

**Luke 16:1-31**

**The master of your heart won't share.**

Being exclusive is a good thing.

I made the mistake of googling that idea this week... there are many opinions and many of them are wrong! But there is a fair number that supports this conclusion. Exclusivity is good. Especially when we think of defining relationships.

That of marriage.

In many relationships, I can hold shared affections (I can like more than one sports team, or genre of music... I can love my children) But when it comes to the most important human relationship I will hold, to survive and thrive it requires fidelity. A single affection over all others.

The same is true of our hearts at the core of who we are - as spiritual beings. There can be only one defining love. Only one master of our hearts.

God has only ever invited people into exclusivity.

And here, Jesus preaching on the Kingdom, inviting the unexpected, calling prodigals (younger and older), reasserts this exclusivity. He hits back against the idol most prevalent among the Pharisees and arguably most prevalent among us!

Money.

Oh no, a sermon about money! Let's get all the uncomfortable stuff out of the way... How should Christians handle money?

- See it as belonging to the Lord - all of it.
- See it as a tool not a goal.
- Be generous - to others, meeting needs.

- Sacrificially give - Kingdom work, the church. Don't even have to make an argument for tithing or prescriptions in Scripture. Give because you value it. "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also."

We get this from Scripture and from our text today.

Here, money is used by Jesus to prove exclusivity and give us some Kingdom clues as to how to approach it.

This is the hinge verse of the chapter.

**Luke 16:13** "No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (ESV)

God desires the ultimate place in your heart. To be the defining love. The One who directs your life.

The master of your heart won't share. How then do we ensure we don't love the wrong master?

Jesus tells us to be smart, be leery, and be convinced.

## **Be Smart**

What an easy point to prove. Who would disagree with the statement: "when it comes to money you should be smart."

Maybe, however, defining "smart" is important!

"He also said to his disciples..." From the audience of Pharisees (who are still there), from a story of a family torn apart by the sons' desire for the Father's mammon (money and possessions), Jesus tells the parable of the dishonest manager.

He was bad. Worked for a rich man, managing his possessions, running the household, the farm, the industry. But he was wasting it all. He makes no defense so it must have been true.

Probably taking extra on the side for himself, or being reckless with the way things are maintained, accounted for, or run. And he is fired. But before he brings all of the accounts before the rich man, he devises a plan to ensure his future.

He realizes he is not strong enough to dig. He is ashamed to beg. So he cooks the books to curry favor. He summons all the debtors and he cuts their debt. Varying but significant amounts. Still costing his master profits, but winning friends for himself.

He is still fired but “the Lord” likely Jesus here, commends his shrewdness. A hotly debated text.

**Luke 16:8–9** “The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. [9] And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.” (ESV)

“Jesus shares an implication of the story: the children of this age (unbelievers) typically deal shrewdly with each other and win friends by this means, whereas the children of light (believers) often fail to use their financial resources to win people to faith, who thus become friends forever (welcome you into eternal dwellings). Thus Jesus encouraged his followers to use their money shrewdly (but innocently) in order to advance God’s kingdom.”

Make friends for yourselves - disciples - that they may receive you into “eternal dwellings.”

He goes on. “One who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much; if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth who will entrust in you the true riches?”

A few of us are reading the book Oikonomics together - which describes five “capitals” or areas of investment that we live with and need wisdom to rightly order them and prioritize them accordingly.

Spiritual, relationship, physical, intellectual, and financial. In that order. The challenge for us is that we often flip the order and invest the most time and effort in the financial capital. Running after mammon.

Jesus says to be smart with whatever unrighteous wealth you have - money and possessions - using them for something more significant than themselves!

This is hard to do. Money is often top of mind (for me anyway). It drives our anxiety, it can color our hope or fear for the future. Jesus comes to free us from mammon's grip. And one way to experience that freedom is to use it shrewdly - not for gain as defined by worldly standards (while gain isn't bad) but used to make eternal impact. Real significance.

“Jesus counsels people to invest their money for eternity instead of focusing on comfort in this life.” TS

To make friends that will receive you into eternal dwellings.

“The word may include both God and redeemed humanity welcoming a newly departed and generous believer to glory. What a picture! God, his angels, and grateful souls—eternal friends, those who have heard the gospel because of one's giving—greeting and leading a faithful believer into the eternal tents. St. Ambrose said, “The bosoms of the poor, the houses of widows, the mouths of children are the barns which last forever.” Hughes

Leveraging what we have been given for the Kingdom.

“Therefore we must use all these things upon earth in no other way than as a guest who travels through the land and comes to a hotel where he must lodge overnight. He takes only food and lodging from the host, and he says not that the property of the host belongs to him. Just so should we also treat our temporal possessions, as if they were not ours, and enjoy only so much of them as we need to nourish the body and then help our neighbors with the balance. Thus the life of the Christian is only a lodging for the night, since we have here no continuing city, but must journey on to heaven, where the Father is.” Martin Luther

**1 John 3:17** “But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?” (ESV)

**James 2:15–17** “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, [16] and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? [17] So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (ESV)

This can be a key indicator of who our master is. Either we will hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. When God is the master of our hearts, he points us outward, winning friends, stewarding what he has given us for his glory realizing it is our good.

When it comes to money, sons and daughters of light must be smart.

- Seek wisdom
- Be generous
- Surrender it all to the Lord

And while we endeavor to be smart with money, we must also be leery of it.

### **Be Leery**

Cautious or wary due to realistic suspicions...

For one, money desires to be your master. There are other things that we make into idols that in the schemes of the devil attempt to chip away at the exclusivity of our hearts, but money has extra long, spindly claws that grab deep into the flesh of our hearts.

But also we should be leery because it won't satisfy. It won't produce what we hope it to. And it will fail. “so that when it fails...” Not if it fails.

**Luke 16:14–15** “The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. [15] And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” (ESV)

Somehow Pharisees have been neglecting the way of God, and using money to justify themselves before men. We get that idea, don't we? If we are blessed with wealth it must be a sign of favor (or so we think).

They have been warping the law to their perceived benefit. I think that is why verse 18 is included here. He says that while the Kingdom is now preached, the law doesn't pass away...

**Luke 16:18** "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery." (ESV)

He is highlighting the ways they ignore God's way, and saying it doesn't change the law. He is also highlighting the relationship of exclusivity that illustrates how we are to give our hearts to God.

So he tells a parable of a rich man and Lazarus, a poor man. The preceding parable of the dishonest manager addresses the proper use of money. This parable confronts the abuse of money, especially by the rich. It is a solemn warning.

The rich man - is clothed in purple and fine linen. You could see that he was rich. "Feasted sumptuously every day."

The poor man - Lazarus, laid at the rich man's gate, covered in sores. "Desired to be fed with that which fell from the rich man's table."

Rolling right from instruction on how to approach money, here we have a rich man that seems to be trusting in his wealth, living for it as his master. So much so that he keeps it to himself. Where Jesus says to use unrighteous wealth to win eternal friends, Purple boy refuses to feed Lazarus - refuses to care for him at all.

"Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores..." Dogs that got scraps from the rich man's table...

Then both die.

Lazarus is carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man was buried and finds himself in Hades. A place of torment and fire.

While this is not a full treatment of what is to come - Jesus is using the reality of hell, the future of judgment before God, and the danger of an eternity of separation and torment to warn those listening.

A place where even the slightest relief is out of reach (not even a drop of water to cool his tongue).

**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** ESV "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil."

Presuming upon his status he cries out for mercy... but the chasm has been fixed.

How many times has this story been repeated in reality? Neither of these characters is in their place by their behavior.

This is not a story proving that the rich are punished and the poor given bliss because of their economic situation. But those things were indicators of who had their heart.

Moses and the Prophets were enough to establish and maintain faith in Yahweh. To walk in God's way. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength... and love your neighbor as yourself."

Yet the rich man refuses and it was too late. He was a lover of money and money couldn't save him. Lazarus on the other hand, his name is the clue, "God has helped."

The master of your heart won't share. The master of your eternity won't share his place of priority, his place of trust, and love.

So we are to be leery of money. It won't keep us eternally. It will fail. It is an unfaithful lover.

Being smart and being leery is not enough though. We need to be convinced.

## **Be Convinced**

The rich man's last request is to send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his brothers.

**Luke 16:31** "He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" (ESV)

Turns out, money isn't really the point of the chapter - but it steals your heart away from the real worthwhile master.

**Deuteronomy 10:12** "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, (ESV)

The One to put above all other things. The "captial" of priority. To be his. To find him and be found in him.

**Jeremiah 29:13** "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." (ESV)

The refusal to repent and the corresponding refusal to believe the gospel is not primarily due to lack of evidence but to a hardened heart - mammon hardens us against God.

Moses and the Prophets are enough... the Word is enough to prove it. To be convinced that mammon isn't enough. That God wants our hearts. It is enough to hear of his heart for us, willingness to send his Son to save us, to draw us to himself. His exclusivity inviting ours.

"People might presume, "If an angel appeared to me, I would believe." Or, "If I saw a clear sign from heaven, I would believe." Or, "If I looked up in the sky and saw the words written, 'Jesus is Lord,' I would believe." But Jesus teaches us a fundamental truth: people who say they would believe if they saw indisputable or spectacular proof are fooling themselves. All people need to believe is found in the Scriptures. They are sufficient." TS



The coming of the kingdom means that it is an hour of decision; entrance into the kingdom is not automatic. Everyone must choose whether he or she will follow Jesus, which means that all must make a radical decision for the kingdom. "Everyone forces his way" into it (Gk. *biazetai*).

We force our way when we realize his heart toward us.

We can have hope too - we like the Pharisees are lovers of money, but that master's grip is loosened and slips the more we know Christ's heart for us.

John Mark Pantana - "I always say this: the heart follow what the mind is fixed on. That means your emotions will always match the health-potential of your thought life. Emotions are good followers but terrible leaders. Emotions are just amoral signs that point to your inside world. Jesus' love affair with his bride has involved an epidemic amount of emotional infidelity. And, it's never on his part. It's wonderful to think that Jesus doesn't emotionally cheat on us. He's resolved to love us in an ironclad devotion, and, His passion and emotion has never deflated. He love us and He likes it. Jesus doesn't cope in unhealthy ways at our rejection of him. He doesn't emotionally distance himself when we're being an absolute pill.

"Jesus doesn't close off his heart to us at the fear of any what-if. Jesus stands fixed, secure, and steady even when your heart wanders to other lovers - whether by good intentions mixed with poor boundaries or an outright willful "goodbye." To love deeply and faithfully is to chance both the great pain of unrequited love and the great joy of union-bliss. I think Jesus is lovesick for our hearts full affection."

What good news.

"The gospel calls us to an inner-person response of consciously adopting God's kingdom values (Rom. 12:2) and turning away from what is perceived as significant in sinful human society. This is possible only as we ponder the great love with which we are loved by God in the gospel of grace."

Be convinced. God is our help. Jesus justifies you by his sacrifice on the cross. He gives you new life in his resurrection, that which drives new affections, new values, new hopes. And he has sacred an eternal dwelling with himself for you.

**The master of your heart won't share.** But this one, Yahweh, is worth loving.

Be smart.

Be leery.

Be convinced.

This is the wealth we need. His Kingdom. His way. His life.

Cash in!