

**“Why Did the Owner Commend
the Dishonest Manager?”**
Luke 16:1-13



January 29, 2017
Kevin Haah

Start Timer!

[Slide 1] Next Sunday, we are going to kick-off a new series on Jeremiah: Prophet to God’s People in Crisis. I am really looking forward to this series. We are not going to look at the entire book chapter by chapter. We are going to look at about 10 passages from that book and see what God says. The reason I picked Jeremiah is because he was a prophet to God’s people during Israel’s greatest crisis, during time when there was a lot of idolatry, injustice, violence, and a superpower empire called Babylon that was threatening their existence, and later actually invaded them, and exiled many of them to live under this ungodly superpower. I sensed that God was calling us to dig in to the book and learn about how to be God’s people in times of crisis.

Today is a sermon not in a series. We are going to look at a very interesting parable that Jesus taught. This is probably one of the most difficult parables to understand. The first time you read the parable, it leaves you wondering if you read it right. But, once you get it, I think you will see it as one of the most powerful parables. **[Slide 2]** Today’s sermon title is: **“Why Did the Owner Commend the Dishonest Manager?”**

[Bible Passage Slide] Let’s go to Luke 16:1-15:

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—

[Next Slide] 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 “ ‘Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied.

“The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.’

[Next Slide] ⁷ “Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’

“ ‘A thousand bushels 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.

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[Next Slide] 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?

[Next Slide] ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?

¹³ “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

What’s going on here? Before I get to the big question of why the owner commended the dishonest manager, I want to point out one thing that Jesus is telling us.

[Slide 3] 1. First, He is telling us that He is the owner and we are his managers. We don’t own it. It’s not ours. It’s God’s. It’s not just the 10%, the tithe, that is God’s and 90% is ours. Everything is God’s. That is an important principle for us to soak on.

Even though we give lip service to the idea that everything is God’s, many of us don’t really believe it. We think: it’s my hard work that earned my money. Maybe it was a part of it, but is it really your hard work. What if you were like Gaspar Marcos? LA Times did a video story about him recently. He is an undocumented high school student from Guatemala. His parents died when he was 5 years old. He made his way to the United States on his own. He goes to school and works 19 hours a day to survive. He said, this is the card that life has dealt me; I am trying to make the best of it. What if you were born in poverty in a Third World country and lost your parents and had to raise yourself? Would you have become what you have become by hard work? Probably not. And it’s obvious that you didn’t have anything to do with where you were born, to whom you were born, and when you were born. A significant part of your success has to do with stuff that you didn’t have any control over. Let’s not kid ourselves into thinking that we are where we are all because of our own efforts.

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The gospel always brings us to humility. The reality that we are not owners of the resources we have been entrusted with. We are only managers, stewards. We have to get this reality deep into our hearts.

Now, let's go back to the main question of this parable.

[Slide 4] 2. Why did the owner commend the dishonest manager? Is he saying it's good to be dishonest as long as you are shrewd? I don't think he is commending the dishonest manager for collecting less than was owed because the debt was uncollectable. The passage actually tells us why the dishonest manager did what he did. It says he did it to make friends who will welcome him into their homes when he loses his job. He used his master's money to make friends for himself! **[Bible Slide]** That's why Jesus explains the parable in verse 9 like this: **⁹I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.** He is saying telling his disciples, he is telling us to use worldly wealth to make friends for ourselves, so that when our worldly wealth is gone, and it will be, we will have friends who welcome us into eternal dwellings. What does that mean? What kind of friends is Jesus telling us to make with worldly wealth? He is calling us to make the kind of friends who end up in heavenly dwelling and welcome us. What does that mean? He is calling us to use worldly wealth to build the Kingdom of God and the church through which the Kingdom is built.

That's why Jesus goes on to talk about the importance of being good stewards with worldly wealth that has been entrusted to us. That's why Jesus again focuses on the main issue: We have to decide who we are going to serve: God or money. You can't have two masters. Either money is going to be a tool to serve God or God is going to be a tool to serve money. You can't serve both.

[Slide 5] 3. How can we be good stewards of the worldly wealth that God has entrusted to us to build the Kingdom of God?

First, it starts with an examination of what God has entrusted us with. It's not just about money. God has entrusted us with health, gifts, skills, passions, things like home, cars, time, interests, jobs, opportunity, personalities, and most of all, he has entrusted us with his

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grace and love. These are all things that we have no matter how much money we make. We are called to use everything to build the Kingdom of God.

Then, we start to ask: How can I use what I have to help people? How can I use what I have to demonstrate God's grace? How can I use what I have to make friends for eternity? How can I use the education that I have for God's glory? How can I use my job to reduce suffering in the world and build God's Kingdom? How can I use what I have to help people get to know Jesus? There are so many ways. I pray that the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom.

For me, I remember when I first understood this passage, it really clicked in my head. I used to think that mine is mine and God's is God's. I had a very dualistic view of my spiritual life. If I really wanted to serve God, I had to be a minister. Otherwise, I am just serving myself. This parable broke that dualistic thinking. Everything is God's and God is calling us to use even my legal skills, my analytical skills, my critical thinking skills for the kingdom. I can use even the prestige of my position for the kingdom. I can use my car for the kingdom. Every good thing came from the Lord for the purpose of stewarding it for the kingdom.

Practically, one of the things we should always do is to use your money to love people. Some of you are so good at this. You regularly invite people over to your home. If it is not big enough, you can take people out. Is there a person around you who needs loving and caring? Is there a person you really want to share the gospel with? Take them out for lunch. Invite them over to your home. I think it is one of the most wonderful ways of ministering to people.

Some of you don't have money to take people out. But, we all have time. You can use time to listen to people, to love people, to care for people, to pray for people, to help people. It doesn't take money to make friends for the kingdom. The most important thing is being there for people with respect and honor. We all need to ask ourselves: how can I use the time that I have to make friends for the kingdom?

This doesn't mean that you can't spend money on yourself for a vacation or leisure. God calls us to rest. So, that costs money. God knows that we need housing, food, clothing,

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transportation. But, we have to know that we are spending God’s money. When we know whose money it is and what we are called to use the money on, it changes the way we live. It changes what we buy.

We also need to be faithful givers to build the Kingdom through the church. The primary vehicle in the Bible for building the Kingdom of God is to build the Body of Christ, a physical manifestation of his presence, to build the church that connects people to God, grow together, serve the city, and extend God’s Kingdom. We need to be faithful in tithe and offering to the work of the church. The Bible teaches us to tithe, meaning give 10% of what we earn to the church. This is something that Grace and I and many Christians practice.

Tithing means to give 1/10th of your income to God through the local church. This teaching is all over the Old Testament. Let me give you an example.

[Bible Slide] Malachi 3:8-10:

⁸“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.

“But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’

“In tithes and offerings. ⁹You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

This is a pretty strong teaching. It says that when we do not bring God our tithe and offerings, we are robbing God. And it promises floodgates of blessings of heaven when we obey.

Now, some of you might be asking, isn’t that the Old Testament law? Aren’t we freed from the law? Good question. Yes, we are. In fact, New Testament does not have teachings that clearly say that we are required to give 10% of our income. But, let’s think about this for a moment.

- Have we received more of God’s revelation, truth, and grace than the Old Testament believers, or less?” “Are we more ‘debtors to grace’ than they were, or less? Did Jesus ‘tithe’ his life and blood to save us or did he give it all?”

If people of the OT robbed God by not tithing, how much more for those who have been revealed the full measure of God’s love, grace, and sacrifice for us on the cross? How much

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more for those whose only response to God’s mercy is to submit our bodies as living sacrifices to God? How much more for those of us who have been saved by God’s amazing grace that is given so freely? Freely you have been given, freely give!

Since we now have the full measure of God’s love for us, we are called to a higher standard than the Old Testament. This movement to an elevated standard is all of the teachings of Jesus. He said, you have heard that it was said, then he would quote an OT law, and he would say, but I tell you. For example, he said, you have heard it says, don’t commit adultery, but I tell you don’t even lust. You have heard it said, don’t murder, I tell you, don’t even hate someone. You have heard it said, love you neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say to you love your enemy. Each time, Jesus elevated the standard. He never lowered the standard. Why? Because we now have the power of grace, the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us and give us power to do way more than the law.

That was understood by the early church. They didn’t live by the tithe. They lived by 100%. They gave everything they had and shared with the whole church. That’s how it was in the beginning. They didn’t ask about 10% because they believed that it was 100%. Of course, the practice of selling everything and sharing didn’t continue throughout the early church. But, the teaching is clear. Just as those who have received much are required much, they believed that everything they had was God’s and gave cheerfully.

[Slide 6] 4. Now, where do we get the power to live like this?

First, we need to see that worldly wealth is temporary.

The passage says, “When it is gone” not “if it is gone.” The reality is that worldly wealth is temporary. If it is not gone before we die, it will be gone when we die.

I heard a story of a guy that made a lot of money, I mean tons of money, and he died. And when he got to heaven, the Lord asked him what he did. He said he made a lot of money. The Lord ask him, “how much money did you make?” He said, “I made millions of dollars.” The lord said, “That’s great! Now, we all have enough money to play monopoly!”

The reality is that it all goes back in the box at the end of our life. We don’t get to keep it. But, Jesus is saying we can use it in a way that makes friends for the kingdom, to build the Kingdom of God. We can do something permanent with the temporary worldly

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wealth. If you don't spend it on the kingdom, you lose it all. Store up treasures in heaven, not on earth, Jesus taught us.

Second, we have to continue to remember the gospel that Jesus loves us so much that he gave everything he had for us. He didn't keep it for himself. He sacrificed even his own life for us. **[Bible Slide]** 2 Corinthians 8:9 says:

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

He gave to make friends with us. That is also our calling.

As we journey with our Lord who gave everything he has for us, as we learn what it means to sacrifice everything to undeserving people, as we realize his love for us, as we realize his grace for us, as we realize that our happiness does not come from security that comes from money but from our God who is our comforter and joy, as we learn to walk hand in hand with God as our father who accepts us and loves us unconditionally, we get the power to live out our lives for the kingdom. It is living in his grace and love that compels us to make God our God, and put money in its rightful place as resources we use for God's kingdom.