Cross Fellowship Church
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Luke 16:1-13
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As you can tell from the passage that Stephanie just read for us this morning, we're continuing on in our study of the gospel of Luke together this morning. We're going to look at kind of a strange parable together this morning. If you feel like what we read together was confusing, you're not alone. Even the Bible scholars that write commentaries on the book of Luke that I was looking at this week kind of felt like this was a confusing parable as well. It was kind of humorous this week as I'm looking a different books. Every single one of them start off with a comment about how dim and how confusing this parable is. One of them says the parable of the unjust steward is one of the most difficult of Jesus' parables to understand. Another one said if Luke 15 contains some of Jesus most famous and accessible parables, chapter 16 contains some of the most obscure and confusing. More recently Topel says the literature is staggering and after all the effort expended, its meaning still eludes us. Creed simply declares it to be an unedifying story. That's a bold claim right there. I don't know if I'd be brave enough to say man, Jesus, that one just wasn't very helpful.

So that's always really encouraging when you're opening up the books that are supposed to give you the answers and that's the first thing you see. That's how they start out. The good thing was none of them ended there and that's not going to happen for us either this morning. We're not going to end there either. So with this parable, the thing is, it is a surprising story. Part of why it's confusing is because it's surprising. It's not what we expect. And that's the point of a lot of Jesus' parables. He's trying to tell a story that shocks us and makes us think and that wakes us up to see realities that we might have missed otherwise. That's what I'm praying this parable will do for us this morning.

This topic that we're going to look at as we get into this parable is one that we often need a wake-up call about. You don't have to raise your hands here. I don't want to embarrass anybody. But think about this for a second. How many of you had to deal with money this week? Had to pay bills? Had to buy something. Waiting for a paycheck, because it was the end of the month. How many of you had to make decisions related to how you used your money this week? And as you think about that, how many of those were decisions that you actually had to wrestle with a little bit. They weren't easy. Felt some level of stress about the decisions that you needed to make with your money?

Those are interesting questions to think about for a couple of reasons. One, because on the one hand I would imagine most of us in this room, except maybe some of you kids, had to deal with money and make money-related decisions this week, and most of us probably struggled with at least some of those decisions. It's hard sometimes to figure out how to use

your money and the best way to use it, where it needs to go. Some of you, honestly might have some of those decisions weighing on your minds even right now.

But on the other hand, I think money can be tricky, because we get so used to dealing with money and making money-related decisions that there are probably a lot of them that I just made without even thinking about it this week very much. A lot of things that we spend money on are almost on autopilot. Like we just got into certain habits where maybe we thought about those things at one point, but now that's just something our money goes to without any thought at all. And maybe they're on autopilot, because you actually set up the auto bill pay with your bank and you don't have to think about it anymore. That's kind of the two-sided struggle with money as we wrestle with it, but there's things we don't wrestle with that we probably should. The culture we live in feeds into those mentalities. Everything around us feeds into the mentality of what everybody does with their money, so why would they think about using our money that way? That's what everybody does. Or we stress did not having the money to do the things that everybody around us makes it look like we should be able to do.

So the question in all that is what should be driving how we think about and how we use our money? How often do you stop and think about that? How often do you evaluate the way you're using money the way that you are, and what standard should you be using to determine if the way that you're using your money is the way that you should be using your money?

Jesus is going to use this strange parable that we're going to look at here together this morning to teach us some lessons that will help us with those questions. He's going to tell his disciples a story about a really questionable manager who makes some pretty shady financial moves, but then shockingly, what Jesus is going to do is he's going to tell the disciples that that guy is actually a better example of how to manage your money than most Christians are. What are we supposed to learn from this sketchy manager here in this parable?

So let's walk through this parable together, and we're going to see at the end of all this three lessons that Jesus draws out from this parable that will teach us as his followers what should characterize the way we handle our processions. So let's start at the beginning of chapter 16, verse 1. We'll comment along the way as we go through the parable and then we'll dig into the lessons that Jesus wants us to learn from this.

If you remember, last week Mike preached on the three parables from chapter 15 that Jesus told, and in that case, he was talking to the Pharisees and scribes. Because they were grumbling to Jesus about how Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them. And so Jesus told them these stories that we looked at last week, so now Jesus is turning to his disciples and he's going to tell them a story. So it feels like a pretty abrupt topic change here. As we'll see there is a connection between the story that we're going to look at today and the last story we talked about last week, the story of the prodigal son. And next week we'll see how this parable we're looking at right now makes the disciples grumble again and Jesus is going to confront them

again.

That's been the pattern of this section of Luke we've been through for a while we've been talking about over and over again about how Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. He's taking the disciples along with him and he's teaching them about what it looks like to follow him as they're on their way to Jerusalem. Ask we've also talked about how along the way, the Pharisees are getting more and more stirred up by Jesus and the things that they're hearing Jesus say and the opposition to Jesus is increasing the closer that they get to Jerusalem. So again, remember that's the context that we're in.

But the lessons here in this parable are directed toward the disciples are part of Jesus teaching them how to live as his followers. So in light of that, here's the story that he tells them. There is a rich man who had a manager, and before we get into what happens with these guys, that would have been a common, real life situation that the disciples would have been familiar with. It's a picture that Jesus used a lot. We've already seen it in here in the book of Luke, back in chapter 12. Jesus used an illustration of a manager that was set after a master's household to make sure everyone received their portion of food at the proper time. Remember that? And a couple of chapters, we'll see another parable in chapter 19 of a nobleman that entrusts some of his resources to several servants with instructions to engage in business until he comes back. So in Luke alone, Jesus uses managers and masters three different times when he's teaching his disciples what it looks like to be followers of him.

In that culture, it would have been a common thing for a person with a lot of money or resources to have either a slave or an employee whose job it was to manage at least a portion of that master's money or resources. So we're not giving a lot of details here about exactly what this manager's position was or what he was entrusted with, but we get the general idea. But the master is the one that everything belonged to and then the manager was basically the master's representative when it came to the use of whatever portion of the master's resources were entrusted to him by the master.

And so as manager, he would have been empowered to make legal transactions in the name of his master and negotiate contracts at his discretion on the master's behalf. And so anything done by that manager within the scope of his management would be binding on the master. He's acting on the master's behalf and representing him. And the manager wouldn't be liable himself for any loss to the master because of his own bad decisions, because again, he's working on behalf of the master. The master is the one who's ultimately accountable for these things. But at the same time, because everything ultimately belongs to the master, the manager is accountable to the master for how he used the master's possessions, and the master is going to hold the manager accountable if he were to misuse the master's possessions. And that's what it looks like happens here in the rest of verse 1.

So as charges were brought to him, to the master, that this man was wasting his possessions. So the way that's worded there, it's not immediately clear whether these charges

are legitimate or whether somebody's making up charges against the manager to get him in trouble, but these are serious charges. Right? The accusation here is that the manager is wasting the master's possessions. Again, we're not told any details about how he might be doing this, and this is one of the things that tripped up a lot of the commentators, I think, but the deal is Jesus, this is a story he's making up. He's going to give us the details we need, so that's just the one we need, I guess.

The important thing, though, here is that as a master, that is not what you want to hear with your manager. Right? If you've entrusted your possessions to somebody to manage them and use them on your behalf and you hear that he's wasting them, that's not good. That's not what you want to hear. That's a big problem. So that's what we find out has gone on here. And the word that's used here sounds all too familiar, because it's exactly the same word that was used of the younger son in the parable that we looked at last week. Remember the prodigal son, the younger son asked his father for his share of the inheritance early, and then he goes to a far country and squandered his possessions or his property in reckless living. Right? The same word here. It's probably not an accident that we've got back-to-back stories of a son squandering his father's resources and then a manager squandering his master's resources.

But where the parable last week focused on the father's compassion toward his son when he repented and came back after wasting his possessions, this week the focus is going to be on the master holding the manager accountable for misusing his possessions, and that's what we see here in verse 2.

"And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.'" So the master receives charges, so he summons and he's going to hold the manager accountable. This phrase he's worded there—"What is this I hear about you?"—It indicates the master believes that these charges are true. And so he tells the manager to bring him the books, to bring him the financial records, but he's pretty sure that they're just going to profess that these charges really are true and that he has been squandering his resources. He tells the manager as soon as he turns in the books he's done. He can't be manager anymore.

So you hear those accusations and you hear the manager's situation. You would think that he would at least try to defend himself. Right? Try to make a case that these charges are false and that he hasn't been wasting his master's possessions, but that's not what he does. Look at verse 3 here and see how he responds.

"And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.' So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to

another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'"

So the manager doesn't try to defend himself at all. Maybe that says something about the truth behind these charges. Seems to just accept the fact that he got his hand caught in the cookie jar now he's in trouble and he's going to be out of his job. But the deal is this is more than a job. This would have been his housing. This would have been his food. This would have been everything. If he loses this position, he's in big trouble. He's going to have nothing left when this position is taken away from him. All the resources that he had at his disposal before when he was the manager are going to be gone. And the reality of that is they were never his to begin with. And so he's realizing this now. He's got a big problem. All these resources that I used to be able to manage are going to be taken away from me and I'm going to have nothing left. I'm going to get kicked out on the street.

And because everybody knows why I got kicked out on the street, everybody knows that I'm being fired because I was untrustworthy with the master's resources, my options are going to be pretty limited. And so like he says here, he can really only think of two, and neither one of them are very appealing. Digging, he says, is one option for him, but that would have been one of the toughest forms of manual labor. You can just imagine how hard that would have been. It was a job for the uneducated, and so coming from his current position where he is responsible for managing a lot of resources probably, this would have been a big step down. And so he says here, I'm not strong enough to do that, but really, the way it's worded, it's probably more that he's not willing to do that kind of work. We say stuff like that sometimes, too.

The point is that would be below him. But then he says his other option would be to beg, and that's even more humiliating of that's not a good option either. So what's he going to do? That's when it hits him here in the text. He's basically like, ah-ha, got it. And the rest of the sentence here is really important. Here's the purpose behind what the manager is about to do. At this point, he's got a really clear view of what his future holds. He's going to turn in his management records and then he's going to be homeless and out of a job. Really clear view of where things are going. So he's thinking, what can I do to put myself in a position where someone else is going to receive me or welcome me into their home? My other options are not good. What can I do so someone would at least feel goodwill toward me and take pity on me? If not even, like, owe me and feel obligated to me to take care of me when I lose my job.

So that's what drives him to do what he does next. He sees what his future holds and he knows he needs to act fast to put himself in the best possible position for the future. What can he do to put himself in that position? And we see here the master had told the manager to bring him the books and then he would be out as manager. The master realizes that he has a short time while he still has the books and he can still operate within his authority as manager. He sees this window of opportunity that he has. He calls in his master's debtors. We're not told exactly how these debtors got to be in the position where they owed the master these things.

Maybe they're, like, tenant farmers or something who paid a share of their produce as rents. Maybe the master sold things and he owed him for that. Whatever the situation, they owe the manager's master. And so the manager calls them. He says he brings them in one by one. And even though we only get to see two specific cases here, the implication is that there are more just like these. It's not just these two. There's a list of people that he's calling in and doing similar things with.

And so what the manager does is he has each of these debtors tell him how much they owe the master. And that's not because he doesn't already know. I mean, he has the books. He probably managed their accounts. But he has them acknowledge how much they owe to set himself up so they will then see him as being generous toward them when he does what he is about to do. And the ESV does have footnotes, which is helpful, but the way it translates, these measurements, it doesn't really do justice to the amount of resources that are at play in these conversations here. The first debtor says he owes 100 measures of oil. A footnote might convert that into a measurements that would make sense to you, but those measures would have been roughly the equivalents of a little bit less than 9 gallons each. So this guy owes almost 900 gallons of oil. That's a lot. The equivalent for people that study this stuff out and do the math, basically, like three years' salary. It's a lot that this guy owes.

The second debtor that comes in says he owes 100 measures of wheat, but the measure here is a different one. Dry goods are measured differently than wet ones. The equivalents would have been 10 to 15 bushels each, but I have no idea what a bushel is either, so I looked that up and that turns out that a bushel is about 9 gallons, too, which is convenient, so he owes the equivalent of, like, 10 to 15 times in wheat what the other guy owes. So it's between a thousand and 1500 bushels of wheat. Like 9,000 gallons. That would be the equivalent of 8 to 10 years' salary. So these guys owe a lot.

The first guy, the manager says take his invoice and rewrite it for half of what it originally was. So he cuts off about a year and a half of salary to what this guy owes his master. The second guy has him rewrite his enjoys for 80 percent off. Since it's a bigger debt, it works out to be a reduction of one and a half to two years' worth of salary as well. And so he's like giving them a lot of relief. Especially, though, with him telling them to hurry up. Do this quickly and rewrite their own invoices. This feels really sketchy.

Given the situation that he knows he's about to lose his job. But remember, as long as he's still the manager he can he's completely within authority to negotiate contracts on his master's behalf and the master is bound by his contracts that he negotiates. So he really helps these guys out. You can imagine how they feel toward this manager walking away from these meetings, like oh, my goodness. He helped me out big time. So the manager went from having nothing but bad options in front of him if he didn't do anything and lost his job to having a list now of his master's debtors that basically are now in his debt. His future looks a whole lot better now than it did before he had these meetings.

And so you can see here in verse 8, even the master can't help but basically tip his cap to the manager. Verse 8 says, **"The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness."** And that's not what you expect to read when you get to verse 8 then. You read what just happened and what we think is what we're going to read here is that the master was furious with the dishonest manager for what he did. That's what we think we're about to see. But instead, Jesus said that the master commended him. He praised him and that's shocking. It doesn't make any sense. This guy is accused of wasting the master's possessions, then when he's told to turn in the books and take his pink slip, he takes advantage of the little window of opportunity that he still has left to do even more damage to the master. He's clearly a dishonest manager, like the master says here. But Jesus says the master commends him. Why in the world is he commending him?

But this is what's important to notice here. Jesus says the master commended him not for what he did, but for his shrewdness. That's probably not a word that most of us use everyday, but we probably have a sense of what it means. It's not completely unfamiliar. The word that Jesus used here in the original has the sense of acting wisely, of acting sensibly, of acting prudently. Seeing a situation clearly and taking wise, sensible, pursuant action in light of that knowledge or foresight. And the English word shrewd has a similar sense, so it's a good word for what the master praised the manager here for. The master saw what we've been talking about. He saw that the manager looked to the future, saw where things were headed, and then made a really smart move in light of what his future held. It was shady, but it was shrewd, and all he could do was tip his cap to the manager. Well played. Good move.

But here's where it gets really surprising. That's the parable that Jesus tells his disciples, and everybody listening is thinking, like, what? Why would the master praise the manager for what he just did? Jesus says, you guys could learn a thing or two from that manager. We're thinking, what in the world? What are you talking about? This is not your typical parable from Jesus. Look at the rest of verse 8 here and we'll see Jesus explain why he's telling the story.

"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. 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." Are you feeling yet why the commentators I quoted earlier all said this was such a confusing parable? But hopefully you're also starting to see how it's not. Jesus picks up on the master's praise for his manager's shrewdness, and he makes it clear that that's the main point that he's making with this story here. He's not telling us to go out and conduct business this shady ways like the manager did, but there's something about his shrewdness that we need to see and learn from as Jesus' followers.

Jesus says the sons of this world or the people of this world or of this age are more

shrewd than the sons of light. This is the only place he calls his soliders the sons of light, but that's clearly who he has in mind with the title here. The point is as Jesus' followers, we tend to not be as good at dealing shrewdly with people in this world than non-believers like this manager. People of this world like the manager tend to give more foresight to their future and act more shrewdly and with more foresight than Christians do. That's what it's saying here. So that's the first lesson, and really the main lesson that Jesus wants the disciples and us to learn about this parable.

Let's think about that for a minute. Like the manager in the parable, we're supposed to be shrewd managers of the resources entrusted to us by the master. In thinking about how the manager in the parable modeled shrewdness, I think there's a couple of elements ever this shrewdness that you need to learn. Your possessions are actually God's possessions. You need to think about our possessions and what this says about your possession. They're actually not ours. They're God's. That's the first thing the manager was going to be reckoned with when he was going to be fired for squandering the master's possessions. He might have been operating as if the resources he had access to were his, but they weren't, and they were about to get taken away, because they were never his to begin with. They were the master's.

So it's not too hard to see that the parallel for us is that God is our master. Right? And that's true for a couple of reasons. One, because he created everything, and so because he created everything, he owns everything. Everything belongs to him. We see this all over the Bible. Here's a couple of examples you can make jot down these references. I'll read them for you. You don't need to necessarily turn to them.

- Deuteronomy 10:14 — **"Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it."**

- Psalm 24:1 — **"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein."**

- Psalm 50:10-12 — **"For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine."**

Everything belongs to God. This consistent pattern we see all through the Bible. He's the master of all things. He created it all. It all belongs to him. He runs the world and it all belongs to him. So that's the first reason why we should be looking at God as our master in the sense of this parable here, but it's also true, because as Christians, God owns us and is our master, because he paid for us with the blood of his Son, and we know this as well. We sang about this this morning. First Corinthians 6:19-20. **"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of**

the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

First Peter 1:17 says, "**And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."**

As Christians we belong to God, because he bought us at great cost: the precious blood of Jesus. To become a Christian is to have your eyes opened to the reality that Jesus is your Savior, yes, but also, that he is your Lord. We tend to just think of Lord as another one of Jesus' names and forget what it actually means. Lord means master. We call Jesus Lord. We're acknowledging that he's our master, that he owns everything, including us. And so if he's the Lord, if he's the master that owns everything, including us, then anything that we have really belongs to him. We're supposed to see ourselves, then, as managers that have been entrusted with these resources by our master. Again, we've already seen that here in Luke more than once. We're going to see it again.

Jesus uses this picture of master and manager to teach us about one aspect of our relationship with God as Christians. There are other aspects to it as well. We're adopted into his family as sons and daughters. He's made us citizens of his kingdom. That's other ways that we can look at our relationship with God, but another helpful picture that shows us what our relationship to God is like is this picture of master and manager. So we need to understand that everything that we have, everything that has been given to us in this life belongs to the Lord and has been trusted to us to manage in this life.

We tend to operate, when you think about it, a lot of times, as if only a portion of what we have belongs to God and the rest belongs to us. We give a percentage to the church or to missions, but then the rest we think about as ours, and we can use it however we want. But in reality, the portion that we give is supposed to be a reminder that all of it actually belongs to the Lord. And the other thing is we tend to immediately focus on money when we read a parable like this, but we need to see that the application here is far more broad than that. This word that's translated as wealth and money in these verses, you might have a footnote in your Bible about this as well. It's a good King James word, "mammon," and you might have learned these verses this way. You can't serve God and mammon. It does have money in mind and we need to see that, but it also has possessions, property, everything else kind of in that category in mind as well. All of our resources are in mind in that word there.

So we do need to be thinking in terms of money. That's a big one for us. But we also need to

be thinking about all of our other possessions as well. We need to be thinking about our houses, our cars, our food. We need to be thinking about our opportunities like our jobs, our schools. Maybe thinking about our relationships, like our families, our roommates, our kids, our neighbors, our coworkers, our classmates. We need to be thinking about our time. That's a big one. We need to be thinking about our bodies. How are we managing the body that God's given you? How are you taking care of that? How are you using your eyes? How are you using your hands? We need to be thinking about our spiritual gifts. We need to be thinking about the gospel. All of these things, the Bible talks about being entrusted to us by God. They belong to him. All of these things belong to him. We're just the managers.

So that's the first piece of understanding. The shrewdness that Jesus wants us to understand here is that our possessions are actually God's possession that he's entrusted to us to manage on his behalf. He's the master. You're the manager. And so even right there, like, oh, you start to sigh the huge implications that that alone has on the way that we handle our resources. Right? But let's get even a little bit more specific here.

You can see this next point on your handout. Knowing what the future holds should shape how you manage the resources entrusted to you in this world. Everything changed for the manager when he was put in the position where he saw clearly what his future held, when he was called in by the master to give an account for how he'd handled the master's resources, told that the managements was being taken away from him. He saw clearly at that point what his future held, and if he didn't doing in quickly, he was going to be homeless, jobless, in big trouble. But he realized he still had this short window to act and affect his future before the resources were taken away so that he could be welcomed into other people's houses when he was removed from management.

Jesus here in verse 9 uses almost an identical phrase for what should motivate us in how we use our resources. He said it's so that when our resources fail, we will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Think about that for a second. As Christians, we know where our future is headed. We know that this world and this life is not all there is to live for. We know that one day, this life is going to be over and that all the resources that we have aren't going to do us any good anymore. We know that there's an eternal kingdom that's coming. In that eternal kingdom, we're going to receive an inheritance that can't be taken away or destroyed. And we know that the kingdom that we belong to is better than anything this world has to offer, because the king himself is better than anything this world has to offer. Jesus is saying that what we know about the future should have a greater impact on how we manage our resources that are entrusted to us than the manager and the parable that his view of the future had on him.

So if he would go to the lengths that he went to in this case to secure another temporary future for himself, how much more should our knowledge of our eternal future drive us to make sensible, pursuant action with the resources? We only have a short window to act with our resources, too. Not because we're about to be fired, but because this life is temporary.

And unlike the manager in the parable, we don't know exactly when that time is going to be up for us. We don't know exactly when the end is going to be. And so how much more should we be motivated to be always managing our resources with an eternal mindset? That's exactly what Jesus is telling us here in the first lesson from the parable.

You can see it summed up in this next point on our handout here. Be strategic with the resources entrusted to you in this life with the eternal kingdom in mind. The manager in this parable acted strategically with the resources that had been entrusted to him with his future in mind. There are a lot of issues with the way he went about that. But that's what he did. And Jesus is saying here that we should be looking at the future and looking at the resources entrusted to us strategically as well. He explains what he means in verse 9. He says the way that we can be strategic in this way, the way that we can be shrewd is we can make friends with the worldly wealth we have now. That phrase translates to unrighteous health. But that word unrighteous there is the same word to describe the manager as dishonest in verse 8, and is it gets translated as dishonest again in verse 10. It doesn't mean that. It doesn't mean unjust, unrighteous, dishonest, but it kind of seems like in this context it's not just talking about money that's obtained by underhanded means. It's not saying that the money that we have is unjust and unrighteous in itself. It's saying that all of these things are connected. They're all related to one another.

The resources that we have in this life belong to the same unrighteous world that surrounds us, and so Jesus is connecting all of these things together and the point is that all of that is going to end. All of it's going to fail. All of it's going to go away either when we die or when Jesus comes back and establishes his kingdom and does away with this world. Also not a matter of if but of when. So what can we do with these resources that belong to this world, to another than the one that we ultimately belong to and look forward to? The manager in the parable, how he was shrewd with those resources, he made friends for himself that would welcome him into his home. Jesus says that we should use our resources to make friends for ourselves, too, not just so that they are going to feel obligated to take care of you if your resources fail in this life, but one day they will be in the eternal kingdom with you and welcome you into the eternal kingdom when this is over.

God entrusts us with resources now for the sake of the kingdom to come. We can bring as many people as possible. It's not about buying yourself, not about manipulating people to become Christians with your stuff, but about remembering that everything you have belongs to God, not to you. You're just the manager. It's about having your eyes focused on the future, the eternal kingdom to come, and saying how can I best manage the resources that I have in this life, in the most strategic way that will make the biggest impact on the future? And there's so many ways we can talk about that. Even going back to what we talked about before, think about your house. Think about your kids. Think about your food. Think about your relationships. Think about your spiritual gifts. All of these things that God gives to us, how can we use them in a

strategic way too make the biggest impact in the future that we think about all of these things is true. So that's the first lesson and the next lesson in the parable.

Jesus goes into a couple lessons here very, very much related and seem to kind of try to balance out maybe, make sure we don't misunderstand. The manager in the story is not your ethical role model. So while his story teaches us something about being strategic with the resources entrusted to us, Jesus gives us a couple ways we're not supposed to be like him as well. So these other two lessons here, let's look at them and see how we're supposed to be different from the manager in the parable. You can see this on your handout. Unlike the manager in the parable, first of all, we're supposed to be faithful managers of the resources entrust to us by our master. Look at verse 10. **"One who is faithful in very little is also faithful very much."** If, then, you have ever not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches, and if you have not been faithful in that which is in others, who will give you that which is your own?

So the manager in the parable, he got himself in trouble first of all, because he wasn't faithful with the resources that his master had entrusted to him. It cost him his job, and the warning to us is not to be like the manager in this parable in that way. Instead, we're supposed to be faithful managers of the resources entrusted to us by our master. So that's the basic qualification for being a manager. If you're not faithful, you can't handle the job. No master is going to entrust you with anything if they can't trust you to be faithful with their stuff. Just like the master in the parable held the manager accountable when he wasn't faithful in his management, God watches our stewardship of his resources as well.

Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians 4. **"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God."**

So Paul, in those Verses there, says that he's a servant of Christ, a steward, a manager of the mysteries of God, the gospel message, and he's saying that he's going to be judged by the Lord one day for how faithful he was in his management. On that day, the Lord is going to bring everything to light. All the things we thought were hidden and thought nobody knew about are going to be exposed. Even the purposes and motivation of our hearts. And the beauty of the gospel is that if you're a Christian, you don't have to fear that day. If we had to stand before the Lord on our own, we would have reason to be afraid on that day. But for those of us who have put our hope in Christ, we will be judged based on his righteousness on that

day. But that doesn't mean we could use our master's resources any way we want to since Jesus' righteousness is ultimately why we stand before God as those who are righteous.

The point of these verses is that faithfulness shows who you are. And character is shown most clearly in the little things. People might do what's right in big visible situations, because the risk of being caught is too great. But in little things where you know nobody is going to know, nobody is ever going to see, nobody is ever going to catch you, that's when who you really are comes out. The point is if you're the kind of person that's willing to be dishonest in a small thing that you know you can get away with, you're the kind of person who would be dishonest with big things if you thought you could get away with those, which is pretty convicting. Pretty easy to convince yourself that this little thing, that doesn't really matter. I'd never be dishonest in something bigger but Jesus is saying that's not the way it works, dishonesty in little things shows you can't be trusted in bigger things. Shows who you are.

Verses 11 and 12 there make it clear that there are way bigger things to come. Worldly wealth is a small thing in light of the true riches of the kingdom to come. The resources that have been entrusted to us in this life belong to God, not to us, but we have an inheritance waiting for us in the kingdom that belongs to us. The point in all of this, the resources, all the resources that we'll ever manage in this life, they're small. They belong to somebody else, unlike the eternal inheritance that we're going to receive in the kingdom. And so if we aren't characterized by faithfulness and how we manage these little things, we have no reason to expect to be given greater responsibility in the kingdom, which means that you may not be who you think you are if that's what characterizes you.

If I could just encourage you, if it that's something you struggle with, confess it to the Lord. Ask him to help you grow in faithfulness with the resource he's entrusted to you. It's a big, big deal. The final lesson that Jesus draws out of this parable is in verse 13. Be loyal to your master. **“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.”**

This was the problem with the manager in the parable. He wasn't loyal to his master. That's ultimately what was at the root of everything he did. He wouldn't have waived his master’s possessions in the first place and he would have handled things differently when the charges came up if he was loyal to him, so the final lesson for us, and really the one at the root of all the others is to be loyal to our master. You can't serve two masters. You can balance things between them, like a see-saw, but one or the other is ultimately going to end up in control, is what Jesus is saying.

We might expect that the contrast is going to be between God being our master or between being our own master. That's really what we expect. But instead, the contrast is between serving God and money, because what happens is that when God is our master, we can maintain the proper perspective on the resources that he's entrusted to us and we can

manage them well, but when we forget that God is our master, we try to live like our resources belong to us. We end up being mastered by the things that we thought we were master of.

So what does your relationship with your possessions say about your relationship with your master? That's the question that these verses here cause us to ask. What does your relationship with your possessions say about who your master actually is? If you remember that God is your master, everything else falls into its proper place. You're going to be faithful with the little things, like money and possessions, that belong to him now, because you remember that they belong to him and you're just the manager. You'll be strategic and shrewd, because you see the eternal kingdom that's to come, so all that being the case, all of these lessons that we've just talked about here, let's back up real quick in conclusion to think about the questions that I asked at the beginning. Why should or what should be driving the way that we think about and use our money? What standard should you be using to determine if you're using your money in the way that you should be?

Hopefully after all this, you start to see some answers to those questions, so let me close with a couple of practical applications in light of all this. First of all, I encourage to you maybe spend some time this week and prayerfully consider, what resources has God actually entrusted to you? Sit down and think about that a little bit. Don't just stop with the obvious ones again, but really think about everything that he's giving you. Think about your strengths. Think about your spiritual gifts. Think about your relationships. Think about your opportunities. Think about possessions. Think about your money. Think about how much God has given you, how much he's entrusted to you.

Then spend some time thinking about the gospel. Think about what Jesus did for you. Think about how he bought you with his own precious blood. Think about the future, then, that that secured for you. Think about the life that's to come because of Jesus' work in your place. We can get so caught up in our life now that we don't get head up enough. And losing sight of the future affects the way we live now. Spend some time in Hebrews 11, spend some time in the last couple chapters of Revelation. See what they do for your perspective. Spend time thinking about that.

In light of all that, think about how you can manage the resources that God entrusted you in the most strategic way that can make the biggest impact on your future. You have the list of things, like these are all the things I could be using for that. And my heart is stirred by these truths to be strategic for that. So what are some ways that you can be strategic in the things that God has given you? How can you be faithful in managing the things that he's entrusted to you with the eternal kingdom in mind? That's the lesson from the parable of the dishonest manager here. Be loyal to the master who bought you with his precious blood. Be faithful with the resources that he's entrusted to you, because how you manage them shows who you are. And be strategic in how you managing the resources that he's entrusted to you with the eternal kingdom in mind. So let's pray together in light of all that.

Father, thank you for the gospel. Thank you for sending Jesus to live the perfect life that we could never live, Father, to take the penalty that we deserve, to pay with his precious blood for our sin, to take the wrath that we deserve so that we could be made right with you, so we could be adopted into your family, so we could be made citizens of your kingdom, and so that we could be, like we've been looking at this morning, managers within your household. God, you are the master. You created all things and you own all things and you own us, because you bought us with your precious blood and Lord, because of that, we have a future that we know is coming. We don't often think about it enough. I pray, God, that you would help us to meditate on the realities of the things that are to come, the kingdom that's to come. I pray that this book of Luke and how much that's come up in here is seeing over and over again how Jesus was showing that he's the king of this kingdom that's to come and that he's establishing it even here, and we're looking forward to the day that he returns and establishes it fully.

Lord, I pray as we think about that, as we look at other places in the Word, that this points us to the realities that are to come. Lord, would you stir our hearts with those things? Would you cause us to just be full of joy at the thought of the future that awaits us? The eternal kingdom that awaits us? And Lord, would you change our perspective on this life and the resources that you have entrusted to us to manage in this life, in light of those things? God, we would submit to you as our Lord. We say those words. God, would we truly believe it and live as if that's true, that Jesus is our Lord? That he owns everything, including us, that we don't, and Lord, would you fix our eyes on the kingdom that's to come? The day that we'll see our king face to face? And Lord, would that motivate us to be good stewards of the resources you've entrusted to us? Would that motivate us to be faithful to our master? To be faithful even in the small things? Because that reveals who we actually are.

And Lord, would we be strategic and shrewd with things you entrust us so one day when we enter that kingdom, we'll be welcomed by people, the friends that we were able to make with the resources that you entrusted to us that will be there one day with us? Lord, I pray that that would be what characterizes each of us individually as your followers and what characterizes us as a church together. Would you use this passage in those ways in our lives? Convict us where we need convicting. Help us to confess the sin in our lives that this exposes and sanctify us in this way through your spirit. Make us more like Jesus in the way that he calls us to be through this parable. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Would you stand with me? Let's respond to the Word together this morning by taking the Lord's Supper together. A couple of thoughts about how I feel like this is really appropriate. One, we talked about part of the reason why he's our master, why he's our Lord is because he bought us with this precious blood. He sent his Son to live the perfect life that we could never live, to die in our place, to take the wrath that we deserve, to give his body be broken, his blood be shed, and so we take these elements today as a reminder that we're participants in that, and because of that, he's our Lord and he's our master. We're just managers underneath him.

And then also, the other reason I think it's appropriate is because one of the reasons we take the Lord's Supper every week is because it fixes our eyes on the future. It fixes our eyes on what our real identity is and what's to come. It reminds us as we go into another week of what's really true. As we think about how do we manage our resources strategically with the future in mind, we need these regular reminders of what's true, what the future really holds, and Jesus said that we do this to proclaim his death until he comes, so there's a future forward looking elements to taking the Lord's Supper together.