

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 18

It is still the Sabbath before the Lord's crucifixion and Jesus is continuing to address the problem of the religious leaders by telling parables to all who are within listening range.

Manager's Squandering

Luke 16:1 Now He was also saying to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and this *manager* was reported to him as squandering his possessions. ²"And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.'³ "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; I am ashamed to beg.

The rich man makes his judgment based fully on the report of a stranger that his steward is squandering his wealth. The accusation of squandering is difficult to defend. How can a person correct such a perception without a full accounting of the actions and deeds that have been done? Therefore, the rich man asks for a full account of his actions or the steward can no longer work for him. It is important that we understand that the rich man, or the owner of the company for which we work, or the board of directors for which we serve has every right to ask a manager or employee for a full account. It is the duty of the manager or employee to have on hand a full detailed accounting of everything that has been done, whether rightly or wrongly. Employees are hired to care for the property of the owners; it is their job. It is not their job to run the business unaccounted for or in opposition to the owner's desires. Yet, once a full accounting is made, the owner may find that everything is in order and the report is erroneous.

In this case, being a steward for the rich man is the only job he knows how to do. In addition, he also knows that he has not taken care of business as he should. Squandering might not be the correct word for what he had done with the rich man's wealth. In reality, it seems that he is guiltier of failing to collect that which is due the rich man rather than squandering the wealth.

Manager's Shenanigan

Luke 16:4 "I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.'⁵"And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he *began* saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'⁶ "And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And 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?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He *said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

In an act of desperation, the steward actually constructs a way to use the resources of the rich man for his own good. Up to this point in the story, he has not defrauded the owner but his plan now is to defraud the owner by discounting the balances of those on the accounts receivable ledger. His ultimate goal is two-fold. Either the rich man will think well of him and keep him in the job or, perhaps, one of the people to whom he has given a deep discount will think kindly of him and adopt him into his family. One by one, he shrewdly makes deals with the debtors. Not all the deals are equal in the amount of discount.

Manager's Praise

Luke 16:8 "And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.

The plan works and he receives the rich man's praises for his shrewdness. He is highly esteemed by his rich master. He has justified himself in the sight of the rich master. It is just business! However, this procedure is not to be considered an appropriate way of doing business. Although the steward is able to accomplish his goal, the Lord still calls him an unrighteous steward. He is still an ungodly man who is living an ungodly life. It is very important to recognize the intent of the Lord in His description of both the rich master and steward. They are both unrighteous. The Lord states that both are shrewder in their relations with their own kind than with the sons of light. In this instance, the word shrewd is not used in a positive sense. Here it means deception, craftiness and intent to defraud. The children of light, referring to those who belong to God, are not like the steward or the rich master.

Unrighteous Wealth

Luke 16:9 "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.

The sons of light must live in this world, the world that the Lord God provides for all our needs. Yet, the Lord's instruction is to use the money of the world to gain true friendships. The sons of light should not be like the unrighteous steward. They are to live righteously, not deceptively, but in a godly manner, ready to give an account of each detail, looking out for the master in every detail of employment. If we live as children of light and righteousness in all our labors, the eternal dwelling will be waiting for us where the need for the money of this world is no longer a concern.

Unrighteous Actions

Luke 16:10 "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

In this verse is one of the most powerful clues to help us understand the integrity of a person. Faithfulness in this case is an integrity issue today. If a person will lie about a small detail, he will lie about large issues. If a person is trustworthy with a few pennies that belong to another, then he can be trusted with the entire estate of that person. If a person will cheat on his score in a golf card, he cannot be trusted in a business deal. If a person will take property that belongs to another, he cannot be trusted to care for anyone's needs. You have heard it said by many, "take it, don't worry, he will never miss it! He won't care! She has a dozen, so what! He's rich, he can buy another." These are examples of unrighteousness and people who think and act in this manner cannot be trusted.

Two Masters

Luke 16:11 "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you? ¹² "And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³ "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

The love of wealth is the root of all evil. It can cause people to do things that they would not otherwise do. It divides friendships, families, partnerships and marriages. Godly people who look at wealth as a tool to further the gospel can quickly find themselves in the midst of people, friends or relatives, who claim God yet put their true faith and trust in money, not God. It is impossible to be godly and love wealth at the same time.

Pharisees' Scoffing

Luke 16:14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

Even though the Lord disguises His message in a parable about an unrighteous servant, the Pharisees know that He is talking about them. They do not love God. They love their position and the wealth that it has brought them. This same group despises the Lord's association with poor sinners and tax gatherers. The Lord's words are cutting to the core of their integrity. They have not been faithful with the oracles of God delivered to them in the wilderness. Their eternal dwelling is not secure because of the way they have treated the poor sinners under their care. They are not only the unrighteous stewards of God's oracles;

they are also the unrighteous rich masters of those under their control who are living their lives and struggling to survive.

Detestable in God's Sight

Luke 16:15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. ¹⁶ "The Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. ¹⁷ "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.

The Pharisees have the Law and the Prophets to direct them but they have ignored the intent and heart of the message from the Word of God. They are truly without excuse. By this time, they have the Scriptures in Hebrew and in Greek. In addition, the Old Testament is firmly in place, but the Pharisees are more interested in the laws they have established instead. Since the arrival of John the Baptist in the wilderness, the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached. These Pharisees are not oblivious to the message because they have stood on the hills and heard the message clearly proclaimed by John the Baptist. In like manner, the Pharisees have followed Jesus around and clearly heard His message. It is not a new message, but the same message delivered to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Obadiah and Malachi. Try as they may, the laws of God cannot be done away with regardless of the desires of the Pharisees. Not one law will pass away. They are all written in stone.

Divorce and Adultery

Luke 16:18 "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.

The Lord then gives the Pharisees an example of a law that will never pass away. It deals with marriage relationships. Breaking a marriage vow between true believers and children of light sets a person up for the possibility of committing adultery if he or she remarries. Notice that the sin occurs in the remarrying. At this point, it is good to look at the instruction concerning what a person is to do when a divorce occurs.

1 Corinthians 7:10 But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband ¹¹ (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. ¹² But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband

away. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

1 Corinthians 7:27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸ But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you. ²⁹ But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; ³⁰ and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; ³¹ and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰ But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19 "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. ²⁰ "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, ²¹ and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. ²² "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. ²³ "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw* Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' ²⁵ "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶ ~'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.' ²⁷ "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ "But Abraham *said*, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' ³¹ "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus tells a story that gives great insight into the hereafter. Referred to here are many different places such as the place of peaceful rest, the place of torment, the agony of torment and the great chasm that has been fixed for all eternity between the two different destinations in the hereafter. We also see the reality of the power of the Word of the Lord which was delivered in the Old Testament. It contained the message that could change a life forever and provide a way to the place of peaceful rest.

In the beginning of this story, we see two men who lived here on earth. One was blessed in his earthly life with earthly riches and a life of ease. The other, whose name was Lazarus, lived a life of struggle, always in need, even to the point of having to beg for his daily food. Covered in sickness, he desired to be fed with the food that fell from the table, the food that the dogs would normally clean up. He was so sick that as he lay on the floor, the dogs would lick his sores. This man lived a life of agony and pain.

Luke 16:22 "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

As we see, both men die. Their eternal destinations are different. Lazarus is carried by the angels to the place called Abraham's bosom, a phrase which refers to the custom of reclining on couches in peaceful rest. It is an arrangement which brings the head of one person almost to the bosom of the one who sits or reclines above him. To be in Abraham's bosom means to enjoy the happiness and rest found at the banquet in Paradise. In Matthew, Jesus says it this way, speaking about the future kingdom of heaven:

Matthew 8:11 "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; ¹² but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Luke 16:23 "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

With the death of the rich man, he finds himself in Hades, a place of torment. Hades means that which is out of sight. It is a Greek word used to denote the state or place of the dead. All the dead go into this place. The expressions, to be buried, to go down to the grave, to descend into hades are synonymous. In the Old Testament, this word is rendered as Sheol. It is the common place of the departed. Here are some examples.

Genesis 42:38 But Jacob said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow."

Psalms 139:8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

Hosea 13:14 Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.

Isaiah 14:9 "Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.

Hades is a term that is rarely used in the New Testament. Our Lord speaks of Capernaum being brought down to Hades, in Matthew 11:23, meaning simply to the lowest debasement. It is referred to as a kind of kingdom that can never overturn the foundation of Christ's kingdom in Matthew 16:18. Here, in Luke 16:23 it is most distinctly associated with the doom and misery of the lost without Christ.

In Acts 2:27-31, Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11 plainly for the purpose of proving the Lord's resurrection from the dead. David was left in the place of the dead and his body saw corruption. Not so with Christ. According to ancient prophecy (Psalm 30:3) he would be recalled to life.

Acts 2:27 BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. ²⁸ 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.' ²⁹ "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, ³¹ he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.

Psalm 16:8 I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. ¹⁰ For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. ¹¹ You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Psalm 30:3 O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol; You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.

In addition, the rich man can see Lazarus far off, in the bosom of Abraham. One is in a place of peaceful rest and the other is in a place of torment. Moreover, they can see each other's condition. This insight into eternity is awesome. Those who have gone to be with the Lord will see those who rejected Him and ended up in torment.

Luke 16:24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

The cry of the rich man, stationed in torment, is to ask the beggar Lazarus to come with cool water to ease the agony of the flame. The rich man, who is now the beggar, calls upon Abraham, who is far away, for mercy, but it is not to be! In God's plan, there is no way to cross the distance after earthly death.

Luke 16:25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.'

Abraham replies to the rich man with the reality of the difference in the two lives. He is not saying that all the rich will end up in torment; however, it is an indictment of the way many wealthy people live their lives here on earth. One might wonder what the outcome of the rich man would have been had he provided for the needs of Lazarus while alive on earth. That answer we will never know.

Luke 16:26 ~'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.'

In the plan of creation, God fixed a great chasm between the two eternal destinies that are available to man, yet the distance is not so far that one cannot see to the other side. The distance is not too far that one cannot speak to the other side. However, the distance is far enough that no one can switch sides after death. What we do here on earth with the Lord determines our eternal destiny.

Luke 16:27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—²⁸ for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

The rich man's destiny is fixed for eternity. With this realization, he turns his attention to his five brothers who are still alive. Here we realize that after we die, we still have concerns for those left behind. It also indicates that we know what is happening on earth after we die. The rich man does not want his brothers to make the same poor choice that he has made while on earth.

Luke 16:29 "But Abraham *said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'³⁰ "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'

Abraham, who is already in eternity, not able to have influence on the lives of those on earth, gives the rich man a sobering answer. It is sobering because he states that they already have what they need to make the proper choice. They have the words of Moses and the Prophets, so let them hear! Nevertheless, the rich man thinks that a resurrected man will have a greater influence on them and they will repent.

Luke 16:31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Abraham's answer states that even a resurrected man will not make a difference in their lives. They have all they need to make their decisions in the Old Testament. It can lead them to the place of peaceful rest in all of eternity if they so choose. They are just not willing to make that choice.

Just as in the parables of the sheep, coins, prodigal son and the unjust steward, this parable is also directed at the Pharisees. They are the rich men, born in luxury and ease, who reject the law of Moses and the Prophets even though they use their names daily. We know that Jesus is referring to them because of His next words.

Stumbling Blocks

Luke 17:1 He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! ²"It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. ³"Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴"And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

The Pharisees are guilty of causing the innocent, poor and helpless to stumble. The Pharisees are sinful men who will not repent. They will not accept the rebuke of the Savior. Had they repented, Jesus would have forgiven them. Even a resurrected man will not change their hearts!