

LOOKING AT LUKE
USING WORLDLY WEALTH

Saturday, August 29

Reading: Luke 15-16

Luke 16:9 *I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.*

The point of most of Jesus' parables in these chapters are fairly easy to understand. But at first-read, the parable of the shrewd manager (16:1-15) can be a little confusing.

The Story (16:1-8a) – Jesus is using a negative example to prove a positive point. This manager oversaw his master's business affairs. He had a lot of power, but he forgot that he did not own these things. He was simply the steward and was supposed to use them to please and profit his master. Instead, he was "wasting his possessions." This brought down the judgment of his master. He demanded an accounting of all the man had done before he was fired.

The manager knew he was in trouble. He was about to lose his job and had nowhere to go for help. He was "too good" for manual labor and begging was beneath his dignity, so he comes up with a shrewd plan of action. He would reduce the debt of his master's creditors if they paid immediately. In this way, he would make friends of them so they would take him in when his master kicked him out. The master's "commendation" was not because of what the manager had done, but because of his future planning. The New Living Translation put it this way: "The rich man had to admire the dishonest rascal for being so shrewd."

The Application (16:8b-13) – Jesus did not want His disciples following the dishonesty and manipulation of the manager. But He did want them to learn three lessons from this story.

1. Use Worldly Wealth to Win People for the Kingdom (16:8b-9) – "The people of this world" are experts at seizing opportunities for making money and friends and getting ahead. God's people should be just as wise when it comes to managing the spiritual affairs of life. The people of this world see the things of time, but not the things of eternity. Because the children of God live "with eternity's values in view" they should be able to make far better use of their opportunities. While the manager used worldly wealth for his own benefit, believers are to use the things of this world for eternal results. Jesus' point is that we should plan for the future by using what God has given us today to win friends to Christ who will be able to rejoice with us in heaven.
2. Use Worldly Wealth Faithfully (16:10-12) – How people handle the little things will prove if they can be trusted to handle bigger things. Jesus' point is that if a believer cannot be trusted to faithfully use worldly wealth for God's kingdom, how can God trust them with the much more important spiritual riches?
3. Use Worldly Wealth but be Servants of God (16:13) – People who live for money cannot live for God. "Henry Fielding wrote, "Make money your god and it will plague you like the devil!" Jesus would say, "Make money your servant and use today's opportunities as investments in tomorrow's dividends." Be a wise steward! There are souls to win to the Savior, and our money can help get the job done."¹