

Title: THE DISHONEST MANAGER, LUKE 16:1 – 13
(Chatham, NJ; 09/18/16, AM) [Pc – Twin-Point Outline]

Theme: This parable teaches us to use worldly resources to make ourselves rich toward God.

Purpose: To explain what is commendable about the dishonest manager and to teach the three principles of how to view our wealth and resources.

Introduction:

1. Not many stories have caused as much confusion and consternation as this one.
2. In the middle of the Gospels it borders on being even a little bizarre.
3. Yet Jesus tells it and draws lessons from it.
4. Let's examine the parable and learn what we can.
5. There are two takeaways for us: first, take decisive action for your soul, and second, use worldly goods wisely, but keep them in perspective.

I. Decisive Action

A. The story doesn't seem to fit

1. How can a bad manager be commended for dishonesty?
2. "What do malfeasance and fraud have to do with the Kingdom of God?"
3. First, we don't know how he was "wasting" the master's possessions
4. Second, was he making the books right: some say the manager was correcting a wrong by reducing the debts
5. But if he is cheating the master further, why commend him?
6. Where the story ends and where Jesus begins to teach seems abrupt (8)
7. How can worldly wealth have anything to do with our eternal habitation, 9? Are we bribing our way into heaven?
8. However, Jesus doesn't condemn his cheating but commends the bad manager
9. For at least doing something of benefit for himself though it appears he does so with more crookedness?

B. Commended for shrewd, decisive action

1. He concocts a plan for his welfare
2. He sets up essentially a quid pro quo with the master's debtors
3. They will feel indebted and perhaps thankful to him: he did something nice for us, so we'll do something nice for him
4. It still sounds like he is cheating: perhaps there is something implied about this that was understood by Jesus' listeners but hidden from us
5. He uses the resources available to him (admittedly the master's resources) to provide for himself
6. Though he had "wasted" his master's possessions, the master at least can commend him for shrewd action
7. Shrewdness – prudence, not necessarily as negative idea as we might think of it
8. In Greek thought, it referred to the ability to discern what is good for oneself as well as for society as a whole
9. Connect to Prodigal Son who also took a decisive step despite his wayward lifestyle?
10. It is his responsiveness that is praised, not the morality of his action

II. Use of and Perspective on Wealth

A. Use worldly wealth

1. People of this age versus the sons of light: the former know how to act with prudence
2. "Make friends . . . by means of unrighteous wealth" – it still doesn't sound right

3. So that you'll be accepted into eternal dwellings – it now sounds even less right
4. If we let Scripture interpret itself, we come up with two related statements:
5. First, almsgiving is a means of laying up treasure in heaven, Mt. 6
6. Second, it is similar to 1 Timothy 6:17-19 – lay a foundation for eternal life by using wealth

B. Faithful in little = faithful in much

1. Faithful with worldly wealth = faithful with eternal wealth
2. In the Parable of the Talents in Matthew each faithful servant receives a reward; the reward is to enter the “joy of your master” – echoes of a heavenly reward
3. If you've not been faithful with these things, “who will entrust to you true riches?”
4. In Luke's Ten Minas the one who made the most was given even more
5. Also read verse 12 – who will give you something of your own?
6. God demands the wise use of what we've been given.

C. Can't serve two masters

1. Can't serve both God and money
2. At first glance this seems like a contradiction to the story
3. The parallel passage is Matthew 6:24 in the context of laying up treasure in heaven
4. And it makes sense here in Luke because Jesus essentially puts money in its place - seeing it as a tool, rather than an idol
5. To be used wisely and for a greater, eternal purpose

Conclusion:

1. It takes decisive, prudent action to prepare for eternal life.
2. Opportunities to prepare for it perhaps come upon us at unusual times, but we must take advantage of them
3. Although wealth can be a trap for some people, it can also represent a great opportunity.
4. Put your wealth at God's disposal.
5. But first, put yourself at God's disposal by obeying the Gospel.