

week 14 : *the one with the scoundrel*

Scripture to Read: Luke 16:1-13

1 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.’

3 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. 4 I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’

5 So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’

6 He said, ‘A hundred measures¹ of oil.’

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?’

He said, ‘A hundred measures² of wheat.’

He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’

8 The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world³ 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,⁴ so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

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? 13 No servant can

¹ About 875 gallons.

² Between 1,000 and 1,200 bushels.

³ The Greek word is ‘age.’

⁴ Greek ‘mammon’, a Semitic word for money or possessions; also v.11; rendered ‘money’ in v.13.

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.”

Summary of Luke 16:1-13

Jesus tells his disciples a story about a scoundrel of a manager who showed daring, cunning, commitment, and resourcefulness in a sticky situation—and observes how seldom these traits are found in Christians in our pursuit of God’s ways. When he returns, Jesus wants us to rejoice at the way we have handled this world’s wealth—for the kingdom, not for ourselves.

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation

“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.” [Luke 16:10]

Questions for Personal Study and/or Group Discussion

- If you were to look at someone else’s checkbook, what might you discover? What does your checkbook say about you?
- Consider the manager’s behavior. What is there to commend in him? What might we criticize? Some commentators assert that it was common in that day for a manager to add his own “commission” to a public debt. If it is the case here that the manager is not so much cheating his master as he is disadvantaging himself, what new light is shed on the passage?
- Look at Jesus’ words in v.8 [retranslated]: *For the children of this age are more shrewd than are the children of the light.* What does he mean? Who are “the children of this age”? How do they contrast with “children of the light”?
- Is it possible that worldly people (“children of this age”) show more resourcefulness in worldly things than Christians do in spiritual things? Discuss.
- How does this parable speak to our need to be prepared to stand before God and give account of our lives?

- In v.10-13 Jesus transitions into wisdom about money and possessions. What are his primary points? What has particular relevance to your life?
- Why is our stewardship of little things so important? What experience have you had with this principle? Are there little things in which God is asking you to be faithful? What “next step” of faithfulness is God calling you to take in your path as a disciple?
- In what ways might our church apply Jesus’ teaching as we simplify and clarify our understanding of what it means to be a fruitful church in our community and world? What kind of “reassessments of accounts” might we need to consider?

Notes and thoughts...

John Calvin on the manager: “Christ meant...that heathen and worldly men are more industrious and clever in taking care of the ways and means of this fleeting world than God’s children are in caring for the heavenly and eternal life, or making it their study and exercise. By this comparison he reproves our worse than spineless laziness that we do not at least have the same eye to the future that heathen men have to feathering their nests in this world.” [John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 3 vols. (Gran Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972, 2:112.

Jesus and wealth: “Luke’s Gospel has a lot to say about wealth and its management, but Jesus nowhere denounces wealth in itself. Instead he constantly puts people on their guard against its corrosive effects on their moral values and priorities in living (1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19). In Jesus’ parable wealth is an opportunity for investment for the kingdom now and our own interests in the day of Christ’s coming (Matthew 25:37-40). [Douglas J.W. Milne, *Let’s Study Luke*, Sinclair B. Ferguson, series editor (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2005), 250]

Tips for Parents with Young Children

The church meeting at your supper table. The following steps are “field-tested” ideas to help direct theological discussions between

parents and their children while also building the children’s theological vocabularies so that they are increasingly familiar with biblical concepts. Remember: a brief, God-focused time together is better than a long, task-oriented time in which everyone is miserable.

The discussion questions and tips are offered to help you and your children grow in relationship with each another and with Christ. They are meant to be supportive and not constraining. Therefore, do not feel bound by any questions or pressured to follow the steps too rigidly. Follow the Spirit’s leading and don’t be a religious parent who is rigidly inflexible and who makes this time together drudgery rather than delight.

If you miss a night, or if conversation gets off track, or if your family occasionally just wants to talk about something else, don’t stress—it’s inevitable. For your children, the point is to learn what they are thinking about God, to help them know and love Jesus as God and Savior, and to teach them how to articulate and explain their Christian faith. For parents, the point is to instruct children and each other, thereby creating a family culture in which every member freely and naturally talks about God and prays to him together. In short, the goal is that your family would open the Bible and grow in love for Jesus, one another, your church, and the world.

Finally, remember that family Bible study requires a sense of humor, so make sure to have some fun, enjoy some laughs, and build some memories.

This week’s parable is a little tricky for adults to grasp, and I think it’s especially so for children. My advice is to focus on the clearer statements Jesus makes in v.10-13. This week’s daily tips reflect that emphasis.

Monday: Read Luke 16:10-12. Spend some time memorizing verse 10. Talk with your children about ways you are teaching them to take responsibility in little things and how success in little things opens the doors for greater responsibilities. You children are always teaching you about themselves. Likewise, we are always demonstrating before God and others what kind of people we are.

Tuesday: Read Luke 16:10-12 again. Talk about what it means to be a **steward**. The manager in the parable is a steward. Stewardship involves the faithful use of resources that belong to another. An important part of following Christ is the use of our material resources for God's purposes and to meet the needs of others. In fact, Scripture is clear that an authentic relationship with Christ *will find expression* in the faithful use of our resources for his purposes. He had authority to conduct business on behalf of his master. He was a slave who had significant authority in his master's household. How is that like being a parent? Being a child? Being a leader in the church? To whom must we all give an account of our stewardship of all that God has given us?

Wednesday: Review what your children learned in Wednesday Night Connection. Spend some time together praying for FPC, its leaders, and your friends at church.

Thursday: Read Luke 16:13. Remind your children that money is not evil, though it tempts many people to do evil things. Jesus says that we cannot serve both God and money. For those who love and serve God, money is not an evil, but its good and faithful stewardship is an eternally valuable means of worship and spiritual service. Talk with your children about how they can show that they love God more than money and possessions. This may be bringing a meal to a mom recovering from birth, to serving at a soup kitchen or giving money to someone you know who is struggling financially. Thank God for the generous giving of FPC members toward the operating budget, Faith Promise, and many others causes.

Friday: Teach your children that God wants us to share. Ask them what things they have a hard time sharing (e.g. toys) and explain how important it is to share. If there are things that they are good at sharing, make sure to note those things and to thank them for being generous. Ask them to also recall how other people have shared with them in ways which made them happy, so they see how wonderful it is to be blessed by a generous person.

Saturday: Quiz your children on Catechism questions or Bible memory verses they are learning. Pray that Phillip and Grant would have boldness in preaching the Word of God tomorrow. Also, pray

for the Sunday School teachers and for the musicians and choir members who serve us each Sunday.

Sunday: Before you leave for church, explain to your children that their ministry at church is to welcome new children, help their Sunday School teacher, serve others, and worship God in the service. After church, discuss with your children what they learned and what you learned.