

Today, we are going to be learning a GOOD lesson from a BAD MAN.

Would you turn with me in your Bibles to Luke 16...

That's Luke 16:1-9.

A lot of people have stumbled over this parable... In fact, this is one of the texts that unbelievers point to when they want to PROVE that the Bible has FLAWS... that Jesus wasn't so perfect after all... I mean, it seems as if Jesus is PRAISING this lying, cheating, scumbag of a manager...

Here is a manager who was ACCUSED of WASTING his master's possessions. And so, like any boss would do, he gives the manager a termination notice. YOUR FIRED! And so, the dishonest manager... who had been wasting his master's MONEY... begins to think to himself... OH WHAT SHALL I DO NOW?!?!? I'm going to lose my job... and no one is going to trust me to manage their business anymore.... And I don't want to be begging on the streets... What do I do???

... and as if a light went on in his head... OH... I KNOW what to do. I will use the remainder of my time here in such a way that when I am terminated, PEOPLE will welcome me into their homes...

So get this... he began to call each one of his master's debtors.... v. 5 - and he asked them - how much do you owe my master?

One replied... about 100 measures of olive oil... which would be around 3200 litres today...ok! Cut that by half!

Another replied ... I owe a hundred measures of wheat - which is around a thousand bushels of wheat... OK, make that 800!

These are big numbers! - SEVERAL times what the annual income was back in the day...

And so on and so forth... the dishonest manger began to help those who were in debt to his master...

Maybe he was just getting rid of the interest or something... anyways, here is where it gets interesting...

verse 8 - the master... COMMENDED the dishonest manager.. But here is where we have to read carefully... THE MASTER COMMENDS - or formally praises- the DISHONEST manager - not for being dishonest, but for being WISE in the spending of his money..

For the sons of this world.. are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. Do you see what Jesus is doing here... There is a movement from the LESSER to the GREATER... For the sons of this world.. are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

It was common practice back in the day... as it is now...to make an argument from the lesser to the GREATER...

Jesus taught in this way often...

If even a evil father will give his children GOOD THINGS... How much more will your heavenly Father give you the Holy Spirit if you ask Him?

OR If a corrupt judge will hear the complaints of a widow, how MUCH more will the RIGHTEOUS JUDGE IN heaven hear the plea of His children?

OR LOOK at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. FEAR NOT - you are worth much more than BIRDS!

In the same way, Jesus is showing us here - THE WORLD IS WISE in the spending of its MONEY... EVEN THE CHILDREN OF DARKNESS PLAN and INVEST... - HOW MUCH MORE should the children of LIGHT be WISE in the USE OF THEIR MONEY!?!?!?

the lesson of the parable of the shrewd manager is this : if the children of darkness are wise in the spending of their money... HOW much more should the children of light be WISE in the spending of our money?

And the wisdom here is NOT - INVEST for GREATER RETURN. Jesus is not telling us to invest our money like the world does...

Jesus does not leave it up to us to DEFINE what financial wisdom looks like.... He tells us right here - SPEND your money GENEROUSLY in such a way as to WIN FRIENDS - ETERNAL friends who will welcome you into the kingdom and ENRICH your eternity! That is the best INVESTMENT you can make - an INVESTMENT that will ENRICH your eternity... verse 9 - Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

How you spend your money now will have very real consequences on HOW RICH you will be in eternity...

Look here... this dishonest manager - a son of DARKNESS... was generous with his master's money... and he was commended for it...

HOW MUCH MORE should WE - who are stewards of all that God has given to us... AS HIS CHILDREN.. and the CHILDREN OF LIGHT - HOW MUCH MORE should we be generous with our master's money? Its not OUR MONEY... ALL that we OWN is GIVEN TO US BY GOD- WE ARE STEWARDS.. NOT OWNERS... God did not give us a nice job and a big house and a good education for us to spend IT ON ourselves. That's the stupidest thing you can do - in light of eternity. Rather, BE GENEROUS with what you have now so you can be RICH IN HEAVEN!

This is what is meant by the FAMOUS verses - Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:32-34).

Our heavenly Master has made us all managers of "unrighteous wealth" (Luke 16:9). AND everyone here works or has some form of income... In fact, let me run some numbers for you... It is a well known fact that a third of the world lives off earns less than \$2 per day... Now, taking into account things like inflation, currency exchange, standard of living, and cost of living - I know for a fact that

EVERYONE single one of you in this room are WEALTHIER than 80% of the world population. You only need to be making 10 thousand dollars per year to be the top 20%. If you make 30 thousand, that number jumps to the top 5% of the world population. If you make 50 thousand, that number jumps up to 2%. SO by EVERY definition... we are RICH. Lets get that off the table. You and me, the very fact that we are HERE and have a salary and have an education and a home and hot water means that we ARE at the very least WEALTHIER than 80% of the ENTIRE POPULATION.

And John Piper says this:

The possession of money in this world is a test run for eternity. Can you pass the test of faithfulness with your money? Do you use your WEALTH as a means of proving the worth of God and the joy you have in supporting His cause? Or does the way you use it prove that you enjoy THINGS more than God?

*Let me give you an example from my life... of what that looks like.*

There are these times.. some of you have been with me when it happens... but there are these times when I am moved to give people large amounts of money. Like it nags at me. Such an overwhelming sense of the Holy Spirit convicting my conscious to GIVE that I can't focus on anything UNTIL I go to the bank... withdraw some money... put it in an envelope and GIVE it to that person...

The last time this happened... I was with Christian.. i think it was last month...we were supposed to eat dinner together - but on the way, I saw a homeless couple sleeping on some cardboard boxes at the intersection of Loughheed and North Road. And I felt the Holy Spirit prompt me to give... but I didn't have cash on me at the moment.. and besides, I Christian was waiting for me at the restaurant. So I just walk on by. Arrive at the restaurant. we sit down. to order food... but by this time the Holy Spirit was convicting me so much that I just could not stand still. I told Christian and he was so kind and understanding... he drove me to a Christian book store... we bought a brand new Bible... and then I took some money out from the bank... put it in an envelope.. wrote down John 3:16 on it... tucked it inside the Bible.. and gave it to them...

Now I tell you this story... NOT because I think this is what everyone should be doing - maybe God will lead you to give like this as well.. but I want to share with you what was going on in my mind... I mean - AM I INSANE??? TO give LARGE amounts of money to people I don't even know who can never repay me? I mean, if I were to give to a charity, at least I would receive recognition for

my generous giving. But this is stupid right? Maybe. But I trust that God will use my obedience and my RICHNESS toward Him to bring Him glory and that He will use that generosity to bring relief from the worries of this world to those in times of trouble and the joy of salvation to those who weep.

And ultimately. I'm going to get the kingdom! Its coming. Its only a matter of time before I will receive my hundred-fold return and receive recognition before the throne of God.

Now - like I said, this is what that LOOKS like in MY LIFE - it seems like a stupid way to spend my money... but I think in light of the Word of God - it is WISE. By the way, just because I give to people this way, it doesn't mean I am excused from taking care of my family or paying my bills or giving to the church. But that doesn't necessarily mean God will lead you to give like I do...

SO I want to end by talking about something which DOES apply to everyone in this room. Namely, MEALS! FOOD!

There is something about MEALS that HELP us get into the kingdom... When we prepare food for one another... or when we TREAT one another to food... we are encouraging one another.... in some way--- IT MIGHT BE SMALL.... BUT IT IS GETTING US TO HEAVEN.... I think it is no mere sentiment that Jesus... right before he died.. SHARED a meal with His disciples.. and afterwards.... when He was risen... He seeks them out.. and what does He do? HE has a MEAL WITH THEM... by the beach.

THAT is a picture of WINNING HEARTS... and of ENCOURAGEMENT... It is strange, is it not - that sharing meals with someone is somehow reassuring... That one of the first things you asked your loved one was probably asking them out on a date FOR LUNCH.. I think this runs much deeper than just cultural traditions - but is a MIRROR of the gospel...

WOW - MEALS... ARE A MIRROR OF THE GOSPEL! Think about it... Jesus has called us to share in the Lords Supper - a meal that is intimately connected to the gospel.... The Bible illustrates many times for us - the picture of the heavenly BANQUET... The most beloved psalm - Psalm 23 - has in it the words.. you PREPARE a TABLE before me in the presence of my enemies.... The prophetic books of Isaiah and Revelations are FULL of images of celebration and richness of the kingdom by drawing upon illustrations of FEASTS!

The significance of food MIGHT be lost to us but this is the way God works... Food is very important to God. It's His way of fellowshiping with us and our way of fellowshiping with God. Jesus was called the Bread of Life and the Word of God is called our DAILY BREAD...

When Christians bring faith to the fellowship and they share a meal together - it breaks down the barriers.. rich and poor.. regardless of social class... regardless of religion... For example, in Acts 10, God gives Peter a vision - telling Him to EAT with Gentiles.... and EAT he did... but when the Judiazers... came, the Jewish Christians didn't eat with the Gentiles...

And this pissed PAUL off... He even records this event for us in Galatians.... But when Cephas, that is Peter, came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. **12** For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. **13** And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. **And when** I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I confronted them!

WHO you EAT with and HOW you eat and WHY you eat MATTERS!

In our culture, it's hard for us to grasp... We've debased MEALS.... In our fast food culture... It's become a meaningless thing..

But let me remind you - who we eat with and how we eat is a deep expression of our fellowship with Christ and one another....

You could even summarize the plot of God's redemptive history in these words - will you share a meal with God or not?

Let me end the sermon by reading for you something from my journal.... It's entitled SUPERNATURAL lunch...

"Supernatural Lunch"

Family is the number one place where you share a table. To sit down at a table and eat together is one of the core pillars and foundational expressions of family.

God wants to share His table with you. So much so that when Jesus came down to earth... what did He do? He taught, He healed... but we often overlook the fact that He sat down and dined with sinners. This is what was so scandalous for the Pharisees - that Jesus regularly shared a table with sinners and prostitutes.

Which can only mean one thing.

"I want them to become a part of God's family.... These are my brothers ... and sisters."

In the same way, there is a supernatural power at work when we share meals with unbelievers with that same desire - of wanting them to become a part of God's family and have a place at God's table.

Therefore, be generous with your money and time. Treat people to MEALS. Have them over at your table. In doing so, we will be winning hearts for the Kingdom of God.

Lets pray.