

Title: THE DISHONEST MANAGER, LUKE 16:1 – 17
(Chatham, NJ; 09/22/13, AM) [Pd – Explanation of Text]

Theme: The shrewd behavior of the dishonest manager demonstrated that he was wise enough to get his life right so that judgment would not overtake him.

Purpose: To encourage us to be aware that God's judgment is near and to remind us that our money and goods can and must be used for good.

Introduction:

1. This is a perplexing story because it is ethically murky.
2. The manager gets commended for what appears to be more dishonest behavior.
3. When Jesus elevates him as somewhat of a model and draws lessons from it, we feel like he is justifying his behavior.
4. It is like we are mixing the wrong ingredients: broccoli ice cream, or sprinkles of sand on cereal.
5. Jesus challenges his listeners with this tale, so let's see what we can learn.

I. A New Look at an Old Interpretation

A. More cheating or making things right

1. The charge against the manager was either neglect of duty or misappropriation of funds; we are never told that dishonesty and stealing were the problems
2. When he finds out that he might lose his job, he reduces the debt owed to the estate
3. We have assumed that he exhibited more dishonesty
4. But what if he had merely reduced the amount of interest they owed?
5. Jewish law forbade charging interest to countrymen
6. By reducing the interest he acted legally and even made the owner look good

B. Dishonest of decisive action

1. He is commended for taking action
2. His actions may not rise to the level of more cheating but actually decisiveness
3. He doesn't care about the morality of it; he only cares that he might have somewhere to go after he is fired
4. The owner recognizes the astuteness of his actions
5. Even if he is cheating more, he still gets commended for his decisiveness

II. Jesus' Observations

A. Sons of the World versus the Sons of Light

1. More shrewd in dealing with their own generation, 8
2. Quicker to assess their wrongdoing; quicker to take action to avoid judgment
3. Jesus implies that the sons of light (Jews) do not recognize the judgment that is upon them because they don't recognize the advent of the new era
4. Are believers today always alert to God's saving and judging activity?

B. Use of Money

1. The way Jesus says it may sound a little odd
2. "Make friends" – "they will receive you into heavenly dwellings"
3. Do for people today that you may see in heaven later
4. Use your wealth to store up treasures in heaven, Mt. 6:19-20

C. Be Faithful in Small Things

1. What you do with the small things translates into what you'll do with big things
2. Small things = unrighteous wealth, 11

3. The faithful servants (Parable of Talents) all received much more after they had been faithful with the talents they had been given
4. In Luke 19:11-27 each mina earned was awarded an entire city
5. Are you being faithful in the small things?

D. Can't Serve Two Masters

1. In particular, God and money are two opposing masters
2. Do we see our wealth and possessions as a loan from God?
3. Paul directs the wealthy to be rich in good deeds and to not put their trust in riches, 1 Timothy 6:17-19

III. Jesus Is Ridiculed for These Things, 14-17

A. His teaching exposes the hearts of the Pharisees

1. The strong reaction from them reveals the power of his message
2. They justify their actions to be seen by others; thus in almsgiving, Mt. 6:1-4
3. In truth they hid their covetousness behind a façade of giving
4. They can't take any action to repent because they have hidden their true motives even from themselves

B. The Good News of the Kingdom

1. This has come upon them through Christ
2. Can they repent as the manager did?
3. He didn't try to hide his behavior behind a cloak of self-righteousness

Conclusion:

1. When you hear the Gospel and its demand for repentance, don't hesitate. You need to take decisive action to avoid God's judgment.
2. Use your wealth to your advantage; be rich in good works.
3. Don't try to keep one foot in the world and one in the Kingdom; choose definitively whom you will serve.
4. Believe, repent, confess and be baptized for the remission of your sins.
5. Live faithfully to that.