

The Parables of Jesus

Buying Friends

Luke 16:1-13

The story is simple enough. The manager, with pink slip in hand, leverages his full authority as an ancient steward and rewrote the contracts his master had with other businessmen. In doing so, he forgave the debts they owed his master.

The amount of money was enormous. One new contract forgave what was equivalent to 3 years of wages. The other was equivalent to 9.5 years of an average annual income! And because, in these new contracts, the manager didn't personally receive any of the master's money, the master had no legal recourse against the manager.

What this shrewd manager was counting on was a prominent ethic in the Greco-Roman world of that day—the ethic of reciprocity. These businessmen, whose debts were significantly reduced by this steward, would be honor-bound to repay a good turn with their own generosity to this steward. So, this man's future was secured, at least for the next decade, all at the master's expense.

The master, who experiences further loss because of this manager, commends him because of his shrewd use of money to secure his future.

Jesus is free to make this man out to be as bad as he wants to, because he makes it very clear that he's not setting this steward up as a moral example for doing business as a member of God's Kingdom.

As we will see in another parable, later in January, Jesus used lessons in contrast—really bad examples to make really good points.

In **v. 8**, Jesus indicates that is exactly what he's doing here, when he says, "The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light."

The phrase "people of this world" is, literally, "sons of this age."

The whole point of this parable: Worldly people give more thought to their temporal well-being and how to use money to that end than God's people do for their eternal well-being. Wealth in this world should be used strategically by God's people to gain an advantage in the world to come.

The greatest threat in this world to our love for God, and that's our love of money!

v. 14 *The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.*

Elsewhere in the N.T. the word *shrewd* is always translated *wise*, and it carries the idea of being *savvy*.

v. 9 *I tell you, use worldly wealth to make friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings.*

Key Principle about Money:

We can use our Master's money to win kingdom friends.

Key Insights about Money:

Insight #1: We're managers, not owners; God owns it all.

Haggai 2:8 Yahweh: "*All the gold and all the silver are mine*"

Deuteronomy 8:18 Our very ability to build wealth comes from God. So, it's all his.

Insight #2: Money doesn't last, so use it wisely while you have it.

Whatever wealth we amass in this world, the great equalizer is death. No one goes to the grave any wealthier than anyone else.

Use wealth wisely while we have it.

Insight #3: Use the Master's money now to win friends forever by turning their personal debt into a debt of gratitude.

A wise investment of God's money is when we put it towards things that help others come to know and love Jesus Christ.

Wise giving is not always tax-deductible, but it's always done with an eye on Christ and an eye on eternity. It's done out of gratitude for the sake of creating gratitude.

How can I use temporal wealth to secure eternal wealth—both relational and physical?

Jim Elliot: *"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."*

Jesus' approach to the whole matter of money management is from the perspective of self-interest! (**Matthew 6:19-21**)

Jesus is urging us to take *his* money, the money he has entrusted to us, and use it wisely for our *own* future blessing!

The wealth God entrusts to us is one of the most opportunistic investment opportunities imaginable, with returns that are, quite literally, out of this world!

Dividends from the Wise Investment of Our Master's Money (**vv. 9-13**)

Dividend #1: The wise management of the Master's money in the salvation of others gains friends who will warmly welcome us into heaven. (**v. 9**)

Upon our arrival in God's eternal kingdom, there will be great fanfare! (**2 Peter 1:3-11**).

How many friends are going to be waiting for you at the gates of glory, overwhelmed with gratitude, because you made wise investments of the Master's money during your life that resulted in their salvation and eternal life?

Dividend #2: The wise management of the Master's money in this world secures our ownership of true wealth in the world to come. (**vv. 9-12**)

Jesus speaks here of our eternal dwellings (cp. **John 14:1-3**).

vv. 10-12 Jesus clarifies: *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 their own?*

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind conceived what God has prepared for those who love him. (**1 Corinthians 2:9**)

Financial wealth in this world and all that it can do and buy is considered by Jesus as "very little" compared to the wealth that awaits us in the world to come, if we manage money wisely, now.

Dividend #3: The wise management of the Master's money keeps money from controlling our lives. (**v. 13**)

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.

The two masters in this equation are anything but equals. To live under God's mastery is the most wholesome, liberating, satisfying life possible. Money, on the other hand, is a ruthless tyrant. It glories in our obsessing with it to our own demise.

The one inanimate object in all the world that Jesus named as if it were a living, breathing being is money. He called it Mammon ("Money"). He spoke of it in terms of being a rival god to the true and living God. A great demonic force lurks behind money. That's why money can control us. Like nothing else in the world, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

We CANNOT serve God and at the same time
serve money. (cp. **Matthew 6:24**)

Generosity is the great antidote to materialism.
Generosity guts Mammon.

He who has an ear; let him hear.