Luke 16:1-13; Col 3:23-25; The Parable of the Worldly Wealth I. Using this Wealth with a View of Heaven II. Using this Wealth shows the State of our Heart

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, do you know what your net worth is? Or children- how much money do you have in your piggy bank? Well, today Jesus is going to speaking on the proper place, view and use of money within the context of the church. What percentage of your money belongs to God? Just the tithe- only 10 percent? Or is it true that all of your money is actually His- and we are but stewards of the gifts we receive. The past few parables have been on prayer, but today our parable from Luke 16 brings the context of money or earthly treasures to our focus. Notice that this parable was told to his disciples in v. 1. Jesus is not giving us a parable that outlines the way in which a person can be saved, but rather He is teaching His disciples how to be wise stewards during their earthly journey. How should the children of the light use money? This important point will keep us from getting lost in the weeds. The focus of this parable is not on gaining entrance into heaven. Being good with money or giving lots of money to the church will not help make you right with God. No, Jesus is speaking to those who are already disciples. These are the ones that are already born again by the Spirit and living in Christ by faith. Added to this fact, this particular parable does not present the unjust steward as an example to follow in all areas. Rather, the application applies to one specific area. In other words, we have to be careful when we apply this parable. Who is this parable speaking to- and how are we to learn from the example of this unjust steward? So our parable begins with a rich man who has a steward who is going to lose his job. He has been a wicked and wasteful manager. Before being sent home, this unjust steward or manager is required to close all accounts and give a final reconning of his work. So in order to prepare for a life after being fired, this unjust steward alters the books so that those who owed his master money would have less of a debt. In this way, the steward is preparing for life after he is fired. He is using his master’s money in order to gain friends for himself- giving a good deal and cancelling the debt of others so that they would be kind to him after he was fired. He changes the amount that is owed to his master for his own gain. But the focus is on the use of what is called unrighteous wealth as v. 9 puts it. So in speaking to the disciples- Jesus instructs them on how to be wise in their use of worldly wealth. When you die- how much of your money will you leave behind? All of it! But can you use your money today in such a way that you will gain in the future? That is the question before us. So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ teaches us to be wise in our use of worldly wealth in the Parable of the Shrewd Servant. The goal of money is before us- there is a way to use earthly wealth for eternal good!

**I. Using this Wealth with a View of Heaven**

So in order to avoid the misapplication of this parable, we are going to jump right in with the application of the parable given by Jesus in v. 9. What is the point of this parable? Not to be a bad employee- and surely not to swindle money from your boss. Rather- the application is that we are to make friends for yourself by means of unrighteous wealth. Something that is unholy and base- we would call common- can be used for a holy and sanctified purpose. Use earthly money for a heavenly purpose! Use worldly, passing wealth for a lasting, heavenly reward! The point is this- use your money with an eye on eternity- with a view of heaven! Just as this dishonest manager cooked the books in order to gain friends for the future- we are to use money today in order to gain friends for the future! Now it seems strange to learn a lesson from a crook- but Jesus says that the people of this world are often more shrewd in their dealings with others than those of the light. We are to be as shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves as Matthew 10 puts it. The unbelievers in our world today are often able to plan far into the future and many have become very successful in their ability to care for their future and their children. They are able to store up and as such do very well at taking care of their earthly well-being. Just to be clear- it is not the way in which the worldly amass wealth and friends that is the focus- but rather the very act of wisely planning for your future. But what future does Jesus have in mind? Not your earthly future- not your retirement years- but your eternal future. Those who have good financial health show shrewdness or worldly wisdom if you will. Perhaps I can illustrate this point with a present-day example. The manager in our parable is very similar to a politician of today.

How do our politicians become so wealthy? How is it that someone can be elected to office being relatively unknown and middle class only to amass great wealth in a few years? Well, politicians are usually very good at making friends. They use their position, insight, insider information and office to get rewarded. So that when they leave office, they never have to work again. Now we can say that they are very shrewd- they do a good job planning for their future while in office. Now we do not want to imitate their insider trading- we do not want to be like the crooked politicians in their abuse of office. But their ability to plan for their own future- to take care of themselves and to make friends for their future- is very shrewd. They are able to make friends for themselves by their present actions. These are the sons of this world. So Jesus uses the unjust, disobedient people of this life to illustrate the need for shrewdness. To be worldly wise. But how then are we to do this? Well, to apply this point Jesus says in v. 9- use unrighteous wealth to make friends. Use worldly wealth to gain spiritual friends. Use the money of today to gain rewards in the future. Be wise, shrewd or prudent in your dealings. Not to gain an earthly future- not to gain earthly friends- but to gain eternal friends. Just remember what happened to the prodigal son, he used money to gain earthly friends who abandoned him as soon as the money ran out. But rather, gain friends who will one day receive you into eternal dwellings- v. 9! Use earthly money in such a way that these friends will rejoice with you when you arrive in heaven! So to be clear, there is a way to use your money today that has eternal consequences. You can give up what you cannot keep in order to gain what cannot be lost! When you give money to Christian causes, when you support ministers or missionaries. When you give to Christian ministries and mission projects- you are in fact using your money in a way that makes spiritual friends. Earthly money will fail- it will soon run out or you will pass away and lose access to it. But if your money supports the preaching of the gospel- or gives a cup of cold water to the thirsty in the name of the Lord- you money can be used for lasting good! The money you give today will put a smile on the face of your spiritual friends- and they will welcome you into glory when your time on earth is over. In fact, our master wants us to use His money in this way! It delights our master when his servants use his money to gain spiritual friends!

**II. Using this Wealth shows the State of our Heart**

Continuing on, Jesus gives us additional application as an epilogue in v. 10. Although not exactly part of the parable, this application flows from it and applies the topic of money to the heart. You see, how you view and use money is an indicator of bigger issues- heart issues! If you are faithful with the little things in this life, Jesu will reward you with great and lasting things in the life to come. As v. 11 puts it- if you are faithful with unrighteous wealth, Jesus will entrust you with true riches! So what is more important to you- what do you live for? What gain or blessings does your heart seek? Are we living for gold and silver- does our life revolve around the almighty American dollar? What is this common money compared to true riches? In other words, here Jesus is testing our hearts to see if we can be trusted with true wealth! If you are good with earthly treasure, He will reward you with true, greater and heavenly treasure! Now I want to be clear here again- Jesus is not saying that if we give lots of money to the church then we will earn our salvation! You cannot buy God off- and no amount of money can be given as a ransom for a man’s soul. But it is also true that Jesus promises us a reward! If you are a good steward- if you use your money for God’s glory and your neighbor’s good- He who sees what you do in secret will reward you as Mt. 6 puts it. So if you support the church- if you use your common means to support gospel preaching and to help the afflicted- you will gain in glory! As we found in Matthew 25 a few weeks back- the master will say to you, well done good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in little, I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master! But what is this reward? Well, the reward or the true riches of v. 11 are the blessings that Jesus promises to His faithful servants. The reward of eternal life in a glorified body is one- but there are other riches like the crowns of glory spoken of in James 1 as the crown of life. Matthew 6 says that we can store up riches in heaven where no thief can steal nor moth consume! These riches are heavenly and not earthly. Greater than what your mind can comprehend. One way to look at it is this- if your home on earth really belongs to God- then you will open that home to others by showing hospitality. In this way- your proper view and use of your passing, earthly home sets the stage for your welcome into an enduring, heavenly mansion in glory! If you are a good steward of the common money in your account today- you will be pleasantly surprised by the billions of blessings you will receive in glory! If you are kind to the distressed and outcasts in the world today, you will be welcomed in glory by the smiling faces of friends in the life to come! Not a merited payment- but a promised reward none the less! Righteous wealth- kept in haven- waiting for you! (Mt. 6:19-21)

As we ponder this truth, Jesus is really helping us see and avoid the sin of idolatry. Worldly wealth- mammon- the treasures of this age are a great hindrance to the spirituality of many people. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the seed of the Word. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. The leach like sisters cry out- give- give! But money remains just a tool- an inanimate object that can be used for evil or good. So when Jesus teaches us how to use and view money properly, he is helping us avoid the sin of idolatry! That is why v. 13 ends with this concept of love, devotion and service. You can either love money or you can love God! Serve money or serve God! Be devoted to money or be devoted to God! How you use and view money is a spiritual thing- it has spiritual implications! How you view and use money shows the world- and proves to God as well- where your heart and first love is! Do you love the master or do you simply love his money? Are you a good steward or are you squandering His possessions? Do you serve God with your money or do you serve unrighteous mammon as your god? You are not able to serve 2 lords- there is only 1 throne in your heart! Do the things of this world sit there- the unrighteous, common, passing things? Or does the eternal and unchangeable God sit on that throne? You cannot serve 2 gods- you cannot serve created things and the Creator!

To conclude, money is one those issues that people either love to talk about or avoid talking about at all costs. How much money do you make? What is your car worth? How much money is in your piggy bank? How you view and use your money is a spiritual issue! You can either idolize money and despise God- or you use money to serve God as a sign of your love for Him! Jesus Christ teaches us to be wise in our use of worldly wealth in the Parable of the Shrewd Servant. Worldly, unrighteous wealth is passing. But true riches can be received by those who use money for God’s glory and their neighbor’s good!