



Managing Wealth God's Way: Learning to be Faithful Stewards

Sermon Notes for Message #1 of DDM: Investing Jesus' Way (Luke 16:1-13) – Pastor Jeff

- One of the topics that seems to make people uneasy or nervous in church life and ministry is the subject of financial management. Whether it is our bodies, possessions or money, we spend most of our waking life thinking about, emoting over, and interacting with the material side of life. Add to this the uncertainty of economic stability and we can tend to allow our financial life to be filled with anxiety, fear, or obsession.
- The Lord Jesus Christ tells us the story of the unrighteous manager to teach us how we should live with material wealth. Almost a third of Jesus' 40 parables deal with the material side of life because God created all of it and designed us to interact with it for our good and His glory (1 Tim. 6:17-19).
- The story Jesus tells about the unrighteous manager seems shocking and strange coming from His lips. Jesus seems to be encouraging the greedy pursuit of selfish gain and the unethical practice of business, but He doesn't.
 - The story is about a business relationship gone bad and Jesus focuses teaches us some lessons we can learn from a bad example (an unrighteous embezzling manager).
 - The unrighteous steward uses his shrewd instinct to figure out how he is going to cut his losses and take care of himself
 - He illicitly discounts the debt of his master's debtor's and obligates them to himself in the future
 - His master "praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly"
 - Jesus doesn't praise the manager for his fraud, but highlights his shrewdness as a son of this age to teach us how to handle His material wealth for spiritual gain (v. 9: "And I say to you...")
- Jesus teaches us three ways to use our material wealth:
 - ❶ **Use your wealth to gain eternal friends (16:9)**
 - Jesus tells us to use our money to make everlasting spiritual friends by investing in gospel-focused enterprises.
 - When your opportunity to financially invest in the future ends on this earth ("*when it fails*"), what will it reveal about how you laid up your treasures in heaven? Matt. 6:19-20
 - Investing in the gospel is a guaranteed and profitable investment.
 - ❷ **Use your wealth to grow everyday faithfulness (16:10-12)**
 - Jesus teaches us three important principles to apply:

1. Faithfulness is driven by character, not circumstances (v. 10). Character determines one's faithfulness. It's always about the conviction and location of one's heart (Matt. 6:21). If you are concerned about eternal things, you will be faithful in little or in much.
2. Faithfulness is rewarded with true wealth, not temporary substitutes (v. 11). Too many believe money is the key to happiness, but God tells us otherwise (Luke 12:15; Ecc. 5:10). Can we expect God to give us meaningful ministry and reward if we mismanaged or wasted our opportunity by investing in endless creature comforts and perishable possessions?
3. Faithfulness is the fruit of a stewardship mindset, not that of an owner (v. 12). The three most important truths to know are: 1) God knows it all (Hag. 2:8); 2) God controls it all (1 Chron. 29:11-12); 3) God provides it all (Deut. 8:18).
 - o We are called to be "*trustworthy*" with what we have been given (1 Cor. 4:2) whether it be our time (Eph. 5:15-16), body (1 Cor. 6:19-20), opportunity (Matt. 25:14-30), possessions (Luke 16:11-12) and the gospel (1 Thess. 2:4)
 - o Most people don't have a money problem, but a management problem.

③ Use your wealth to guard against empty fickleness (16:13)

- Jesus lays down the gauntlet. Make a decision about whom you will serve: the god of materialism or money or the God of all gods? There is no middle ground.
- Our hearts have the capacity for one dominating love and Jesus knows the spiritual power of possessions (Mark 8:36).
 - o God demands an undivided heart (Matt. 6:33; Col. 1:18; Ex. 20:3)
 - o Check your heart for false gods (idols like anxiety, discontent, loving money, stinginess, security, etc.). 1 Tim. 6:9-10
 - o We are forbidden to serve the god of material things (nothing wrong with possessing things, but you can't allow things to possess you)
 - o We are commanded to serve the God over all material things. We must settle the issue of ownership. The Pharisees didn't like this story as it condemned their lives (v. 14: "*Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money...*")