

The Dishonest Manager | Luke 16:1–15

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Date: 22 June 2025

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[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ.! I'm Pastor Patrick Daly, and each week I share sermons that balance the grace and love of Jesus Christ with the truth of the Word of God.

Together, we'll explore Scripture using observation, interpretation, and application. This helps us discover practical ways to live out our faith every single day.

Let's dive in together into God's Word. Well, good morning, everyone. What an interesting parable we have going on. This parable of the dishonest manager.

You know, when you read that title, you have different translations. Some say the dishonest steward or the dishonest manager. And it just makes me think for a moment, you know, before we even begin of, you know, that had to have been a problem back then.

And we don't really have dishonest managers nowadays, do we? Well, certainly we do, right? And so when you're reading this, you can't help but think, well, this guy was just kind of a bozo kind of thing.

[1:07] There's a lot to this, though. When we open God's Word, there's a lot of patterns. There's a lot of wisdom. There are a lot of pieces that we are to read, that we are to discover, learn, and grow.

And also, how in the world are we going to apply these lessons to our very lives? We see that in the beginning here, that this parable is happening.

I want you to go ahead and open your Bibles if you have them open already. And I want you to see what's kind of going on here. It's on page 1040.

As you're turning there, you'll see that this parable is happening after the three lost parables.

In chapter 15, you have the parable of the lost sheep. You then have the parable of the lost coin.

[2:15] And in the ESV Bible, it will say the parable of the prodigal son. But it's also known as the parable of the lost son. So this is happening right after these things, where Jesus is continuing to speak to his disciples.

But you also have the presence of the Pharisees that are there. And we start off in all the verses 1 and 2, right? The rich man who had a manager, and the charges are being brought before him. Saying that he was squandering, or he was wasting his possessions. Right? So the rich man is calling him.

And I want you to keep this in mind. That same language that's being used about a manager is very similar language to what we find in a steward.

That's something that's very important for us to know. When we think of being a good steward, right? The parable of the talents, the parable of the minas. Because here, it's a little bit more about management.

[3:24] But it's also about stewardship. So, the steward, right, was accused of mismanagement. In verse 2, what is this that I hear about you?

Turn in the account, right? I want to see, show me the books kind of thing. Turn in an account of your management. You can no longer be manager. And so, it's this threat of dismissal, of losing your job.

And I think that's pretty, we can think about that nowadays. If you misuse funds, you're probably not going to have a job even nowadays. So that's pretty obvious that we can see.

Relevant in business today. So, the manager said to himself, what shall I do? My master is taking the management away from me. I'm not strong enough to dig. And I am ashamed to beg.

Which is, God has a funny sense of humor. We can think of people who are in management may not be used to being in the trenches, right? We can think about that back then and even now.

[4:23] That it's different when you're in management than being on the front lines, as it were. And so, I'm ashamed to beg. So, he's used to a certain way of living.

And in verse 4, I've decided what to do. So that when I'm removed from management, people may receive me into their houses. All right. So, he's trying to have some sort of plan, some sort of exit strategy, as it were.

So, summoning his master's debtor one by one, he said to the first, how much do you owe my master, right? So, the manager is in this predicament where he can have this loss of job.

But he's going out and it's very interesting. He is reducing the debts that are owed. Now, in biblical scholars, there's two arguments about what's going on here.

One of them is that the guy is going and say, you haven't paid your debt. Just pay a little bit. Just give something back to the debt that's owed.

[5:24] Giving them a discount, right? The other argument is that the manager would receive a, basically like, we would call it like a commission nowadays, right?

You think of real estate agents or car salesmen, right? That they get a commission on top of the service that's rendered. So, part of the debate is he's not receiving any payment.

He's just collecting the debt that is owed, not the commission, not the interest. So, there is some debate on that. We don't know specifically what exactly it is. But he is receiving some sort of payment that is owed.

And if you think about it, well, when you're owed a debt, it's better to have some sort of payment than to get nothing at all. And that's what we're seeing in this sense. So, we then go along, right?

So, he's going off saying, how much do you owe? A hundred measures of oil. Just sit down quickly and write 50. Just give 50. And the next one, he's saying, how much do you owe?

[6:23] A hundred measures of wheat. Well, take your bill, write down 80. So, he's negotiating some sort of discount for them. And so, what's interesting in this, when we look at this, we're thinking, well, wait a minute.

This guy's about to be fired, but yet he's going out and he's collecting money's owed to his master. And he's getting praised for that? That's kind of an interesting thing that's happening there, right?

I mean, look at verse 8. The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.

Which, I read that, I know from my own modern lens, I think, well, that's kind of strange.

But there's a lesson that's with that. The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness, for his wisdom. For the sons of this world are more shrewd.

This is where it gets into kind of the meat of it. People that are in the world are more wise with dealing with their own generation. The people within the world, as it were.

[7:24] Then, the sons of light. And who are the sons of light? That's a question that may come. Those are the ones that, in this case, would be the Jewish people. The ones that know the Lord.

So, basically, what Christ is teaching is, look at this man, who's part, basically, a worldly person, as it were. He's more wise when it comes to business dealings than you guys are.

That's kind of an ouch. It's kind of an ouch truth. But, you know, when we think about it, there are things that are in Scripture that can convict us. It can be a stinger, as it were.

But it helps us with our understanding, nonetheless. Verse 9 goes on, then, and I tell you. Now, this is a weird one. Make friends with yourself by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails, they may receive you into eternal dwellings.

That's kind of a weird language. What is this unrighteous wealth that we're talking about, and why should I get it? Well, that is speaking of worldly resources, earthly things that are not necessarily pure.

[8:35] In other words, we think of our earthly payments, right? Jobs that we have. I mean, don't raise your hand, but I'm sure that a lot of us here have jobs. We get some sort of payment for services that are rendered, okay.

So, that would be earthly wealth. That would be the unrighteous wealth. So, what he's saying in here is that use earthly wealth so that when it...

How you steward earthly wealth is a reflection of how you should and can steward what God gives to you.

Does that make sense, church? It's important for us when we consider the parable of the minas, the parable of the talents. It all has to do with stewardship, with what God has given to us.

And here it's talking specifically about earthly wealth and stewarding that well. And in the same way that we are to steward what God gives us here on the earth, you know, for some of you, you may have a really good job.

[9:49] You may even be a manager. Steward those resources well. Because what we find just like on the earth is also similar with heaven.

Steward the things of the earth well. And it will show how well you can steward the things of heaven. So, it's showing this parallel that's happening here.

Verse 10 helps us understand this even more. One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much. That should be the light bulb moment.

That's what we're talking about here. And one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. As we have talked about before, we've used this parabolic language, the seed that gets planted into the ground and grows, the stone that knocks over a statue in Daniel 2 and grows into a mountain, is this idea that things expand when it comes to God.

And so, how many of you think of this every day? There's a saying out there that who you are before you get famous, who you are before you get rich, you've got to consider your character.

[11:14] You have to consider who you are. Because that gets magnified as you attain wealth. We think of things here on the earth. It's very similar to what we're finding in Scripture.

If you're dishonest with what God has given to you here on the earth, it's saying you're going to be dishonest with what God has given to you. And that's kind of a little hard for us.

But it's true nonetheless. All of this, how we understand this, is a matter of the heart. Let me repeat myself.

What matters is on the inside in how we deal with earthly treasures, as well as treasures in heaven.

We have got to consider what is our mind, what is our heart posture towards the Lord.

Some of you may know someone who is dishonest in their business dealings, or they're just a dishonest person. How will they handle the things of God?

[12:20] That is the kind of question you have to think for a moment. And so this unrighteous wealth that we've been talking about is talking about earthly riches.

How are you going to steward the things on the earth? How are you going to steward the things of heaven? So verse 10, once again, one who is faithful with very little is also faithful in much.

And one who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest in much. It then takes us to verse 11. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust you with true riches?

So there's even more explanation. If you're being a crook with wealth, if you're being dishonest with wealth, that's the question.

Who will entrust you with true riches? Verse 12, And if you have not been faithful in what is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

[13:20] Verse 13, No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.

This is where we see that famous verse that you cannot serve God and money. We consider money and wealth as a tool. Many of us, for those of you that work with your hands and building things, you have many different tools to build a shed or to put something together.

You don't worship the tool. Don't make the tool your God. Well, what can be a tool for us nowadays?

Well, certainly money can be one of them. Artificial intelligence can be another one. Right? We can think of many things. We can think of the pursuit of knowledge in of itself can become a God.

So when Christ is saying you cannot serve God and money, it's talking about who is, who do you serve? So it's not money in of itself.

[14:30] Just as scripture says, it is the love of money. You can think of, there's many examples we see in culture, right? Where you have movies where their eyes turn into dollar signs, right?

Or we can think of people who just cut corners, are dishonest in their work. Those kind of things that happen. And we have to think about, have we made, what have we made an idol?

Have we? I hope that, I hope the answer is no for all of us, right? We need to have God. That's who we worship. That's who we love. Money will fade away.

It is that which is created. The material will fade away. Much like how we age, right? We don't like admitting that, for sure.

We trust in the living God, who is everlasting to everlasting. God does not change. He is constant. And he is our firm foundation.

[15:38] And so, I also want to point out that it is not stewardship that saves you, but it's showing, how is your heart?

That's something we also need to factor in. So the Pharisees, in verse 14, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. They scoffed at him.

And he said to them, you are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.

When you think of someone who is dishonest or who is a lover of money, God knows their heart.

God knows our hearts as well. Not to say you're lovers of money, but to still show that God knows.

For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God, which is just showing, you guys have made an idol of yourself or the pursuit of money.

God doesn't like that. What's very interesting is that this parable, it shows us that we cannot hide our true intentions from God.

[16:59] We simply cannot. It's similar to the parable of the talents and the minas. And I just find that this is a very, this parable can be very controversial, but it's really not.

It's just the question of, where is your heart for the things of this earth and the things of God? That's it. There's nothing controversial of that. And certainly when you read it and you see, well, this guy is trying to, you know, fix the wrong that he's done.

Well, how many of us, we try to fix the wrong that we've done? We have to think this isn't a salvation thing though. And I, in my humble opinion, I would think that's the controversy.

But it certainly is a stewardship thing for us. And so, what does all of the, what can we learn from this?

The manager mismanaged what was given. That's the first one. The Steward, his mismanagement resulted in being accountable with the potential loss of his position.

[18:13] We can think of how God gives us so much. This life, this time, our resources, as it were. We are to be wise in what God has given to us.

The second thing then is that the manager changed and acted wisely. That is his shrewdness. So the manager was being held accountable.

It required a course correction. And I know for a lot of us, when we have the threat of being fired, I hope that we change our ways, certainly. Which is why we can think of a parallel even for us today.

So the manager changed his course. He acted wisely and it pleased the rich man. Now here's the other thing. The rich man was not pleased with the dishonesty.

Okay? But he was pleased with the shrewdness. With the turning things around and being wise.

Okay? The text does not say that the rich man was applauding the dishonesty.

[19:24] And I want to make that very clear here. And so God values wisdom, action, wise stewardship as it were. In other words, many of you guys that have watched Indiana Jones choose wisely.

Right? You think of that scene where there's all of those cups, right? All of those chalices. And you're like, well, wait a minute. You know, you want to get the most beautiful looking one?

Are you sure? The idea was choosing wisely and humility. Well, when we think of this parable, we are to act wisely.

We are to be wise. We are to choose wisely. And the third thing then is that God measures our heart. This is very important. That God wants to transform us and to soften our hearts to live and to love like him.

to continue to be molded by him every single day. And part of this, well, people can see, God can see, where is your loyalty at?

[20:38] Is it towards God or is it to, well, in this case, an idol? We cannot serve God. We cannot place God as our Lord and Savior and money.

You will fundamentally have to make that decision. And so God examines our hearts, our motives. He knows what's on the inside. That's something for us to consider.

Let's now go into the application. What can I do? How do I live this out? Remember, at Ontario Community Church, we observe the text, we read it.

What in the world is going on here? We then look at the lessons that help us in our own spiritual walk with the Lord. And the third thing, the application, is what do we do about this?

Well, the first thing, if you're not, if you don't believe in the Lord, belong to God. Make a decision for Him. Respond to the invitation that God has given to you to say yes to Christ.

[21:41] Respond in faith. Everything that you have and everything that you are belongs to God.

And it is important for us to recognize that and to know that we need Christ. And when we think about things that have happened back then and even things that happen in our world today, it is so important for us to turn to Christ.

And here's the thing. No matter what you have been through, no matter what you are going through, no matter what your behind-the-scenes story is, God extends this invitation to the table of plenty.

He calls for you to respond in faith that whosoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life.

So that is the first thing, is to belong to God. Have I, ask yourself, have I responded to the invitation to salvation in Christ?

[22:54] The second thing then is to steward every gift. Just as it says, I think it's in James, that every perfect gift comes from the Lord above. We are to steward it well.

As we're being transformed, as we're being changed, there's spiritual gifts. There's spiritual fruit.

We are to steward that just like we are to steward that which comes from the earth.

In other words, use all of your resources wisely. Time, talent, treasure, consider that.

And give back to build the kingdom. Steward for God, and it may even require for you to take inventory of what it is you have. Just a simple pad and paper.

Sometimes when I get down, when I'm human just like all of you, I have my down days. I remember I learned from my parents, get a pad and paper and write down what you're grateful for.

[24:00] Usually like by the fifth or the tenth one, you start turning it around. But sometimes it's appropriate to take inventory, to consider what you're thankful or what your blessings is.

That doesn't change the fact that you're going through emotions, but it's something that can help you in that. So take inventory and consider that when you are saved by grace through faith, the things that you do, the words that you say, the actions, all of these things help build up treasures in heaven.

That's important for us. To live in love like Christ and to help others respond to the gospel message, to be that ambassador for Christ for other people, we can think of our neighbor.

How are you being salt and light to the world? How are you living out the gospel? And here's the thing. None of us, is anyone perfect here?

Right? We are still being a work in progress. We're still going to make mistakes. None of us are perfect.

[25:17] And let God work in and through you to make you more like Him. The third thing then, what does it say, church? Serve God, not the world.

And I specifically put the world and not money. Because we think of how money being a tool, well, there's many things that are of the world that people seek.

Do they find fulfillment? Very often, it always has interested me when you hear about actors, actresses, famous people, rich people who say they're empty.

That there's something missing in their life. It's like, I have all the money in the world, but I don't know why I feel empty. Or I could have, you know, I'm the most beautiful person.

I'm not, but you understand. I'm certainly not. You can think about all of these statuses, how there's that sense of emptiness happiness.

[26:30] And it's the strangest thing if you don't know the Lord. You're like, well, wait a minute. Logically, you would think being the most beautiful, being the wealthiest, having the most knowledge, any of these things would give you fulfillment, would give you peace, would give you joy, would give you any of these things.

but they don't. We have to consider how it is God that gives us joy that's unspeakable.

That how the Lord gives us peace that surpasses all understanding. That it is God who gives us salvation, eternal life.

And if that's not enough for you, just think of all the other things that the Lord gives you. The softening of your heart, the putting on of the new self, the confidence in the Lord that no matter what happens, I'm going to trust in God.

And I don't know about you, with everything that goes on in the news and social media, I don't want to talk too much about it. It goes to show where do you turn to in crisis.

[27:43] whether that's a personal crisis or things that are just going on and you don't understand or agree with. In other words, serve the Lord.

Consider to serve and have God at the center of your life. And consider how you live and love. Serve the Lord and serve others.

Much like how Scripture calls us to love God and to love others. be that ambassador for Christ and to be salt and light. Jesus clearly shows us that stewardship is about what matters in the heart.

So, as we close here, use your resources wisely. Come to know the Lord, belong to Him. Steward what God has given to you.

and may you clearly choose God as your Savior and Lord. Let's pray together. And Father, we thank you for this time for us to gather together going over this very interesting parable about a dishonest manager or a dishonest steward, as it were.

[29:02] may we, first off, know you. May we have that relationship with you. May we grow in you.

May we be moved to do good, but in that entire process, may we steward well what you have given to us, the things that are of the earth and the things that are of God, things that are of you.

may we examine our hearts if there is something that is wrong with our hearts.

Father, if we have evil intent, I pray that there will be a change of heart, much like how there is a change of mind.

May you soften our hearts and change our minds on who you are and continue to mold us and to change us into who you want us to be. May we not be afraid of turning to you and may we recognize that what matters is that we turn to you today.

[30:16] That you love us regardless of what we have been through and you're there for us in the hills and the valleys and the highs and the lows or as that song says, the highways and the byways of life.

May we take this parable to heart considering how we know you and how we steward the things of the earth and the things of you.

We love you, we praise you, we glorify you, and we honor you. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray and we all say together, amen. Amen. Thank you for listening for this week's message from Ontario Community Church.

I pray that you are encouraged and strengthened in your walk with Christ. For more sermons and resources, visit OntarioCommunityChurch.org. May God bless you as you live out his grace and truth every single day.

Thank you for