at a meal one day, I said to Michael, I said, Is it ever possible to get money behind the bamboo curtain into Red China to some of the Christians there? And he thought for a minute, he said, It's possible. It isn't easy. And it would take time.

So when we left, we left this sizable gift with Michael Brown and continued on our journey. And you know, when I got back to the States, that dear young couple from Colorado told me that that money had got in to Red China and that some of it had got to Mrs. Watchman Lee, the widow. Her husband had recently been bereaved.

And you know, I don't know how that couple could have been any happier than in that investment of their money. It was on the same trip when I was in Yugoslavia and I got a letter from a lady in Zion, Illinois. And she had an aunt in Sault Ste.

Marie, Michigan who had recently died and she left her a small gift. I think it was \$2,000 she left her. A small inheritance.

And this dear sister, she really needed a new washing machine. But she went over it all in her mind and she decided that she was going to invest all \$2,000 in the work of the Lord. And so she sent the \$2,000 to me to put to work.

Not for me, but to work. So one night, again, I was sitting at table with a dear elder brother there in Yugoslavia and I said to him, what do you think would be for great need here in Yugoslavia? And he started, he had no idea what I had in mind. He said, well, you know, down in Macedonia, he said, the people really need copies of the New Testament.

And he said, there's another place down there that uses the Cyrillic script. I don't know what the Cyrillic script is. There's a different type of typeface.

And he said they don't have the New Testament in their language. And he said, if we could get New Testaments in Bulgarian, he said, we could get them across the border. He said, it's easier for us to get them across the border than it is for you Americans to do it.

And he mentioned one other thing that has escaped me at the moment. And I wrote back, when I left the \$2,000 with him before I left Yugoslavia, and I notified this sister in Zion, Illinois and she was absolutely ecstatic. She was euphoric.

She said, I'd rather do without a washing machine any day, just to get the word of God to these people who don't have it. Well, there are all kinds of wonderful opportunities like that in Christian life and service today. And the Lord Jesus is saying here, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails, they may receive you into everlasting habitation.

How would you like to have some folks from Red China, or some folks from behind the Iron Curtain, standing there at the gates of glory and reaching out a loving hand and saying, thank you so much. You are willing to live sacrificially so that I could be here. Well, then the Lord Jesus goes on and he says, 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. This tickles me, this verse. He that is faithful in that which is least.

What's that which is least? There it is, friends. This is the divine estimate. Men today think that's what's most, isn't it? They think that's what really counts.

God doesn't say so, because that's what's least. And he says, I put that into your hands as a little test. I put that into your hands as a test of faithfulness.

I watch what you do with it, and then I know that I can entrust more to you if you are faithful in that. On the other hand, if you're an unrighteous in a very little, and you are careless about perishing souls about you and spend it on self-indulgence, then I know that that's what you would do if I gave you an awful lot of it. It says in verse 11, if therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? Isn't that beautiful? That says, this is not true riches.

Most people think it is. And he says, if you haven't been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust true riches? What are true riches? I would suggest to you they're spiritual riches. That's what they are.

Spiritual riches. Not material riches, but spiritual riches. Did it ever occur to you that your faithful stewardship of finances might have something to do with your understanding of the Bible? You know, we go to the Bible and it's just a rock book to us sometimes.

We read a thing and there's no understanding at all. Well, I believe that verse 11 is a promise from the Lord that to the extent that we are faithful in the administration of material things, he will pour in knowledge and understanding of the word of God and spiritual riches. The true riches.

Well, it's nice to think God's thoughts after him, isn't it? It's nice not to be conformed to the world's way of thinking and value the things that the world values, but rather to read these verses, see what God's estimate is, and follow. Then it says in verse 12, and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, says the King James, another man, leave out that word man. It's not referring to a man at all.

It's referring to God. When it says another's, that refers to the Lord. I thought it was mine.

It's the Lord. All that I have is the Lord's. We had that earlier in the week, didn't we? The truth of stewardship.

If you have not been faithful in that which is another's, the Lord's, who will give you that which is your own? What's your own? Well, it could very well be rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. In other words, to the extent that I am faithful in my stewardship of these material things, to that extent I will be rewarded there. And then the Lord Jesus says, No man can serve two masters.

We had that before in Matthew 6, a couple of nights ago. No man can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and cleave to the other, hold to the other, or despise the one.

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 men. And then I just read that next verse because it always tickles me.

The Pharisees, you know, so full of worldly wisdom, they had the truth and knowledge would die with them. And it says, The Pharisees also who were covetous, that means who were lovers of money, heard all these things and they scoffed at him. That's the human heart.

Here the Lord Jesus is laying out something that really can only be spiritually apprehended. And these wretched Pharisees derided the Lord of Life and Glory. What were they saying? They were saying, It's crazy.

It's crazy to talk like that. It wouldn't work. You couldn't live that way.

You can't. And there are people living that way today. So I would just like to leave this passage of Scripture with you.

Make to yourselves friends of the manhood of unrighteousness that when it fails, they may receive you into everlasting habitation. Invest your money wisely in the work of the Lord, so when money loses all value at the time of your death or the rapture, back to heaven, you will have a welcoming committee there ushering you into the realms of glory. And just remember the two keys that we suggested for this difficult story that Jesus told.

A. The Lord did not commend the man because of his crookedness. He commended him because he had done wisely in preparing for his future. Key number two.

The future of the child of God is never said to be on this earth. The passage doesn't tell you that you should prepare for your future on this earth. Your future is in heaven, and you should be thinking of that time and gathering a family of saints together there during these days.

Shall we look to the Lord in closing prayer? Father, we just thank you once again tonight for your word and for the privilege of being a part here at Ozark Bible Camp, looking into the word, hearing your voice speak to us by the Holy Spirit of God. Lord, we think of the wonderful opportunities that there are today in

investing for God and for eternity. We think of souls in need in so many countries.

We think of the possibilities of Christian literature and Christian radio and every other means in which the word of God is going forth today. Lord, we pray that we might be wise stewards of all that you have entrusted to us. It all belongs to you.

The spiritual riches are the true riches. Soul prosperity is the best prosperity. Lord, help us not just to believe these things intellectually, but to live them out day by day.

And now the God of peace who brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

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