

# Luke

## The Gospel for Everyone

Study 25 | Luke 16:1-17

### News and Needs

#### Upcoming Events:

- **Resurrection Prayer Night** - On the second Thursday of every month at 7:00 PM, we will gather at the church to pray for the needs of our church, our neighborhood, and the world. Join us to worship God and ask him as a Father for all that we need. The dates for your calendar are: **March 11**, April 8, and May 13.

#### Opportunities to Serve:

- **New Orleans Mission Trip** - Our churches will be sending our 5th team to partner with Redeemer Presbyterian Church of New Orleans. We will continue to engage in the rebuilding efforts post Hurricane Katrina of 2005. Construction/maintenance skills are appreciated, but not required to attend this trip. Children under 12 are not recommended to attend. Children 12-18 require a parent/guardian to attend. **April 24-May 1**

\$275 per person covers lodging, lunch and breakfast for the trip, 5 dinners eating in, 1 lunch out, and car rental. NOT INCLUDED is airfare, 2 dinners out, and personal food items. Reserving a spot requires a \$100 non-refundable deposit. Final sign up deadline and entire balance due by April 4th.

If you are interested in raising financial support to cover the cost of your trip, please first contact Brian Steadman for guidelines and help.

Contact: Brian Steadman,  
[briansteadman@parkslopechurch.com](mailto:briansteadman@parkslopechurch.com)

### “Under New Management”

**1. What do you think is the point of the parable in verses 1-9? How do you reconcile what Jesus says in v. 9 about making friends through "unrighteous wealth" with what Jesus says about being wary of riches? Does Jesus really want us to think the dishonest manager should be commended for his shrewdness?**

This is one of the most difficult, if not the most difficult, parables in all of the Luke's gospel to figure out. Here are a few options, and I'll elaborate on the one I think makes the most sense.

A. The manager did a dishonest thing in reducing the bills owed to the master's creditors. However, the manager was thinking ahead and trying to get the most he could while he had a chance. Thus Jesus (the master) is commending his crafty, forward looking use of resources (v. 9).

B. The manager was dishonest in how much he was actually charging his master's creditors. Thus, when he reduces their bills, he's actually just cutting out his unjust commission. The manager's hope is that this action will put him in the good graces of these debtors and they will return the favor and look out for his needs once the master fires him. Thus, Jesus (the master) is commending the manager's creative use of foresight to provide for his life later (v.9). By choosing generosity over financial gain, the manger has also looked towards God who rewards the generous with heavenly riches (e.g. Zacchaeus).

C. Jews were forbidden to lend money with interest. To get around this, they created a loophole of lending in kind, using things like oil or wheat as commodities for charging interest. So when the manager deducts from the debtors' bills, he is just deducting what the dishonest *master* had charged them in interest. Thus, the debtors would be grateful to the manager for reducing their bill to the principal owed, and thus, perhaps take care of the manager when he loses his position soon. The master will not be able to lay a charge against the manager for doing this, for then his own dishonesty would be exposed. The master can only sit back and admire his former manager's clever approach (thus the master in v. 9 is the master in the story, not Jesus).

I'll take option C. Johnny, tell him what he's won!

Why option C? Option A just doesn't make sense because then Jesus is commending dishonesty in order to provide for yourself in dire circumstances later. Which does not square with what Jesus says all over the

- **HOSTS NEEDED FOR DINNER WITH FRIENDS**

As a host you agree to make dinner for several guests. The number of guests is up to you; ideal is 6 guests but that it totally up to the host. Just let us know. We will take care of assigning guests and notifying them of your dinner, all you do is open up your home for a great evening of fellowship and food; and you will have a lot of fun doing it. Right now we are looking for hosts for April 15, 16, or 17, so if you are interested in hosting a dinner and could do so on one of those days, please contact David Chatburn, [dchatburn@msn.com](mailto:dchatburn@msn.com), (646-245-1564), please include a contact phone number. If you would like to be a guest, please wait for upcoming announcements.

place about being wary of the pitfalls of wealth, false security in what it can acquire for you being chief. Or he's using an unethical example to make a point about using resources wisely. Which is just confusing.

Option B kind of makes sense, since then Jesus wouldn't be commending dishonesty or using some kind of weird negative example to make a positive point. But, it still doesn't quite square with v. 9, which plainly says, "make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth." The sense of the parable is not that the manager is now doing a noble thing when he reduces the debts, he's still a shrewd, "dishonest" manager at the end of the day. Nor is the sense comparable to what went on in the repentance of Zacchaeus, who paid back what he stole, to make right the injustices he committed, in response to the gracious salvation shown him by Jesus.

Option C seems to make the most sense because it doesn't identify the master of the parable with Jesus. The master is a shady character in the story who is commending his soon to be fired shady manager for at least covering his rear end before he gets sacked. So, what is the point Jesus is getting at? Remember, parables are not necessarily homey, pastoral words of wisdom couched in metaphor or illustration. They are quite often, a sign of judgement on the people to whom Jesus delivers them too. They are cryptic warnings that only those who have ears to hear and eyes to see will press on to follow Jesus and know what the Master means to teach them about his coming kingdom, a kingdom that will clash with the current kingdoms vying for control of God's people.

This message of conflict Jesus has been alluding to over and over again in the gospel of Luke. Israel wants a confrontation with Rome, they want to defeat the Romans and drive them out of their land. Jesus is telling Israel, if you will not follow me, your true King, in the way of true kingdom warfare, that leads to true peace, you will get your war. And you will lose that war. Therefore, if that war is what you want, it would be a good idea for you to make as many friends as possible by whatever means at your disposal, honest or dishonest. Because when the Master's judgement comes to boot the manager out of his place, in your desperation you'll be looking to find a lasting place to care for you (a better sense of what "eternal dwellings" means, v. 9) when that devastation comes. That devastation does in fact come, 70 A.D..

So what's the connection to the teaching of Jesus that follows in v. 10-17? It's a bit confusing, but I think here, Jesus does turn to moral and pragmatic advice about how a disciple is to be a good steward of the resources that God has granted him and the temptation to serve money, the gift, rather than the Giver. Sort of like saying, "On that note, let me say a little something about money while we're at it." Not without warrant since Jesus does the same thing in ch. 14 in giving instruction in humility in the context

of feasting, then goes on to tell a more cryptic parable about feasting, that develops who Jesus is as King, what his kingdom will be like, and how that kingdom is coming.

**2. Read verses 10-13. How does being faithful with the possessions we have been given prepare us to be faithful with 'true' riches? What are some practical ways we become torn between the two masters? What sorts of true riches are forfeited when we serve money rather than serve God with our possessions?**

Often when you find yourself a neurotic, anxious, crazy mess of a person, you can ask yourself, "What is it that I'm trying to protect from threat? What am I trying to protect from being taken away from me? What am I clenching in my fists?" The answer to that question can be many things, sometimes many things at once, but too often, it's money. Or at least the security/comfort/stability/protection it offers. Money is a merciless task master. There is never enough and our finiteness reminds us that we can't adequately protect it. It drives us to physical, emotional, relational, psychological, and spiritual ills.

Hopefully you can encourage your group to discuss the pull between serving God and serving money. There are many practical ways we become torn. It is tricky to walk the thin line between a love of money that is detrimental to kingdom life and the good gift that wealth and possessions can and should be when God gives them to us. But getting at that anxiousness/neurosis we feel in our lives often is a good thermometer to check our attitude towards our money. You can also ask it other ways, such as, "What do you give most of your time to?" and "What do you spend your money on?"

**3. In light of verses 14-17, how does the good news of God's coming kingdom challenge typical attitudes toward and uses of money? List some ways we could be faithful to God's kingdom with the wealth he's given each of us. How can we serve God and others with our possessions? And how can we both challenge and help one another to be more faithful with our riches?**

Jesus begins his ministry and announces, "Repent and believe the good news, for the kingdom of God is at hand." He then goes on over and over again to show that his kingdom turns upside down the values of the world. That true riches come from the inside, not the outside. And that the end result of the kingdom informs how we work towards seeing that kingdom realized in the present. To embody this message, Jesus is constantly healing the sick, welcoming the outcast, and providing for the poor.

While the Pharisees might have pointed to much in the Old Testament that encourages people to see their wealth as a sign of God's favor, Jesus throughout the gospels points to other Old Testament laws, the ones that commanded God's people to use their wealth to care for the marginalized, hurting, outcast, stranger, and poor. When he says, "The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached," Jesus is in effect saying that what God intends to do through Jesus, the Law and the Prophets that have come before would stand up in approval.

How can we hold one another accountable to be good stewards of the resources God has given us? Do people need help with budgets? Do people need to let someone in to give a much needed word of wisdom in terms of how they spend their money? Can we provide resources to land jobs for those unemployed or underemployed? Can we provide for those struggling financially? Can we consider caring for the homeless and hungry in Brooklyn? How do we continue to remain aware of the needs of others around the world once the immediate attention begins to fade (i.e. Haiti, Chile, Ethiopia)? Who may have the gifts and abilities to serve on our church's Mercy Team to assist individuals and our church as a whole faithfully steward the the resources God has granted?

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THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

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