

Luke Chapter 16

Luke 16:1 "And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods."

“Steward”: A steward was a trusted servant, usually someone born in the household, who was chief of the management and distribution of household provision. He provided food for all the other servants, thus managing his master’s resources for the well-being of others. He acted as an agent for his master, with full authority to transact business in the master’s name.

“Wasted his goods”: His prodigality is a thread that ties this parable to the preceding one. Like the younger son in the earlier parable, this manager was guilty of wasting the resources available to him. Like the prodigal, however, he had enough sense to make sure that his wastefulness did not leave him friendless and unprovided for in the future.

We quickly see that Jesus is teaching the disciples here a lesson about being good stewards. Every person who has proclaimed Christianity as a way of life is a steward of the things Jesus has entrusted to them. What a terrible thing for God to leave you in charge of a job and find out later that you are a bad steward.

Some are stewards of money, some are stewards of God's churches, and some are stewards of God's people. To fail in any of these would not only cause a problem for you, but for those you are to minister to, as well.

Luke 16:2 "And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward."

“Thou mayest be no longer steward”: By announcing his intention to fire the man, the owner acted unwisely, and it cost him even more. Evidently he thought the man guilty of incompetence, rather than fraud. This would explain his reaction in verse 8.

We see here, the master wants to take account of what he has done. This is like the Lord giving the ministers that He has entrusted a last warning. He is saying, if you didn't repent and do the first work, I will no longer entrust this ministry to you.

The 34th chapter of Ezekiel is speaking of this very same thing. The ministers are called shepherds in Ezekiel. God will not continue on with a bad shepherd or a bad steward.

Luke 16:3 "Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed."

“I cannot dig”: I.e., he did not consider himself fit for physical labor.

This steward suddenly sees the error of his ways. His first thought is to do something quick to find favor with his lord. He is not used to physical labor. He wants to earn his way back in favor so that he will not have to beg.

Luke 16:4 "I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses."

“Resolved what to do”: Cleverly, he arranged to give large discounts to his master’s debtors, which they would eagerly agree to pay.

“Receive me into their houses”: By reducing their debts to his master, he gained their indebtedness to him. They would thus be obligated to take him into their homes when he was put out of his master’s home.

We see this steward has lost favor with his lord and is trying to make friends with the world. He feels he has already lost out with his lord so he must find somewhere to go. He feels if he makes friends with the world, they will take him in.

Luke 16:5-6 "So he called every one of his lord's debtors [unto him], and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?" "And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty."

Here, he is short changing his lord. He makes a deal with the worldly to reduce their debt to buy favor with them. This is really not this steward's oil. It belongs to his lord.

Luke 16:7 "Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore."

We see a repeat of the mistake he made with oil. Bribes have never been pleasing unto God, and this is no exception. In fact, it is worse to bribe the worldly. Not only is it a bad example, but is just getting this steward in trouble with his lord.

Luke 16:8 "And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

“The lord commended the unjust steward”: Outwitted, he applauds the man’s cunning. His admiration for the evil steward’s criminal genius shows that he too, was a wicked man. It is the natural tendency of fallen hearts to admire a villain’s craftiness (Psalm 49:18). Note that all the characters in this parable are unjust, unscrupulous, and corrupt.

“Wiser than”: I.e., most believers “sons of light” (John 12:36; Eph. 5:18), are toward the things of God.

Luke 16:9 "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

“Mammon of unrighteousness”: I.e. money. The unrighteous manager used his master’s money to buy earthly friends; believers are to use their Master’s money in a way that will accrue friends for eternity, by investing in the kingdom gospel that brings sinners to salvation, so that when they arrive in heaven (“eternal dwellings”), those sinners will be there to welcome them.

Christ did not commend the man’s dishonesty; He pointedly called him “unrighteous” (verse 8). He only used him as an illustration to show that even the most wicked sons of this world are shrewd enough to provide for themselves against coming evil.

Believers ought to be shrewder, because they are concerned with eternal matters, not just earthly ones (Matt. 6:19-21).

To me this means that this steward no longer has a place with his lord. He might as well make the best deal he can, because he has chosen unrighteousness. His place will not be heaven, but his everlasting habitation will be with the unrighteous in hell.

Luke 16:10 "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

“He that is faithful”: Probably a common proverb (19:17; Matt. 25:21).

This is saying a thief is a thief whether he is taking a dollar or \$10,000. The amount is not the important thing. A person's heart is either faithful or unfaithful. It really doesn't matter how big or how small. It is the same.

Luke 16:11 "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true [riches]?"

“True riches”: Faithful use of one’s earthly wealth is repeatedly tied to the accumulation of treasure in heaven (12:33; 18:22; Matt. 16:19-21).

What this is saying, to me, is if you are not honest here on the earth with your neighbors, then God surely cannot trust you with heavenly treasures. The true riches are like having eternal life. The true riches are heavenly treasures.

Luke 16:12 "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

“That which is another man’s”: This refers to God, and the believer’s stewardship of His money, which believers only manage as stewards.

This to me, could be jumping from material things to men's souls. Ministers are entrusted with the souls of the people they minister to. If the minister fails his converts and causes them to fall, the Lord will see to it that he has none that are his own.

Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

“Ye cannot serve God and mammon”: Many of the Pharisees taught that devotion to money and devotion to God were perfectly compatible (verse 14). This went hand-in-hand with the commonly held notion that earthly riches signified divine blessing.

Rich people were therefore regarded as God’s favorites. While not condemning wealth per se, Christ denounced both love of wealth and devotion to mammon.

You can only have one Lord. This is saying that you cannot straddle the fence. You must be on God's side or Satan's side. There are no other sides. If you choose money and things of this world over God, you are on Satan's side. The time has come to choose whose side you are on. A worldly person cannot inherit eternal life.

Luke 16:14 "And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him."

These Pharisees, who heard Jesus speaking here, were some of the very people who had put great importance on worldly wealth and prestige. "Deride" here means to sneer. They knew they were guilty of just what Jesus was talking about here, but instead of repenting, they made fun of what Jesus was saying.

Luke 16:15 "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

“Justify yourselves”: The Pharisees’ belief was that their own goodness was what justified them (Rom. 10:3). This is the very definition of “self-righteousness.” But, as Jesus suggested, their righteousness was flawed, being an external veneer only.

That might be enough to justify them before men, but not before God, because He knew their hearts. He repeatedly exposed their habit of seeking the approval of people (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 23:28).

These Pharisees are self-righteous. Their hearts are wicked. They have no compassion for others. They have been blinded by their own pride. They may put up a big front to the people and be highly respected by them. God judges the heart, not the outward appearance. God knows how evil they really are. In fact, they are an abomination to God.

Luke 16:16 "The law and the prophets [were] until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

“Until John”: John the Baptist’s ministry marked the turning point of redemptive history. Prior to that, the great truths of Christ and His kingdom were veiled in the types and shadows of the law, and promised in the writing of the prophets (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

But John the Baptist introduced the King Himself. The Pharisees, who thought of themselves as experts in the law and the prophets, missed the significance of the very One to who the law and the prophets pointed.

“Every man presseth into it” (Jer. 29:13). While the Pharisees were busy opposing Christ; sinners were entering His kingdom in droves. The language of this expression speaks of violent force, probably signifying the zeal with which sinners were seeking with all of their heart to enter the kingdom. (Isa. 55:6-7; Matt. 11:12).

Jesus told them exactly what they did not want to hear. He said the law had been in effect for a very long time, up until John the Baptist. Jesus tells them that everyone, Jew and Gentile, will be able to enter the kingdom of God in this age of grace. He is saying even you Pharisees must change and accept God’s grace. By the foolishness of preaching men are saved.

Luke 16:17 "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

“One tittle of the law to fail”: Lest anyone think the statement in verse 16 meant He was declaring the law and the prophets annulled, He added this. The great moral principles of the law, the eternal truth contained in the law’s types and symbols, and the promises recorded by the prophets all remain in force and are not abrogated by the kingdom message.

Jesus says even though this kingdom is for everyone, the law is still valid. He will tell them later that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. God or His law never changes.

Luke 16:18 "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from [her] husband committeth adultery."

“Committeth adultery”: I.e., if the divorce had no legitimate grounds. Luke gave an abbreviated record of Jesus’ teaching on divorce, stressing only the main issue. Matthew’s fuller account makes it clear that He permitted divorce in cases where one’s spouse was guilty of adultery.

This countered the rabbis’ doctrine, which permitted men to divorce their wives easily, and for almost any cause (Matt. 19:3).

Jesus quotes one of the laws about marriage to prove His point. He is just saying this has not changed. It is so now as it was with the law.

Luke Chapter 16 Questions

1. What in verse 1 was the steward accused of?
2. Who really are Jesus' stewards?
3. Name several ways we can be a steward.
4. What did his lord request of him in verse two?
5. In the 34th chapter of Ezekiel, what does God do to the bad shepherd?
6. The steward says I cannot _____, to _____ I am ashamed.
7. In verse 4, is this action for his lord or himself?
8. What did he do to find favor with the man who owed 100 measures of oil?
9. How much did he reduce the wheat?
10. In verse 8, Jesus says the children of the world are wiser than whom?
11. Where will this steward's final place be?
12. What does verse 10 mean?
13. Does the dollar amount change the fact that someone is a thief?
14. Verse 12 is speaking not of money, but what probably?
15. In verse 13, we read ye cannot serve _____ and _____.
16. What are the only two ways from which you can choose whom you will follow?
17. What does the word "derided" mean?
18. In verse 14, how are these Pharisees described?
19. They said they justified themselves before whom?
20. That which is highly esteemed of men is an _____ to God?
21. Up until when were the law and prophets in effect?
22. Since that time what had been preached?
23. What did the Pharisees not want to hear?

24. By the foolishness of what are men saved?

25. It is easier for what to fail than for one tittle of the law to fail?

26. Jesus came not to destroy the law but to _____ .

27. If you put away your wife to marry another, you commit what sin?