

Stories That Change The World

Part #10 – “On Stewardship” Text: Luke 16:1-15

Delivered at Central Baptist Church on July 23th, 2017, by Pastor Steve Edelman

Introduction:

What has your heart? Money or Jesus? I know this guy who really understands what it means to be a good steward with money. In a way, he became a mentor to me. When we were sitting down enjoying a meal together he told me the journey that led him to managing millions of dollars. He was telling me that his childhood was difficult. He mentioned an incident in grade 10 that that exposed his shortcomings and hurt him. He was asked to stand up in class and the teacher belittled him because he was flunking. In front of everyone, the schoolteacher said, “you will not succeed in life because you are stupid.” My mentor told me that he struggled with academics and memory work all throughout his schooling. In fact, he failed grade 12 twice. He does not have a high school diploma. This experience left him feeling confined and limited by the world’s standards. He had low self-esteem and felt useless.

In his teens, he got a job stocking shelves at a grocery store for a dollar an hour. In his boredom, he decided to make a game out of it because it was so mundane. He started to time himself as he was pricing grocery items and putting them on the shelf. As he got faster and faster, he realized that he was limited by the speed of his price stamper. He started to refine the price stamper and used oil to speed it up. His clever productivity was noticed by management. The boss started timing him as he was working and said that everyone else was taking 2 to 3 minutes and he was doing it 20 seconds. The boss started to pay him to fix everyone’s price stamper and create a more efficient system.

My mentor became a very clever successful entrepreneur who has retired with several millions of dollars. He has started and sold off multiple businesses which led us into a conversation of how he views and uses money.

At 18 years old, through the ministry of Young Life the Spirit of God exposes his sin and pain. Jesus transformed him and began to heal his hurtful past. As a result, my mentor wanted to invest back into a ministry of changing lives through building relationships for the sake of Jesus. It changed the way he viewed his time and money.

After retirement, he continued to use his money and skills for the sake of the Kingdom of God. He always lived in a modest house and drove a minivan for many years. During his business years, he learned to invest in the stock market. He would use his profits to send teenagers to camp and support all kinds of ministries. The time he put into investing was often equivalent to a full-time job. I asked him why he continued to do this into retirement? Why? Because Jesus changed my life! He would donate up to \$20,000 per year for youth to go to camp to hear about Jesus. At one point, I asked him why? He responded with, “what if one teenager comes to Jesus? Steve, it’s the Lord’s money! I have prayed about it and believe that is what God wants me to do. Do you want to build God’s Kingdom or not?” We did see many teenagers give their lives to Jesus because he was a resourceful, clever steward who was big-hearted for the sake of the gospel.

Today, I want to show you how Jesus transforms the use of everything that we own. We can become stuck in a selfish, dishonest lifestyle until we are exposed. So often we say that we are following God but our grip on our possessions tell a different story. We can also be dishonest with ourselves and others and hold on to our stuff tightly! Do we use our finances and talents effectively to make disciples for Jesus? Are we purposefully managing our finances, time, and skills to strategically reach people for Jesus? What has your heart? Jesus or money?

We are in the middle of a series called “Stories that Change the World.” Jesus’ parables are stories designed to transform us from the inside out.

This morning, we are going to be looking at the parable of the dishonest manager and the challenge that is given to us. As you are going to see, Jesus transforms the affections of our heart - to a heart of stewardship for the sake of Christ. I am going to break it up into three parts:

First, **THE HEART’S LIES**; second, **THE HEART’S AFFECTIONS**; and third, **THE HEART’S MASTER**.

1. THE HEART’S LIES

We too, need to see that our hearts can easily fall into selfish deceitfulness. The parable opens with two major characters. A rich man and a manager or steward of the rich man’s estate. The manager has the authority to run the owner business. He would

oversee the sales, loans, and collecting debts for his master's estate. The manger would also earn a living by managing the owners resources.

Look with me at verse 1 and 2, "He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. 2 And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager."

In this parable, Jesus is talking to His disciples. The standard interpretation of this parable is that the manager acted corruptly throughout the story. He misused his master's goods during his stewardship for his own benefit. He finally proceeded to falsify the accounts of the master's business to reduce the amounts owed to obtain their goodwill. Let's start with the manager who has been caught in sin. Let's look at how his sin was exposed.

a) His sin exposed. (v1&2a)

In verse 1, we see that he was formally charged because he was being dishonest and pocketing some of the money. In other words, he got caught in his dishonesty. Some of the scholars suggest that he was taking more than his share than what was agreed upon by the owner. Whatever he did, he was dishonest and got caught in a scandal. Our natural tendency is to cover it up or create a story that gets us off the hook. Sooner or later, the lies you tell come tumbling down like a house cards when exposed.

Look with me at verse 2a, "And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management..." In other words, he got caught in a web of lies and the owner now has proof. The proof will be in the books and history of your dealings.

Have you ever caught someone who is in a lie and when confronted still won't admit it? This scenario has played out in my own household on numerous occasions. One day, I noticed that a chocolate bar was missing from the location I placed it. No, it wasn't my wife. I also noticed that my youngest was nowhere to be found. I called out her name and heard nothing back. I found her with a very suspicious look on her face. I asked her what she was doing and she said "nothing." I asked her directly, "did you eat daddy's chocolate bar?" "No," she replied. "Can you open your mouth? Why are your

teeth covered in dark stuff?” “I don’t know!” She says. I said “Did you lie to me?” “Yes daddy, I’m sorry.” She says. Why can’t we just admit the truth? Why does it take hard evidence to change a sinful pattern!

Next, the manager is faced with the consequences because of his actions.

b) His consequences. (v2b&3)

Look with me at verse 2b, “for you can no longer be manager.” Here is the in-depth Greek interpretation: YOU ARE FIRED! Sin has consequences and the manager is faced with the reality of how he has been living.

In verse 3, we see the consequences start to sink in, “And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg.’”

There comes a point in life when consequences are necessary and need to happen for character change. Facing his sin head on forced change. We too are like the false manager when we lie to God and others. What happens when you get caught? Will you just continue to lie your way out of the situation? What will it take for you to stop?

What causes us to mislead others? It’s because we believe the lies ourselves are afraid of the consequences of the truth. We are dishonest because we believe that we are better off living with our pet sins, rather than living in freedom with God. Just like the manager, our hearts are easily deceived by falsehoods and we hold on to them or even hide them in our heart.

These lies can come in many forms which lead us into a life of sin.

Here are some of the lies that lead us away from God and I quote:

1. There is no truth. **John 14:6**
2. If I am good enough - I will get to heaven. **Isaiah 64:6**
3. When I am on my own, I can do what I want. **Romans 13:1**
4. The things I do now are not important. **1 Cor 3:12-13**
5. My past determines my worth. **Philippians 3:13**
6. The easiest way is the best way. **Hebrews 12:4-6**
7. If it feels good, do it. **Hebrews 11:25**
8. My friends and family will be with me forever. **2 Cor 5:10**

9. I do not have to change to follow Christ. **1 Cor 15:33**
10. What I listen to and watch does not affect the way I think.
Philippians 4:8
11. There is no consequence for my sins. **Romans 6:23**
12. Premarital sex has no effect on my life. **1 Cor 6:15-18**
13. Serving God is boring. **Proverbs 34:8**
14. Money will bring happiness and security! **1 Tim 6:10**

Andrew Strom says, "Many deceptions only appeal to us because there is something inside us that "wants" to believe them. They are seductive because of darkness and wrong motives in our own lives. We must search our hearts and root these out."

This parable describes a manager who is enslaved by the grip of mammon (the Greek word for money.) He builds a career based on falsehoods until he is exposed. How much of your life is built on lies that you believe? What we believe is directly related to how we use and view money. We too, need to be exposed by the Spirit of God so that we can fully give everything to Him. As you will see, we can waste our resources living for ourselves. Secondly, we need Jesus to change our heart's affections because it's connected to our stewardship.

2. THE HEART'S AFFECTIONS.

Secondly, we need Jesus to change our heart's affections to be good stewards for Him. Look with me at verse 4. The manager says, "I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses."

The manager quickly decides to make the best of a bad situation. He uses his clever stewardship abilities to make friends because he is going to need them when he is out of work.

He did this by:

i) Giving discounts. (v6&7)

In verse 6 he gives a 50% discount and verse 7 a 20%.

The manager reduced the price by removing any commission for himself.

ii) The debts were difficult to collect.

- Reducing the amounts by removing his commission fee, the manager provided a massive increase of money for his master because they could pay off their loan.
- I think you would be pretty happy if you received a 50% or even a 20% discount on your mortgage, or student loan.

Who is loved and has friends now?!?!

In verse 8a, the master commends the manager for his cleverness. Which brings up the major controversy of the entire parable. Why did Jesus tell a story that applauded this manager? The only thing that makes sense and that is consistent with the character of Jesus is that the owner commended the manager for his stewardship and not his sin! The manager was skillfully planning for his future and using his financial expertise to make friends for himself because he was going to need them.

Look with me at verse 8, “The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.”

The parable ends there. In verse 8 and 9, Jesus starts to explain his intention behind the story. He says, “For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. 9 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.”

Jesus contrasts the difference in how the world and Christians use their resources. It’s kind of an insult to his disciples. Jesus is saying, the world is smarter or more business savvy in dealing with each other than you Christians. Disciples, you can learn from them. Use your skills and resources to make friends for the sake of the gospel and plan for the future. Jesus draws a line for His disciples by contrasting the difference in how the world and Christians use their assets.

a) Living for the world produces worldly things. (sons of the world - v8b)

Those who live for the affections of worldly things are called the sons of the world. The sons of this world are people driven by secular values, are clever in arranging things for themselves, and they are careful in their dealings with one another. Generally, the sons of this world are wise enough to create a good life for themselves.

Their heart's primary desire is to take care and better one's self. They often show more concern and skill in taking care of their earthly well-being than do the followers of Jesus.

In Contrast:

b) Living for Christ produces eternal things. (sons of light - v8b)

Our heart's affection for Christ produces eternal things. Those who live for Jesus are the sons and daughters of light. The people of the light are those who are committed to the light of Jesus and spreading the good news. Unfortunately, we rarely see the same clever wisdom used in building the Kingdom of God. We don't see the same commitment to the same degree, to loving each other, reaching the lost, to discipleship, and building His church. We don't see the same strategic investment to accomplish God things. We need to be dedicated to our relationship with God and stewardship flows out of that. True riches means spiritual stewardship and responsibility in God's kingdom, and ultimately heavenly reward as well.

Jesus is counselling his disciples and us to increase their stewardship for the sake of Kingdom. A scholar says, "This understanding of resources runs counter to the values of our culture, which instills in us the idea that what we have earned is ours and that we can use it as we want. Jesus makes the point that what we have is entrusted to us, and God watches how we use it. It asks us to reflect on what God does when he gives us our resources and encourages us to consider how to direct their use." Look at verse 9 which says, *"I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."*

Randall L. Roberts says, "First, we can invest more in people than in things. The manager used people for his own ends. In contrast we are to use our possessions and resources to bring eternal benefit to others. To the rich man the most important thing was to look after his needs in this world, even if that involved dishonesty. But Jesus did not agree with that view. We are managers over his goods. His question is, are you investing what I have given you in things or in people?"

God created us to love the people we rub shoulders with and use our possessions, but materialists love things and use people. How you spend your time and

money demonstrates who or what you are living for. Our heart's affections are exposed in how we use our time and money. Our resources shouldn't just be counted and hoarded, but planted for a Kingdom harvest. The stewardship of money is the means in which we live out our faith. Greed and selfishness have no place in the Christian life.

Next, living faithfully for Christ multiplies Kingdom things.

c) Living faithfully for Christ multiplies Kingdom things. (V10)

Look with me at verse 10, *“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. 11 If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?”*

Many Christians view money as evil or bad. Generating income is necessary and a God-given gift for us to use for His glory. Therefore, making money is not unspiritual, it's being faithful – the problem is how you use it. Randy Alcorn says, “When we see money as a toy to play with instead of a tool to impact eternity, our vision becomes shortsighted and unfocused.”

Are you faithful with what God has given you? Are you faithful in stewarding your time, resources, and skills? We all have a spiritual responsibility to build God's kingdom with what He has entrusted you.

Story – A builder who built a house for himself and one for Jesus.

The irony is - God doesn't need our money. He wants us to learn to give back because He gave everything. Whatever our heart loves - is what we give to. It really comes down to what our heart loves and too often it's our stuff. When we love Jesus, we become good stewards because we love Him.

Murray Harris says, “All too often we regard stewardship simply as a matter of our giving to God, but this aspect is secondary. Before we can give, we must possess, and before we possess we must receive. Therefore, stewardship is, in the first place, receiving God's good and bounteous gifts. And once received, those gifts are not to be used solely for our own good. They must also be used for the benefit of others, and ultimately for the glory of God the giver. The steward needs an open hand to receive from God and then an active hand to give to God and to others.”

As we have seen, our heart's affections determine our stewardship. We need Jesus to change our heart's affections so we can be faithful stewards for Him. Thirdly, our hearts cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve both God and money.

3. THE HEART'S MASTER

Look with me at verse 13, "No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Jesus makes a critical statement in which you are faced with a fundamental choice of allegiance. No one can serve two masters. We all have made a choice to serve God or money. You cannot love both. Devotion will be offered to one, while the other will be rejected. If God is our master then the resources we receive are a gift from God to be used to advance the cause of Jesus. Someday, God will judge the use of our time, money and skills. Are you handling them in a way that reflects his desires and values? We must be wise in considering how God desires us to handle his resources. The pursuit of wealth or mammon can cause us to ignore God, undervalue family, walk over people, use them, act unethically, and engage a host of other destructive actions. To pursue wealth for the sake of wealth means you are worshiping the God of mammon. Jesus is saying to make a choice, a person cannot serve both God and money.

Larry Burkett says, "When we surrender every area of our lives - including our finances - to God, then we are free to trust Him to meet our needs. But if we would rather hold tightly to those things that we possess, then we find ourselves in bondage to those very things."

Which brings me to the question - **How do you serve God with everything we have?** What does it look like to be a good steward for the sake of Jesus?

Randall L. Roberts says, "We must invest more in eternity than we do in tomorrow. How? By investing more in people than in things, by investing more in the soul than in the body. In this parable, Christ clearly states that there are some things that last, and some that don't. Some things are of true value, but others are only of passing value. There is a time for fun and games, and there is a time to be deadly serious about the future. So, he says, don't play games with the future. Invest in the

things that count. If we are to learn from the unprincipled, we must shrewdly learn to invest our energy, wisdom, astuteness in securing the eternal future. We must learn to invest more in eternity than we do in tomorrow.”

**How do we become good stewards?
Invest. Be all in for Christ.**

1. Tithe.
2. Invest in relationships for the sake of the gospel.
3. Some have created charitable trusts to send kids to camp.
4. Support Christian charities.
5. Get creative.
6. Pray about it and see what God leads you to do!

Remember that people only need three things: food, clothing, and housing.

Jesus speaks to the sin of double-mindedness or, should we say double-heartedness. We need to realign our lives' practices to those of God's kingdom. This kind of discipleship is not easy or popular because it requires a heart-level openness and spiritual transformation. Following Christ is foundationally about what we love and worship.

When we love money – it's a mis-valuing of what is truly valuable. We are lovers of money. Money is valued and sought because of the pleasure, honor, and the temporary security that it brings. However, Jesus is looking at our heart and not our pocket book. Actually, this human valuing of wealth is despised by God. Once again the gospel calls us to an inner-person response of consciously adopting God's kingdom values and turning away from building our own Kingdom. This is possible only as we accept the deep love of Jesus and turn from sin.

As we have seen, our hearts can easily fall into selfish deceitfulness. Secondly, we need Jesus to change our heart's affections so we can be faithful stewards for Him. Thirdly, our heart can't serve both God and money. The way we use our money exposes us. Are you living for God or money?

Conclusion – Worship Team.

Maybe the Spirit of God is exposing you this morning. Is He telling you that you have been worshiping things and not Him? Can you to let go and stop living for yourself,

but to be fully invested in what He wants to do through you? Jesus gave His life and His everything, so you can walk through the door of freedom. Do you know what He did for you? Once we deeply understand what He did for us, we start to sacrifice our resources to spread the good news. The good news is that you can be free from chasing the dollar and experience His love and joy right now and for eternity. You can't take the dollar with you when you die anyways! So, what holds you back? When you surrender all of yourselves including your resources it, Jesus changes the desires of your heart. It changes you from the inside out. From being selfish to invested. When we know, and understand this love - we want to become good stewards so we can pass it on the love that has been given to us.

David Livingstone says, "I place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God. If anything will advance the interests of the kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping it I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time or eternity."

What has your heart? Money or Jesus?

- **Read Thank You Card**
- **Worship Song**
- **Urban Adventures commissioning**

What if we unselfishly collectively used our resources and did whatever it took reach our community? What would happen? Faithful discipleship reproduces itself by living like Christ in the company of others, therefore, the disciple is resourceful and generous with what God has given them.

Benediction:

1 Cor. 15:58 - Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Rom. 15:13 - May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.