

## **Make Friends for Yourselves with Unrighteous Mammon (Luke 16:1-13)**

There's a parable in Luke that is a difficult one to understand (*Luke 16:1-13*). It has amazing implications in evangelism and the Lord used it to challenge my heart to repentance as I read it recently.

The parable speaks of several crooks- one was a rich man who was owner and the other was his manager over his estate. The owner planned to fire the manager because he was doing a poor job of managing his possessions (the owner may have thought he was incompetent, but more likely, he was a shrewd thief). The manager, knowing he was going to get fired, cut deals with those crooks who owed the rich man money, so that when he got fired, he could stay at their house for being in cahoots with them to rob the rich man. What a story- when you first read it, your first thought might be, "Let's see- how is Jesus going to use this story to teach? Is He going to give a lesson about stealing, about honesty, about 'what comes around goes around?' Nope- the story actually is about our stewardship and it has amazing implications for evangelism. Here's the story...

1 Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. 2 So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'

3 "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— 4 I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

5 "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

6 " 'Eight hundred gallons[a] of olive oil,' he replied.  
"The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.'

7 "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?'  
" 'A thousand bushels[b] of wheat,' he replied.  
"He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'

8 "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. 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.

10 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

The key verse to the passage is verse 9, with the follow-up verses in verses 10-13 bringing further clarity.

Truly it is amazing to see how much energy the 'people of this world' expend in accumulating riches- they are so shrewd, cunning and at times dishonest- all for 'unrighteous mammon'. Jesus has a rebuke for you and for me- we've been given 'unrighteous mammon' but we 'people of the light' aren't near as shrewd as the world is in using that 'unrighteous mammon' to eternal benefit. Instead, too often, we play the game the world plays with money- we act as if this world is our kingdom, and we invest in it- we act as if God can't be trusted to meet our future needs, so we accumulate 'bigger barns' to take care of us well into the future. We tend not to be risky with 'unrighteous mammon' for the kingdom.

I want you to picture Judgment Day for yourself as a follower of Jesus Christ- you're there at the Bema Seat- every work done by God's grace- every act of obedience prompted by faith is rewarded. There standing before you is a multitude of friends, right? That's what the passage says in verse nine, "I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone (and rest assured, that unrighteous mammon will be gone before you know it!), you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." Who is going to welcome you into eternal dwellings? According to this passage, your friends, who were affected positively by the choices you made by faith to invest in eternity as you supported the gospel of Jesus Christ financially. What do you think the return on investment will be for that investment? We put money away in 401k's and in expensive houses, thinking about how good of an investment they are- we devote much energy to this- but how much energy do we put into sacrificially giving our time, talents and treasures to winning souls to Christ?

I don't know about you, but I want to see a multitude of friends greet me in heaven, affected by the 'unrighteous mammon' that I've invested in gospel tracts, in evangelism training materials that I give away, and in sacrifices I've made with time devoted to sharing the gospel with people and encouraging and teaching other Christians to do likewise.

This has led to several crossroads for me. Earlier this year, I told the Lord, "I wonder if we really will get a retention bonus at work- our company is doing so lousy. Lord, if we do, it all goes for the gospel." I got the bonus- I was so excited, and I plotted with the shrewdness of the Lord to use 'unrighteous mammon' for the kingdom, investing in an outreach on Monument Circle. I had hopes that the end result would not only be that souls would be saved, but that other individuals and churches would invest in that outreach to the point where we would break even financially. When it didn't happen that we didn't break even financially, and we didn't even get close, I became disgruntled, then the Lord reminded me that I had already laid that gift on the altar- why was I now grumbling that the gift was taken and used and that the return would be with friends in

the next life, rather than with 'unrighteous mammon' in the present life?

I've looked at my friends George and Jodie- this is what they did with their 'unrighteous mammon' to invest in the kingdom- they sold their house and moved into a motor home and quit their permanent jobs to share the gospel full time- such uncertainty in such a venture! They will see many 'friends' greeting them in heaven! Mark Cahill spoke at our church in March and the Lord used it in my life in several ways- one was what Mark said about spending- he emptied his retirement account and freely gives to people- I was astonished at what Mark said, as he spoke of the faithfulness of God to abundantly meet his every need. I since then have stopped giving towards my own IRA (it is a personal conviction- I'm not urging you to follow me in this), and I've changed my work hours- from working full time to joining a program at work where you can work less and get correspondingly less pay. I dropped from 100% to 90% and am about to turn one in to go to 80%- I just want to have more time to share the gospel and do the work of an evangelist. A voice inside my head tells me at times that I'm crazy- it's a voice of fear, of distrust- it's the voice of the devil. That voice tells me also I should look for a more stable job with a stable company (and end up working not only a full time job, but likely overtime as well).

In spite of these voices, the voice of the Holy Spirit has spoken thus to me:

"I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." 10"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? 13"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

As Master Card says, "What's in your wallet?" More importantly, what is it that you're investing in? Imagine Jesus looking into your eyes on that Day and saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful with a little- here, be faithful with a lot!"

In Christ's Love,

Mike