

Life Lessons From Luke The Parable of the Shrewd Steward Luke 16:1-13

Luke turned his attention from God's joy over finding lost sinners to another issue of Christian discipleship: possessions. Luke began chapter 16 with the parable of the shrewd steward and the resulting implications about handling possessions generously, faithfully, and for the glory of God.

The Big Truth: How we use our resources is a reflection of our relationship with God.

1. The Interpretation of the Parable (1-8)

A. Context (v.1) - 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.

- In the previous parable, the older brother (representing the Pharisees and scribes) was upset that the father used his resources to celebrate the return of the prodigal brother.
- Though v.1 turns the conversation toward his disciples, the Pharisees and scribes were still there, and the teaching will be teaching them the appropriate attitude and actions toward financial resources.

B. Accountability (2) - 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.'

- The manager is called to account for his mismanagement.
- Jesus doesn't specify his wrongdoing only that he was "wasting" the rich man's goods. "Wasting" is the same word used in the previous parable to describe how the younger son was living.
- *So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:12*

C. Response (3-7) - 3 "Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. 4 I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.' 5 "So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' 7 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.'

- He had an "Aha!" moment - He came to himself.
- Knowing he was going to get fired, he devised a plan that would endear him to people who could help provide for him when he was unemployed.

- "Hunger makes people resourceful." French proverb
- Though he was undercutting his rich employer, he was preserving himself.

D. Commendation (8) - So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly.

- The rich man may have been angry with his manager, but all his debtors were overjoyed, and the rich man would have created massive ill will if he had gone to the debtors and reinstated their full debt.
- Phil Ryken said, Though [the rich man] could hardly credit the man for his honesty or integrity, when it came to shrewdness, he had to give the man his due. There is a legitimate moral difference between saying, "I applaud the clever steward because he acted dishonestly," and saying, "I applaud the dishonest steward because he acted cleverly." The master was saying the latter, not the former, and this is the key to understanding the parable.
- Jesus was not endorsing dishonesty. Instead, Jesus was giving an example of how shrewdly non-Christians can be when they act in their own best interest. That is what Jesus meant when he said in verse 8b, "*For the sons of this world [that is, non-Christians] are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light [that is, Christians].*"
- Darrell Bock: "Jesus' remark is that those of the world ("the sons of this [world]") give more foresight to their future, they are more shrewd in their dealings with people than are God's children ("the sons of light"). God's children should be shrewd with possessions by being generous. Such acts show charity and foresight."

2. The Implication of the Parable (9-13)

A. Use your resources wisely (9) - "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.

- *Here's the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home. (NLT)*
- "Unrighteous mammon" refers to the danger of pursuing wealth for its own sake. Jesus wants his disciples to use wealth for eternal purposes.
- Kent Hughes: What is inescapably clear here is that our wealth and possessions are to be used to win eternal friends. This is the proper use of what we have. We must give generously of our money for the furtherance of the gospel.
- *Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 NLT*

B. Be faithful in your stewardship (10-12) - 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, who will give you what is your own?

- Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:2
- J. C. Ryle, "The doctrine is, that he who is dishonest and unfaithful in the discharge of his duties on earth, must not expect to have heavenly treasure ... "Let the disciples remember that unfaithfulness in money transactions, is a sure evidence of a rotten state of soul."

C. Resolve to serve God, not money (13) - "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."

- Jesus does not say "should not serve" but "cannot serve."
- 19 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. Matthew 16:19-21 NLT

Our use of money does not get us into heaven, but it does show if we are already the recipients of grace.