

The Parables of Jesus #33
The Parable of the Unjust Steward
(Lk. 16:1-13)
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Introduction

A. We have seen in our study of the parables that Jesus sometimes used these stories to answer or challenge his critics

1. Remember the parable of the prodigal son was told in answer to criticism by scribes and Pharisees of the ministry of Jesus
2. Parables are a wonderful way to make people think

B. Tonight we come to a parable in Luke 16 of the Unjust Steward

1. Many believe this to be a very difficult parable to understand
2. If you want to spend some time thinking about the meaning of parables, this one is a good one to study

C. Let me set up the parable by asking you some questions

1. How resourceful are you in the use of things God has given to you?
2. What kind of effort do you put forth to secure God's eternal blessings?
3. Can you be trusted with the things of God?

D. This parable will challenge us to consider the meaning of faithful service

I. THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD (Lk 16:1-13)

A. Background

1. Some think this parable was told at the same time, or near the same time as the parables found in Luke 15
2. That may be true, however, there seems to be a distinction made between the audience of Lk 15 and that of Lk 16
 - a. Lk 15:2-3 - tells us those parables were spoken to the scribes and Pharisees
 - b. Lk 16:1 - tells us that this parable was told specifically to his disciples
3. Disciples need a "wake-up call" as much as his critics

B. The gist of the story

1. There was a rich man who had a steward (a house manager or overseer of an estate)
2. The steward was accused of wasting his masters goods
 - a. Lk 15:13 says this is what the younger son did with his inheritance
 - b. Lk 16:1 says the steward wasted his masters belongings
3. The master did two things upon hearing this accusation
 - a. first he called him to account of his stewardship (an audit?)
 - b. second he fired him
4. The steward realized he had a problem
 - a. basically, he wondered what he was going to do now that he had lost his stewardship
 - b. he couldn't dig (too old/lazy/out-of-shape/proud?) to be a common laborer
 - c. he couldn't beg (admitted he was ashamed to do that)
5. So he formulated a plan
 - a. he would make friends with his master's debtors so they would provide for his needs once he was dismissed
 - b. one owed a hundred measures of oil, so he cut it in half and got the man to pay quickly
 - c. another owed a hundred measures of wheat, so he cut the bill to 80 and got the man to pay that part
 - d. it was a shrewd move to gain favor with his master's debtors
6. The master had an interesting response
 - a. it is not that the master was necessarily pleased with fact that his steward had discounted what was owed by his debtors
 - b. it is simply that the master recognized what the steward was doing
7. Jesus gives the reasoning behind the response
 - a. the children of the world are in their generation wiser than the children of light
 - b. it is not an approval of the steward's morality or ethics, it is a recognition of the shrews effort to provide for himself

II. LESSONS TO LEARN FROM THE UNJUST STEWARD (Lk 16:9-13)

A. Make friends by means of unrighteous mammon (Lk 16:9)

1. This is a difficult vers for it doesn't seem to make sense for Jesus to be telling people to make friends by means of unrighteous wealth
2. To me it makes sense if you read Jesus as being a bit sarcastic
 - a. the steward was commended for being shrewd in worldly matters and providing for his own benefit
 - b. in this verse Jesus introduces the idea of eternal or everlasting home
 - c. perhaps it is this challenge: "go ahead, be like the steward; see if you can be shrewd enough to prepare for eternity by making the kind of friends you get with unrighteous wealth
 - d. the story illustrates what a shrews steward could do to prepare for his future once he was no longer a steward
 - e. for the stewards of God, however, it drives home the point that there is no one else to turn to for eternal blessings except God
3. 1 Cor 4:2
Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. (NKJ)
 - a. the steward in the parable was shrewd according to the world
 - b. how should the steward of God demonstrate such wisdom?
 - c. God's stewards are shrewd when they are faithful -- put as much energy into faithfulness as the man in the story did in providing for himself after his dismissal from his master

B. Learn the principle of faithfulness (Lk 16:10-12)

1. The point is stated two ways
 - a. a man who is faithful in little is faithful in much
 - b. a man who is unjust in little is unjust in much
2. Then he follows up with two questions
 - a. if you haven't been faithful in unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?
 - b. if you haven't been faithful with that which belongs to another, then who will give you thing of your own?
3. Note a couple of other verses that bear out this point
 - a. Matt 25:21 (and 23)
His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (NKJ)

b. Heb 3:1-2

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. (NKJ)

4. Someone once said that God has not called us to be successful, rather, he has called us to be faithful

C. Learn to focus on the true master (Lk 16:13)

1. A servant cannot serve two masters

- a. he will hate one and love the other (affectionate regard for one, but unaffectionate disregard for the other)
- b. he will hold to one (heed, obey, render service to one)
- c. he will despise the other (disrespect, neglect, desertion)

2. Lk 11:17 - a house divided against itself cannot stand

3. You cannot serve both God and worldly riches

a. Matt 4:10

Then Jesus said to him, ""Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' " (NKJ)

b. Rom 6:16

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? (NKJ)

c. James 4:4

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (NKJ)

d. I Jn 2:15-17

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world-- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (NKJ)

Conclusion

A. What kind of steward are you?

B. Can you be as shrewd in faithfulness as the steward in worldly riches?

C. Invitation