

Maple Springs Baptist Church

Series: The Blessed Life

Week 2: The Shrewd Manager

ACTS 20:35. GOD IS TESTING YOU. He wants to know if we are going to be faithful.

WILL YOU LOVE & TRUST MONEY OR WILL YOU LOVE & TRUST GOD? God knows that for most of us money and things will be the number one competitor for our hearts. Money is the number one competitor for our hearts, because money is a counterfeit god.

MONEY PROMISES WHAT ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE

- **SECURITY:** if you have more, you will be secure.
- **FREEDOM:** if you have more, you will be free.
- **POWER:** if you have enough, you will be powerful.
- **SIGNIFICANCE:** if you have enough, you will be important.

Luke 16:1-9: Do we see ourselves as the owner or the manager? **Deuteronomy 8:17-18**

This parable begins with a foundational truth for us to integrate into our lives: **We are not the owner; we only know the owner. We are the manager.**

Jesus is telling this parable to His disciples. If we genuinely believe that God is the rich man and we are the managers, then that means generosity becomes the new standard for us. **If you think that you are the genuine owner of all you have, you will constantly struggle to understand how generosity can be a joy.**

Jesus continues the story with charges brought that the manager is wasting the owner's possessions. The owner calls the manager in for the final accounting because his time as the manager is over. **We won't be the manager in our stories forever either.** The manager is clearly guilty as charged. He makes no attempt to explain or defend himself to the owner. Instead, **he begins to do what all sane and rational people do: He talks to himself.**

Self-talk is something we all do. But it's important to think about what you talk to yourself about. **To live differently, you have to think differently. To think differently, you have to monitor your thoughts—you self-talk.** God's Word tells us: **ROMANS 12:2.**

Notice here that the man's upcoming actions result directly from his thinking. Through his self-talk, he realizes that he's too weak for manual labor and too proud to beg. He is insightful enough to know that this requires decisive action.

In response to his imminent crisis, the steward calls in the rich man's debtors and summarily reduces the debt of each. In Jesus' day, **the validity of the contract is guaranteed by being written in the handwriting of the debtor, with the document kept in the possession of the**

manager. The manager acts now with an eye to his quickly coming future needs of shelter and food when his job is over.

There is a strange turn in this parable: **The dishonest manager is actually commended!** That seems weird, at first. But notice that **he is not commended for his initial mismanagement of the owner's resources.** Instead, **he is commended for acting shrewdly when he knew his time was limited.** He is considered shrewd rather than simply dishonest, because his actions cast an aura of goodness and generosity on the rich man while simultaneously providing for his own future by ingratiating himself with the rich man's debtors.

Because he has done this favor for them, he is providing for his future well-being, as he is about to lose both his job and shelter. The rich man then is not praising him for his dishonesty; **he is praising him for the great foresight to anticipate what he will need after his dismissal and for using his current situation to make the most of his future one.**

After concluding the parable, Jesus goes on to say: **LUKE 16:11-13. Jesus' parable is saying that we need to plan for the future: eternity.** Repeatedly in His parables, Jesus taught His disciples to use their resources to invest in Kingdom purposes.

We cannot serve both God and money. Either we will choose to submit the money we have to God, or it will become our god. Money makes a great tool, but it is a terrible master.

Jesus' parable is saying that we are the manager now but will not be forever. Time is short. **Decisive action now with what we cannot keep will in some way make a difference in our futures. The road to who we are becoming in the future begins now.** The shrewd manager saw this. Do we?

A discerning manager has an urgency to act now, not later. **Have you ever noticed there is always a reason to delay generosity?** We will not be different when we have more; we will be different when we decide to change with God's help.

LUKE 16:10:

TRUTH: Generosity is never about how much we have; it's about how much of our hearts God has.

This manager was not just shrewd; he was also generous to the others in the story. But realize this: It was the rich man's money! That's our situation too.

Jesus intends for us to identify with the manager of the story. But in our own life stories this isn't always easy. Case in point: tithing. Tithing is not the end of generosity, but rather the beginning of it. Genuine generosity can go must further.

In commenting on this parable, Jesus did not warn us not to have resources; he warned us not to serve wealth: **LUKE 16:13**.