

Luke 16:1-13

Where does faithfulness start?

Icebreaker: discuss your favorite “heist” movie. What do you love about it? Did you feel yourself “rooting for” criminality? Were there any redeeming principles to be learned from the character or the story line? If Jesus had used a movie like this to teach a moral or Biblical principle, how would you have responded?

- 16:1 “He also said”...context
 - He had just taught the parable of the Lost Son, so that teaching must inform this teaching.
 - The context therefore is God’s love for the repentant son, and His stern dealing with the pious son (the true prodigal).
- **Luke 16:1-9 Is an indictment on the religious leaders’ usurping of God’s gift of leadership.** It’s a stern warning to get what they can while the getting is good, because there was soon going to be a regime change.
 - **Luke 16:1-9 He also said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. 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.’ 3 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. 4 I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’ 5 So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ 6 He said, ‘A hundred measures[a] of oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ 7 Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures[b] of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ 8 The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world[c] 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,[d] so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.**

- the key word in this passage is “wasting” in verse 1, which was also used of the lost son in chapter 15, and is the greek word *diaskorpizo*.¹ The word means to disperse or scatter (if you hear the word scorpion in that word it is because the idea of seeing a scorpion causes us to scatter and move away!) This word was used of throwing wheat in the air to separate the grain from the shell or chaff.
- This means **he is speaking to his disciples about potentially wasting something that belongs to God.**
- Jesus wanted to now connect the religious leaders (older brothers in the previous parable) to the same action of wasting God’s provision and causing the people to scatter from the religious leaders instead of drawing in close. The religious leaders were abusers of the investment of God’s grace. Jesus wanted his disciples to be different than the religious leaders!²
- It is obvious that the manager is dirty, but what may be less obvious is that he wants to hold on to his position because he is not physically capable of the labor done by those beneath him! (vs 3)
- The goal of the manager in writing off the debt was a simple calculated risk: “If I’m no longer in favor with the one above me, I better get into favor with those below me so that they can help me out if I become desperate.”
- Jesus was not praising dishonesty. He was using a tongue’n’cheek way of acknowledging the cleverness of this master in figuring out how to work the system. He was speaking ironically with a statement that might sound like this to us today: “You are brilliantly shrewd, but go ahead and see how far your abuse of your position gets you once you are removed from leading God’s people.”
- But **who was Jesus trying to say was like this dishonest manager?**
- **Answer: the dishonest religious leaders who, realizing that they could not win favor with God, would usurp the temple to win favor with people.**
 - When I say the temple here, I’m talking about the ministry of the temple that was supposed to be taking place.

¹ Philip Ryken, 169

² Matthew Henry states: “This our savior is here pressing us to, by reminding us that we are but stewards of the manifold grace of God; and since we have in divers instances been unfaithful, and have forfeited the favor of our Lord, it is our wisdom to think how we may, some other way, make what we haven in the world turn to a good account.” Commentary on Matthew-John, 606

- I'm so thankful we have the story of Jesus overturning the money tables in his disgust at how the temple area was being used for financial gain!³

Question: The “possession” granted to the religious leaders was the ministry to God’s people. In essence, they took advantage of the people. How might churches “waste” or “take advantage of” the people God places under their care in our culture today?

- Follow this story out and you will see that is exactly what they did when they “disposed of” Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.
- Follow the story even farther and you will discover that the temple was stilled destroyed, and the religious leaders still lost their positions of power with both Rome and the people.
- Jesus did something odd in these verses commending them for their “shrewdness”. (vs 8)
- If you ever watch a “heist” movie, you find yourself complementing the cleverness of how the crooks accomplish their task, even though (hopefully) you are against the criminality of what they are doing.
- Jesus wanted his disciples to hear that if the pharisees could be clever in how they used the law for personal gain, even more so those walking in the light should be clever in how they win people to truth!
- There is nothing wrong with looking for ways to convince people that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life! Let’s get creative! (This is why we are praying that our athletic center next door will make kingdom connections in our community!)
- We want the world to know that Jesus has paid the sin debt for those who believe! **Romans 10:14–15 [14] How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (ESV)**

³ Matthew 21:12-13

Discussion: Brainstorm some clever (even shrewd) ways that Four Points Church can get the message of the Gospel out into our community.

- **Dealing with sin is always about paying or “writing off” of debts.**
 - The religious leaders treated righteousness as a balancing of scales through finding external favor with others.
 - Jesus wanted the people to understand that they could never balance the scales with God, regardless of the favor they garnered with man.
 - The Gospel helps us understand that only Jesus can balance the scales, and this comes from the work He does inside of us.
- **Luke 16:10-13 - Jesus gave a theology of faithfulness.**
 - **10 “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. 11 If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? 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.”**
 - These next few verses help us to understand that Jesus was not teaching primarily about money (although there are money principles taught here by inference). Verse 11 differentiates between wealth and true riches. Jesus is getting at something more important.
 - The religious leaders had made a handy living at the temple. Not only did they live off the left-overs of the temple sacrifices, they also sold temple sacrifices for exorbitant amounts, taking advantage of the poor. This is why Jesus was so indignant that he overturned the money tables and whipped the people selling!
 - **Where does faithfulness start?**
 - **vs 10 - Faithfulness starts with the little things (this is integrity)**
 - if you don't have integrity in the little things, eventually you won't with the big things
 - Integrity is who you really are when no one is watching.

Question: How do you define integrity? In what areas in our life do we tend to struggle with integrity?

- **vs 11 - Faithfulness continues into our recreational lives. (this is responsibility)**
 - Responsibility is nothing without proper priorities. Do you properly prioritize your life?
 - “I’m too busy” or “I don’t have time” to serve at church or serve my family or give my best at work is not necessarily a true statement if you have spent hours on end in social media or video games.

What does a properly prioritized life look like to you? Is there anything in your life that is higher in priority than it should be?

- **vs 12 - Faithfulness carries through our occupational lives. (this is stewardship)**
 - Responsibility is a matter of stewardship. Do you see your resources as a tool to honor God?
 - Remember, when a good thing becomes a “god thing” that is a bad thing.⁴

What is the most difficult area of your life to “steward” for God’s glory? Why?

- **vs 13 - Faithfulness is revealed in our priorities. (this is worship)**
 - We worship our highest priority! Is Jesus in the highest place?
- The point or application in all of this is: **You can only focus in one direction therefore you can not be fully focused on yourself and fully focused on God at the Same time.**
- The language here of servants and masters goes all the way back to the parable we started with. The manager was a poor manager because he was focusing on himself, therefore when it came down to him being in trouble, he did everything to save his own neck. When the manager should have been confessing and asking forgiveness, he tried to be his own savior instead.

⁴ phrase coined by Mark Driscoll

- The religious leaders cared about themselves, so when it came to the reckoning that was about to happen with God's Son, Jesus, they were going to do everything in their power to save their own necks.

Application Questions: How do I know I'm truly trying to live my life for God and not for me? Talk through some practical examples of the following process of not listening. Where have you seen this propensity in your personal life? How often does this process happen? How do we counteract these tendencies?

- the answer lies in how you act and react when God convicts you of sin through the Holy Spirit.
 - **1 Thess. 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.**
- **The first thing we often do is stop listening.** We justify our sin or become dismissive. Paul likens it to turning off the light.
- **The second thing we often do is stop listening to truth from those in our watch care, namely our pastors.** We find reasons to be absent or filter what they say.
- **The third thing we often do is to stop evaluating and questioning our hearts.** We should always "test" our attitudes and actions, but sadly when we are quenching the spirit, we are no longer ready to hear the truth about our own motives.
- **Finally, we just begin to say yes more often to what we know is wrong.**
- Paul reminds us in 1 Cor. 4 that God has given us an incredible treasure in earthen pots. He will hold us to account, not because He is unloving, but precisely because He is loving. How will you respond?
- The good news is that when we are unfaithful, or even faithless, He is still faithful. In fact, we can admit our failures, because 1 John 1 says He is faithful and just to forgive!⁵ He has promised to hold us fast, even when we struggle to hold on.

Practice: preach the Gospel to our struggle with listening. Why is 1 John 1:9 so encouraging?

⁵ 1 John 1:9