

Luke 16:1-13. Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg--I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' " 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' " 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? "No servant can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money."

Dear Christian Friends:

During the Middle Ages the rack was a torture device. The rack had a frame big enough to hold a grown man. Each end of the rack had a wheel. Attached to these wheels were strong straps to grip the victim's wrists and ankles as he was stretched out on the rack. The torturers then slowly turned the wheels. As the wheels turned they stretched the victim's joints, muscles and ligaments. Gradually, more and more pressure pulled the joints out of their sockets. Tendons snapped. Muscles ripped. The pain was unbearable.

That's what happens when two powerful forces grab onto you and pull you in opposite directions. You experience great pain. Jesus describes that pain. He says, **"No servant can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money."

Both God and money have great power. Certainly, God is more powerful. And, by itself, money is not evil. It is only a thing. However, once greed sets its eyes on money, money becomes like wild horses dragging you away from God. Saint Paul says in First Timothy, **The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

Jesus does not want you to be pierced with the griefs, pains, and troubles because of money. More than that, Jesus does not want you to lose your faith and salvation. So, Jesus says: **SERVE THE MASTER WHO SAVES YOU.**

God is your real master. God created you. God gave you life. God blesses you with money, yes, but also with family, friends, celebrations, jobs, health, and all good things. God is also your master because he sent his Son to die on the cross for you. Yes, we all confess Jesus Christ has *"purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.*

So, God is our master. Jesus is our master who saves us from sin, death, and hell. And Jesus Christ, our real master, also teaches us the proper way to use money. He says, **"There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So, [the rich man] called [his manager] in and [said], Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do? I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' "So, he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' " 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' "Then he asked the second, 'How much do you owe?' " 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill. Make it eight hundred.'**

This manager used his master's money to invest in his future once he lost his job. That was sinfully dishonest. It was also pretty clever. Jesus says, **“The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly...I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”**

Jesus is not praising dishonesty. He is praising shrewd, crafty actions. His point is this: “That manager knew his time on the job was running out. So, that manager used the resources at his disposal to invest in his future. Likewise, your life-time on this earth is running out. So also, use the resources God gives you in this life to invest in your eternal future.” That's what Jesus means when he says, **use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.**

Now, again, don't misunderstand. Jesus is not saying, “Use your money to buy your way into heaven.” No, Jesus is saying, “Only heaven lasts forever. So, don't invest all your time and effort in gaining stuff here on this temporary earth. Instead, use your money to demonstrate how you believe that I am your Savior from sin and that heaven is your everlasting home.”

It's a bit like this. A family moves to a new city. Instead of buying a house, they decide to build their dream home. But while the workers build the new house, the family lives in an apartment for a year. Now, this family knows their time in the apartment is short. So, they don't invest any money in the apartment. They don't buy new carpets, new paint, or new appliances. They don't spend money on a temporary dwelling. Instead, they spend money on their soon-to-be-finished dream house. They spend money on tile, carpeting, cabinets, and appliances for their permanent dream home.

We need a similar attitude when it comes to the difference between this life and eternal life in heaven. So, ask yourself, “Am I really looking forward to my dream home of heaven? Or, am I spending my time and energy as if this life were my whole existence? Am I setting my heart on temporary things that will be obsolete and outdated next year? Do I always have to have the latest technology in my living room, in my pocket, and stuck in my ear? Do I have to wear the latest fashion? Do I have to drive the nicest car, the biggest SUV, or the most powerful pick-up? Do I need the best furniture, the fanciest appliances, or the latest power tool?”

Yes, take a look at your lifestyle. Examine your attitude toward possessions. Evaluate how you spend your money. Then ask yourself, “Who is my real master? Is it God? Or, is it really money?”

If you are honest, you will say the same thing I have to say. “Yes, I love money. I love stuff. I want more stuff. I gotta have the best stuff.” Yes, we all have served money more than we have served God. But money is a cruel master. Money promises you happiness and an easy life. But the more money you have, the more worries you have. The more you love money, the less you love and trust people, even your family. The more you serve money, the more you become a slave to your stuff. And like every addiction, the more money you have the more you thirst for even more.

And there’s only one way to get rid of that slavery—that addiction to money. That way is Jesus Christ. Jesus died to free us from the punishment of our sins. Jesus also died to free us from the power of sin. Saint Paul says in Romans, **Thanks be to God...you used to be slaves to sin, [but] you ...have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.**

Christ set us free from the slavery to sin by pouring out his holy precious blood on the cross. By the power of his holiness Christ cut the cord of greed and materialism. Christ rescued us from the false master called money. He made us servants of our real Master, our loving Savior God.

And God is such a different master than money. Just think how money makes you serve it. You need to watch your money constantly. You worry about your money all the time. You exhaust yourself trying to earn more money. And, in the end, what does money give you? Nothing. Once you are dead, you can’t take it with you. On the other hand, think about how God serves you. God watches over you constantly. God calms your fears and worries all the time. God can never exhaust his love and blessings he showers on you. And, in the end, what does God give you? Everything. He gave you his one and only Son. So, when you die and leave the temporary apartment of this world, God gives you eternal life in the mansions of heaven. So, serve your true Master. **SERVE THE MASTER WHO SAVES YOU. AMEN.**