

Luke 16:1-13; Col. 3:22-25; Using Money Properly I. By Making Friends for Eternity II. By Being Honest with It III. By Refusing to Serve It

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, money is a touchy and tricky subject to discuss. Everyone has their own view of how it functions and how much is enough. In previous generations it was asked- is meeting with a financial advisor acceptable- or can a Christian purchase life insurance or invest in the stock market? On the flip side, you may have heard of some pastor's spending over 3K on shoes or over 200K on a new car for his wife. Is that an acceptable use of money within the church? We all hear stories of pastors who have misused funds- but do we often think of how every member of the church will be held accountable for how they used their money. Not just pastors- we all need a proper view of worldly mammon. So the question before us is this- is financial wisdom at odds with holiness? Is money ultimately impure and unholy? I Tim. 6 is often misquoted- it is not money that is the root of all evil- but rather the love of money! This morning we come to what is often called the most difficult parable in that Jesus seems to encourage us to act like the dishonest manager. However, today we see that Jesus teaches us to properly view and use temporary means for an eternal purpose.

### **I. By Making Friends for Eternity**

After Jesus tells the parable in v. 1-7 Jesus applies this parable by saying in v. 8- the master commended the unjust manager for his shrewdness. Now this is very important- Jesus does not commend or encourage his dishonesty only his shrewdness. Now the word "shrewd" here is "Phronimos" meaning worldly wise. This manager, seeing that his time was short, made decisions that were pertinent and savvy. He was prudent in the few days that were left- so that he gained a practical and immediate benefit from his actions. Now this is the point of this parable. Jesus does not say- go and be unjust and dishonest- as we will see. Rather Jesus commends this man's foresight- his ability to plan for the future by using his position. This manager knew that his time as a steward was coming to a close- and he chose to act in a way that proves well for his future. Jesus applies this to us in v.9 – so you should use your earthly means to gain an eternal reward. Use earthly wealth

to gain heavenly friends. Use your possessions in this life to gain possessions in the life to come. Now this is a hard teaching. We know that Jesus is not saying that you can earn your way to heaven. You cannot purchase or buy your way into God's kingdom. No- giving your money to others or to the church is not going to secure the forgiveness of your sins or your adoptions as children of God. However, Jesus is saying that how you use your worldly wealth can have consequences for the future. Your reward- or your enjoyment of eternal blessings and your heavenly dwelling may be brighter- better- if you are faithful in your use of this money below. You can even gain friends in glory- to serve and benefit Christians below who will rejoice with you when you arrive above! Jesus uses the term- unrighteous mammon- or worldly possessions. Unlike the prodigal son who blew his money and gained no lasting friends, we are called to use our money for the good of what will be eternal friends. With foresight- planning for our eternal future. To be generous with our time and money- because you will be blessing to others. To give away what you cannot keep here below- to gain what cannot be lost up above. In other words- use temporary funds for eternal good. As you know, we are only temporary stewards of all that we receive. We cannot take anything earthly or worldly with us. But we can use the money of the master- the assets of the owner in order to gain a blessing after we die. The sons of this world- as Jesus says in v. 8- are often shrewder than we are. They know how to plan for their own earthly futures- knowing how to invest and prepare. They are wise- or prudent with their finances and reap their earthly reward. How much more shouldn't we be wise- knowing the proper use and purpose of money! Preparing not only for our earthly futures- but for our heavenly future! So think of tomorrow when you spend today. Be consistent in applying the truth and principles of God's word- even to our use of money and finances.

## **II. By Being Honest with It**

Jesus continues this call to wisdom in your finances in v. 10. Not only are we to think of the future by making eternal friends with our money, we are also to be honest and faithful today. Remember that this comes in the context of the dishonest manager- in order to guard against a false understanding and interpretation, Jesus exhorts us to be faithful and honest. Now what does dishonesty in finances mean? How can we wrongly- or

inappropriately use worldly mammon? Well, as the catechism applies the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment in QA 110- Jesus forbids not only outright theft, but also greed and pointless squandering of His gifts. Not only does Jesus forbid stealing- but He commands charity and generosity! To be faithful in the little things- in the small things of finances. How many major cases of fraud don't start with a few smaller transactions? It is hard, sometimes, to be faithful in the small stuff. For example, what if the lady checking out your cart at Walmart accidentally gives you an extra 5 dollars back after you paid cash? Kids- what would you do if you parents leave a quarter on the table- and you need a quarter for your next planned purchase? Jesus is calling us to be faithful with our worldly treasures- honest in the little things like how we make and use money. As we read in Col. 3 earlier, do your work not as an eye-pleaser; not seeking to please men but working as for the Lord. Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. In your work and in your spending- you are serving Christ! We serve Christ because we belong to Him! He has purchased us with His blood- ransoming us from the futile ways of this world. If all we have is a gift from His hand, how can we but joyfully serve Him with His own gifts! Note that Jesus says in v. 10- faithful in the little. He puts our money in perspective. Whatever you have- whatever wealth you have amassed- whatever your salary- it is a small thing to the Lord! But we are all called to be faithful in putting those gifts into practice. We have an inheritance in glory that is so much greater- better than any earthly mansion below! Remember what Jesus has already purchased for you- and where you are going! Think of what Jesus taught in Mt. 25 and the parable for the talents. One man put the talents to work- gained a return- and was praised by Jesus and given much in return- welcomed into the joy of the master! The other wicked servant did nothing with the talent- and was rebuked. His talent taken away and he missed out on the joy awarded to the faithful. The fact is- as v. 11 continues- those who prove themselves faithful with God's gifts today will be entrusted with true riches in the life to come! Remember that we are stewards- what we have received is not our own by right. That is the point of v. 12- whatever you have has been given to you- as a steward of God's gifts we recognize that we are dealing with the possessions of another. So when Jesus calls us to tithe- to support the church with our offerings- we do it because we are dealing with His gifts- it is not our

money. When it comes to writing out those checks for Christian education- we are dealing with the funds that God has entrusted to our care! So let us each be faithful and honest as we manage God's blessings! Money itself is not evil- it can be a great gift from God and when used properly- it can be blessing to others. However, worldly mammon can grow into the green monster of greed! It is the love of money that is to be avoided!

### **III. By Refusing to Serve It**

So there is one more aspect to consider- money has to be kept in its proper place! Jesus does not condone ignorance- He does not want us to be foolish when it comes to using His blessings. Rather use them wisely with a view towards holiness and the future. But this gift can grow into a beast that seeks to overthrow the true Master! Worldly mammon can grow into a cruel master! So Jesus concludes by teaching us to refuse to serve the things of this world. Finances, money, and possession are not worthy of our praise! In v. 13-14 we find those well-known words- no one can serve two masters. Imagine that you had two bosses- each issuing a conflicting order. You can't obey both- you have to choose which one to follow. Or kids, imagine that you are going to try out for a sport. But both soccer and basketball tryouts are on the same day and the same time. You have to choose- which one do you love the most! In a similar way, we have to choose which master we will follow- whose ideology will we accept- whose praise we will seek. If we choose worldly mammon to be our master. If we love money and we submit to the standards of worldly happiness and prosperity, then our lives will be governed by a constant desire for more. The almighty dollar will rule our lives- gaining it, keeping it, spending it- will be our driving force. Even in the so-called prosperity gospel of today- some people teach that if you become a Christian you will have more money or drive nicer cars. You all know that God's messengers have to travel in first class- right? We will think only of the present life and the physical body- drinking deeply at the fountain of worldly pleasures. What we watch, eat, feel, buy and enjoy will be the primary focus of our lives. The evolutionary mindset will rule our hearts- survival of the fittest- step on others to get ahead. And after amassing great wealth we think- eat drink and be merry. I have all I need. But your little kingdom will come crashing down. Think of what we saw this past week with Jeffery Epstein. So rich- he had everything he

wanted in this world- and his life ended with a sigh. Jesus says- you cannot have money as your master and God as your master. Only one can sit on the throne of your heart. So if you want God as your master- if you see the futility of things like money and worldly possessions- than your life will reflect this. As v. 13 says, you will serve God- obeying Him and His word. Refusing to rob God, but rather cheerfully give and lend to those in need. Faithfully supporting Christian ministries. You will love God- you will give your allegiance to Him. Because even if you give away all you have- but you do not have love- you gain nothing. So you Love the LORD with all your heart. And finally, you are devoted to Him- you have a lasting commitment to Him. He is your master and owner- all you have belongs to Him- even your very life is not your own. Not only today- but every day using your talents, time and possessions for Him and His glory. You cannot serve, love and be devoted to both. Now why would we do this? Why should choose the LORD over money- our God over worldly mammon- to be our master? Why serve the LORD with our time and money? Well- because He made us and takes care of us! Because we belong to Him- and every earthly and worldly possession belongs to Him as well. The cattle on the hills belong to Him as Psalm 50 says- every beast in the forest is His. Why should we love God? Because He loved us first! He set His heart on us to be His own! Why should we serve Him? Because Jesus came to serve and save us! Why serve things that are dead- things that cannot save- things that do not last? Rather choose to serve the Only living God who is the author and source of every good gift! How we use our money- what we do with the gifts we receive- indicates the condition of our heart.

To conclude, this teaching of Jesus is radically opposed by the spirit of our age- the spirit of consumerism. Work to make- make to have- spend to enjoy. But this worldly thinking enslaves us to things that are temporary and will not endure. People today don't like this reminder. Neither did the Pharisees in v. 14! But today we see that Jesus teaches us to properly view and use temporary means for an eternal purpose. In this teaching He frees us from the slavery to possessions- so that we can cheerfully enjoy them! So whatever you do- wherever you work and whatever you gain- use it as an opportunity to serve the Lord and bless fellow man.