

Luke 16:1-9

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[0 : 00] This afternoon I want to talk to you about preparing for the future. In a few years I will retire. I know that's hard to believe looking at me.

That's a joke. In a few years I will retire. And you know, that is a concern of mine. Have I set aside enough for retirement? Have I prepared for the future?

Do I have enough money to take care of me and my wife in the future? But we want to think about this afternoon preparing for our future.

Not maybe the 10, 5, 10, 20 years of retirement. But we want to think about our future. The millions of years that are ahead of us in eternity.

How do you and I prepare for our future in eternity? Well, of course, the first and most obvious way is we put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus.

[1 : 04] His work on the cross. His death on the cross. His shed blood. We ask God to save us on the basis of what Jesus has done.

The first and most obvious way of preparing for our retirement is putting our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. But that's not what I'm going to talk about this morning.

Excuse me, this afternoon. We're not going to talk about how to get to heaven, but how to prepare for ourselves a future in heaven.

You know, there's something that this parable teaches that is absolutely amazing. There's something that we can do right now which will affect our time in eternity.

It will affect our reward in eternity. And it has to do with how we use our money right now. The amazing truth that Jesus teaches in this parable is that you and I can use our money here and now in a way that will ensure a wonderful welcome for us at the gates of heaven.

[2 : 19] You know, this is a parable that is rarely preached from. Maybe in all my years as a Christian, I've only heard maybe two or three sermons on this parable. And I think one of the reasons is because it does present some problems in interpretation.

It's a puzzling parable. And what puzzles people is, is this dishonest man, is he commended for his dishonesty? How are we to interpret this parable?

Of course, parables are a common way that Jesus teaches. They've been called earthly stories with heavenly meanings. They're a story from everyday life that illustrates a spiritual truth.

But people get into trouble when they're interpreting parables when they try and press every detail of the parable to have a spiritual meaning. Usually in parables, Jesus has one point, one spiritual meaning, one spiritual truth he's trying to get across.

And we don't need to press every detail to have a meaning or an interpretation. And we need to remember that as we look at this parable. How can you and I prepare for eternity?

[3 : 35] Not how we'll get to heaven, but how can we affect, influence, the reward, the reception that we will get when we get to heaven?

We're going to divide this into four sections. The first is the plight of the dishonest manager. The second one is the scheme of the dishonest manager. The third one is the commendation of the dishonest manager by his master.

And then the last point, the fourth point, is Jesus' application of the parable. So the first point is this. The plight of the dishonest manager, this is in verses 1 through 3, we're introduced to someone here who is called a manager.

Older translations, they are called a steward. What is a steward? A steward in the ancient world was a business manager. You had a rich man.

He had great estates, great agricultural holdings. This businessman, his estate produced olive oil and it produced wheat and these agricultural products were sold.

[4 : 42] But seemingly, this rich man lived at some distance from his estates. So what did he do? He had a steward, he had a business manager who would oversee his affairs. In other words, his estate was entrusted into the hands of his business manager.

And his business manager would sell his agricultural commodities and collect the money. He was his representative in business transactions.

The steward was entrusted with what belonged to the master. His estate, his wealth, but not for his own personal gain, but for the gain of the master.

You know, there's an application here to you and me as Christians. We sustain exactly the same relationship to God. If you are a Christian, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a steward. God has entrusted things to you. You don't have anything in and of yourself. Everything you have has been entrusted to you by God for you to use for him and for his glory.

[5 : 54] Not for yourself. We are stewards just like this man. But there's a problem with this steward. And the problem is in verse 1. It says he wastes or squanders his master's possession.

You know, that means more than that he was simply a poor manager. Down in verse 8 he's called the dishonest manager. This man was a crook.

We're not told exactly what he did, but in some way he used his position to defraud his master. To steal from his master.

But, he's discovered by his master. Word of what he's done gets back to his master. And his master is undeniably upset. You know, this is the equivalent of an employee finding out that a trusted employee has been embezzling money from him for years.

You see what happens. The master lets him go. The master said, you cannot be a steward anymore. You cannot be a business manager anymore. I'm terminating your employment.

[7 : 08] But not yet. There was one thing that the stewards still had to do. He had to give an account. A financial account.

He had to close the books. You see, what had he been doing for his master? He'd been selling agricultural commodities. And then he'd been collecting the money from debtors. And then he'd been paying that money to his master.

So his master said, close the books. Tell me how much you've sold. Tell me how much money you've collected. Tell me how much money that you owe me.

You know the same thing will happen to us. One day. When we die. Or when Jesus returns. We will have to give an account.

For what we've done. We will have to give an account. For our stewardship. What are you and I. Are stewards of. That God has entrusted to us. Our time.

[8 : 12] Our gifts. Our opportunity. And particularly. Our money. We're stewards of those things. And one day. We'll give an account to God. How we use.

Those resources. That he entrusted to us. This is 2nd Corinthians 5.10. For we must all. Appear. Before. The judgment seat of Christ.

This is not a judgment to determine. Whether or not we get into heaven. If you put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. You will get into heaven. Because of what Jesus has done. But this is the judgment for reward.

So do you see. The steward's plight here. What kind of. What kind of a future does he have. He's just lost his job. And he says. I cannot dig.

I cannot do manual labor. All he's ever had. Was a desk job. And he says. I'm too proud. To beg. What is he going to do.

[9 : 12] How is he going to support himself. In the future. So he comes up with. A scheme. A plan. So that when he's kicked out of his master's service.

He'll have a way. A place to go. And a way to live. This brings us to our second point. And that is the scheme. Of the dishonest manager. He doesn't have much time.

He just has a little time. To close the books. And he immediately comes up with a scheme. And it's true to his character. It is a dishonest scheme. You know. I don't know if you know it. But the word. Scheme. Is used in a different way. In the U.S. From the way it's used here in the U.K. Here in the U.K. It's just a plan. I think it doesn't have a connotation. Scheme.

Good or bad. But in the U.S. A scheme is a plan. It's dodgy. It's a plan. That's dishonest. And that's the kind of scheme we have here.

[10:14] He's come up with a dishonest scheme. He said this is the way I'm going to be taken care of. After I lose my job. What I'm going to do. I'm going to go see. Each of my master's debtors.

These are businessmen. Who bought agricultural commodities. Either wheat or olive oil. From this estate. They bought them on credit. And they still owe money.

To the master. And so he goes to see each debtor. And he tells them. You can actually. Pay. Less. Pay for less. Than you actually got.

He says to the man with the olive oil. You don't need to pay me. For the 850 gallons. Of olive oil. That you got from me. Why don't you just pay. For 450.

Let's just call it even. That'll be okay. Let's just call it 450. And then he goes to the man. Who bought the wheat. He bought a thousand bushels. But he said. Let's just make it.

[11:11] 800. I'll put 800 down in the books. And you just pay me for 800. You see what the steward is doing. He's. By canceling your debts.

He's ingratiating. These people to him. He's causing them. To be indebted to him. So that when he loses his job. These people will be obligated. To take care of him.

Excuse me. I cut this thing off here. So these people will be obligated. To take care of him. It's a dishonest scheme. But he can do it.

Because he is still. The steward. So his one last act. As steward. Is to cook the books. Is to cancel the debtors. Some of their debt.

So they will be obligated to him. So they will. Take care of him. And what's he doing? He's preparing. For his future. You know. This brings us to something very unusual.

[12:12] To something very unexpected. To something surprising here. And that is the third point. And that is the master's commendation. Of the dishonest steward.

The master learns about this second scheme. This is the second time he's caught him in dishonesty. He initially had caught him. And was going to discharge him. Then he told him to close out the books.

He came up with another dishonest scheme. And now the master learns about this second dishonest scheme. This second way in which the steward was going to defraud his master. What kind of. How do you think the master would respond? You would think if he was angry the first time. You would think. Well he would be angry the second time. He would be even more angry the second time.

But we see something here. That is very surprising. Look in verse 8. In the very beginning of verse 8. The master commended the dishonest manager.

[13:08] Now the question is. What did he commend him for? Look again at the verse. At the beginning of verse 8. The master commended his dishonest manager. Because he had acted shrewdly.

The point of commendation was. His shrewdness. His foresight. And shrewdness. In preparing for his own future.

Even though. The master had been wronged. By this man. He still. Could not help. Admiring. His shrewdness. His foresight.

In preparing for his future. And then he commends him. You know. In light of this. What are you and I to do? In light of this.

How are we to prepare. For our future. What is Jesus saying to us? This is the fourth point. This is Jesus application of the parable. This begins in the middle of verse 8. Jesus said.

[14:06] For the people of this world. Are more shrewd. In dealing with their own kind. Than are the people of the light. Now what is Jesus saying here? He's saying that often times.

Believers. Unbelievers rather. People who are not Christians. Are shrewder. And wiser. Than believers. Than Christians are. Are. It's not that they're wiser.

In spiritual things. If they were. Then they would be Christians. But what Jesus is saying. Is that unbelievers. Are wiser and shrewder. In the affairs. Of this world.

Than Christians are. Very often. In the affairs. Of God's kingdom. Let's face it. Unbelievers. Do a better job. In preparing. For their future.

In this life. Than often time. Christians do. In preparing. For their future. In the next life. You know. There's still. An unanswered question here.

[15:03] What is the preparation. That Jesus is talking about? What is the preparation. That Jesus wants. Us to make? How do we prepare.

For our future. Not in this life. But in the next life. Well you say. The way to prepare. For our future. In the next life. Is to become a Christian. To trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's true.

That's vitally important. But that's not Jesus point here. What is the preparation. That Jesus has in mind? Jesus here. Is talking about.

Our reward in heaven. The experience. That we will have. And of course. Those are all by grace. But what is the reward. And how do we get it. In the language. Of this parable.

Look in verse nine. And this is a. Puzzling. Mysterious verse. If you just. Take it out of the context. Of the parable. It's puzzling. And mysterious. But it makes sense. When you look at it.

[15:57] In the context. Of the whole parable. This is verse nine. I tell you. Use worldly wealth. To gain friends. For yourself. So that when it is gone.

You will be welcomed. Into eternal dwellings. What is Jesus. Talking about? First of all. Jesus is talking about. Money. Here in this translation.

Is translated. World. Worldly wealth. Older translations. Say more literally. Mammon of unrighteousness. But regardless. Of how it's translated. It's talking about money.

Jesus is saying. Use your money. To gain. Friends. You know. I could use money. To gain friends. What if I had a stack. Of one hundred pound notes.

What if I went out. On the pavement. Out there. You think. I could find some friends. If I were giving away. One hundred pound notes. Of course I could. But that's not what Jesus. Is talking about.

[16:53] Jesus is talking about. Gaining friends. In eternity. In heaven. And the two things. That show us this. In verse nine. These. These are friends.

Who will welcome us. Into. Eternal. Dwellings. That's heaven. These are friends. Who will welcome. Us. When it is gone.

When what is gone. Your money. When money. Will no longer be. Of any benefit. For you. These are friends. That we will have. In heaven. Who will welcome us. Into heaven.

You see what Jesus. Is teaching here. Jesus is teaching. The astounding. Truth. That you and I. Can use. Our money. Here and now.

In this life. So that. When we die. There will be people. In heaven. Who will welcome. Us.

[17:49] How do we make friends. In eternity. How do we use. Our money now. By meeting the needs. Of people. Physical needs. But by especially. Meeting their spiritual needs.

By taking our money today. And investing it. In God's work. In the work of the church. In the advancement. Of the kingdom. And when you do that.

When you take your money today. And invest it in God's work. The work of the church. Advancing the kingdom. Both here. And around the world. What do you do? You're making friends. Who will greet you.

In eternity. Eternal reward. It's a stunning fruit. So the question. I want to ask you today. Are you. Preparing for eternity.

First of all. Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you come to God. Have you acknowledged. Your sin. And independence. And ask God. To save you. On the basis. Of what Jesus has done.

[18:49] His cross. His suffering. In our place. That's the first preparation. We need to do for eternity. But how about. Your reward. In eternity.

Let me ask you. As a Christian. Are you focused. Only here and now. Or are you focused. On eternity. Are you focused.

On the few years. That we have on this earth. Or are you focused. On the millions and millions. Of years. In eternity. What are you focused on. What are you living for. What are you using.

Your resources for now. You can use your resources. For the here and now. For your comfort. In this life. Your pleasure. In this life. Or you can invest.

Your money today. In eternity. In God's work. In the spreading. Of the gospel. And you'll have friends.

[19:45] For all eternity. It is an absolute. Stunning truth. That Jesus. Is teaching right here. Why should we.

Invest our money today. In eternity. And in the work of God. Well one of the reasons. Is what we've just seen. Is reward. For it. But you know. There's another reason. Why should we be willing.

To pay today. So that others. Could come into God's kingdom. Because Jesus. Paid.

For us. So that we could come into God's kingdom. Why do we want to give. Of our time. Our resources. So that others could come into God's kingdom.

For us. For us. Because Jesus. Because Jesus. Gave himself. And we want to follow Jesus. We want to be like him.

[20 : 43] As he gave himself. For us. We want to give ourselves. For others. We want to give ourselves. So that others would know. His salvation.

And one of the ways we do this. The way that we do it here. In this parable. Is through our money. I tell you. An absolute stunning verse. Let me read it again. Verse 9. I tell you. Use worldly wealth. To gain friends for yourself. So that when it is gone. You will be welcomed. Into eternal dwellings. Some of you may have heard.

Of the English. Of the English. Athlete. C.T. Stud. This was well over a hundred years ago. C.T. Stud. As many of you. I'm sure know. Was a cricket player. He was regarded as. Maybe the best. Greatest cricket player.

[21 : 45] Of all time. Played for Cambridge University. He was born in 1860. Into a rich and wealthy family. In England. His father had been a planner. In India.

And had made a great fortune. His father had come back. To England. To have a life. Of ease and pleasure. But his father. Became a Christian. Under the preaching. Of the. American evangelist. D.L. Moody. And then later. His son. C.T. Stud. Became a Christian. Also under. Moody's preaching. But C.T. Stud. Was a sports idol.

I guess he would be like. The Wayne Rooney of today. Or the Lionel Messi of today. But not with football. With cricket. But when he was converted.

When he became a Christian. He decided. I'm going to go to the mission field. And he went. To China. To share the gospel. With the Chinese. Went in 1885. And many people were shocked.

[22 : 41] Why would a sports idol. Waste his talent. And throw away his life. To go. To the mission field. But he went to the mission field. And upon his father's death.

He became heir. To a sizable fortune. What was he going to do. With all that money. You know what he did. He gave it away.

He put it in God's work. He put it in the work. Of the church. He put it in the work. Of missions. Spreading the gospel. Around the world.

You know what he said. I'm putting my money. In the bank. Of heaven. Here is a man who realized. That if you keep your money. You'll only benefit from it.

For a short while. In time. In this life. But here is a man who realized. That if you put your money. If you give your money. To the work of God.

[23 : 40] And the work of the kingdom. And the work of the church. You will benefit forever. And others will benefit ever. Forever. Let me ask you today.

Will you have friends. Who will welcome you. Into eternity. Let's pray. Let's pray.