

GENEROSITY

Responding To God's Radical Grace In Community

LESSON 6 – GENEROSITY AND WEALTH PART 2

"Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² 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.' ³ "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— ⁴ I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' ⁵ "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶ "Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.' ⁷ "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.'"

Luke 16:1-7 (NIV)

This parable is about a rich man who employed a manager, often called a steward. The Greek word for steward is called: *oikonomon* literally translated "the ruler of the house."

The Manager

1. The manager was **ruler** over a large amount of wealth and was charged with managing it.

He was free to use and invest his master's wealth as he saw fit, and his decisions were legally binding. A benefit of the job was that he lived quite well. Yet in reality, he was a servant, since he did not own anything, and he ultimately served the interests of his master, not his own.

2. Jesus invokes an ancient form of lesser-to-greater reasoning, as noted by, "If this is true, the how much more..." He shows us a man who has enough sense to know it is better to give up **income** not to insure a safe and prosperous future.
3. The manager knew that the real value is in **relationships**, not the money itself.
4. If people of this world have the wisdom to use their wealth with the **long-term** future in view, how much more should the "people of the light" (Christians)?
5. If the people of the world realize the importance of relationships, how much more should Christians **value** them?

Jesus teaches us about wealth and relationships.

*“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. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” **Luke 16:8-9 (NIV)***

Jesus’ emphasis is on our relationships with others, and the value of people above possessions.

1. The employer represents God, and the manager represents Christians.
 - A. Just as the money he managed belonged to his employer, so the money and material resources under our control are not ours; they are God's.
 - B. We are God's managers, entrusted with some of His resources and responsible to use them to advance His purposes.
 - C. If “people of this world” know how to shrewdly use their wealth to make friends, how much more should Christians, who have experienced unlimited riches in Jesus, use their wealth to welcome others into God’s family.
 - D. If this manager could see that relationships are more important than wealth, how much more so for Christians who ought to consider their relationship to Jesus their greatest treasure.

What “true riches” does Jesus give us that worldly wealth cannot?

*“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. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own? ¹³ “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” **Luke 16:10-13 (NIV)***

1. True riches come from experiencing the love of Christ, who laid aside his heavenly riches to provide us with lasting treasure and community.
2. Money is “a shelter” but can only offer us temporary security and comfort. The benefits of our current level of wealth fade and we need to spend more to get more.
3. Jesus, however, offers lasting peace and eternal security without us having to earn it.

King Solomon, the Bible’s example of ultimate wealth and security, wrote about the inferior shelter of money: *“Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: Wisdom preserves those who have it.” **Ecclesiastes 7:12 (NIV)***

4. Money itself is temporary. No matter how much you have, someday you will have to depart from it. But Jesus promises that he will be with us forever.
5. Money does not have the capacity to care about you or love you. But God’s love for us is evident in the gift of his son Jesus, who he sent that we might have eternal fellowship with him.