

## **The Rev. Charlie Holt:**

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of Your Word, where You challenge us to not just be hearers of it, but doers. And so we pray that Your Word would, through the indwelling of Your Holy Spirit, take root and be established in our hearts, in our lives, on our lips, so that we might be faithful witnesses to You. May the preaching and ministry of Your Word be Your Word for the sake and glory of Your Son Jesus, in His name we pray. Amen.

Please.

This is the passage that always reminds me of Bob Dylan's song on his Christian album. I don't know if you knew that Bob Dylan had a Christian album. It's called "A Slow Train Coming," where he started to work in some of his Christian ideas into his lyrics. And one of the songs is called "You Gotta Serve Somebody."

And I love the line, "You gotta serve somebody. It might be the devil. It might be yourself. You gotta serve somebody." How's that? Is that a good Bob Dylan? Pretty close. I got a Tom Petty, too, Billy. Yeah, but I'm not gonna share that with you. I'll save it.

But Bob Dylan's exactly right. You gotta serve somebody. In fact, you will serve somebody. That's the nature of what does it mean to be a human being, is that we are, in a sense, subservient creatures.

And even though we may not be serving the highest power, God, our hearts will gravitate towards some other thing to be our God.

And the chief rival to our relationship with the Lord is actually our relationship with money. Or in the word of the Greek is *mamon*. Hebrew is actually the same word, *mamon*. It means really wealth. It's that accumulation of possessions to provide for ourselves. And it makes actually a lot of sense, if you think about it, why wealth would be the rival to God.

Because from a worldly perspective, that's the security, isn't it? Having wealth, having money so that we can buy things, so we can have a car, so

that we could have a place to live, houses, and money to buy food or whatever it is, or to, if we really had a lot of wealth, maybe we could go on vacations or go on trips to Europe or whatever. And so we idealize, and if our hearts are not careful, we idolize the idea of wealth.

And if we're not careful, we begin to allow wealth to be the thing that we are serving. Whether we have a lot of wealth or not, those who don't have a lot of wealth, if they make wealth their God, they actually can be filled with a lot of resentment and covetousness at those who have it. And if you have a lot of wealth and that's your God, then you will often sin to keep it and do things that are sinful in order to preserve your wealth. And so the Scriptures consistently, and this is one of those passages where Jesus is really trying to give a bit of a wake-up call to us to say, "You really have to make a choice.

It's really going to come down to a choice between which God you're going to serve. Are you going to serve the true God, or are you going to serve the God of money, wealth?"

And so as a way of sort of getting at that, He tells a story that's a little bit complex, the way that Jesus tells this story, but I think we over-complicate it sometimes.

It's about this manager who is working for a wealthy master, and we don't know much about the master other than he owns everything. And so this manager is a bad employee.

Has anybody here ever had a bad employee that's worked for you or a vendor that you've hired?

And basically what he was doing was enjoying the benefit of the master's paychecks and the master's largess and money, but he didn't want to do any work for him. He just wanted to get the blessings and the money.

And so all of a sudden, he has been found out, and nothing is more of a morale killer if you're working on a team, and one of your fellow co-workers is not carrying their weight.

And inevitably, those co-workers might one day report it to the boss and say, "Hey, you know about so-and-so over here? He's enjoying the paycheck and being part of the company, but he's not really doing a whole lot. He's not doing any work to support the team."

And of course, when that kind of news gets to the boss, you have what is to this day called a coming to Jesus talk, right?

This is the origin of that talk, where the master sits down with this employee and says, "Hey, news has traveled to me that you're not doing much of a job, and yet you're taking my money."

And so I want you to give an account, and you're not going to be the manager anymore."

And this is what happens to so many people when, in a sense, you've been found out, busted, however you want to put it.

You have a wake-up call.

It's an oh-no moment, and this guy starts to think about it, and he asks himself a question.

It's a very important question. What should I do?

He starts to run through the scenarios, and he goes, "Well, I'm actually too lazy to work manually and do any manual labor. Too weak for that."

And he's like, "I'm too prideful, actually, to beg."

Ah, I know what I'll do." So he goes to the master's creditors or people that owe over the master some goods, and he says, "How much do you owe my master? A hundred jugs of oil. Well, cut your bill. Let's make it fifty. How much do you owe the master?"

A hundred bushels of wheat. Well, cut it down to eighty."

And this is a process that is known as "You scratch, or I scratch your back. You scratch my back."

He's building chips for himself and securing himself an earthly future because he knows that he's about to lose his job.

Now, when the master finds out that this manager has done this, this is where the parable gets a little strange sounding. It says he commends him for his shrewdness.

And I kind of read like, I read that this way. I think that master kind of said something to the effect of, "Well played."

I see what you did there. You got some money out of these people, but you also got some money for yourself. Well played.

I don't think he got his job back, but I do think he impressed the manager with his shrewdness.

Now, what Jesus is saying here is actually not about employee-employer relationships at all, is it?

This is really about humanity's relationship with God.

And his point is, is that when it comes to the world and worldly wealth, we all do pretty good job, generally speaking, about securing our earthly future.

We manage money, and we manage situations, and we manage our networks, and we manage our lives in order to get by at a minimum, but in many cases to ambitiously excel and to succeed from a worldly standpoint, and maybe even to make a lot of money and to build wealth.

And Jesus' point is to put a mirror up to our lives and say, "Okay, well that's how you do it with the world and the world's wealth, but are you pursuing the kingdom of God and stewarding the things that God has given you with the same kind of ingenuity and even shrewdness,

passion to secure your eternal future and make for eternal friends?"

And of course, for the vast majority of the people of this world, we go about spending a lot of focus and a lot of time securing our earthly future, making earthly friends,

but we don't put much attention to the securing of our eternal future and the building up

of our eternal portfolio, so to speak.

And this is what Jesus is getting at.

And so the call here is actually to have a bit of a wake-up call. I think these types of wake-up calls come all the time in our lives, and at various times they come to individuals.

Sometimes it comes from hitting rock bottom, you know, where you've gone down the path of trying lion, women, and song, and you hit the bottom, and you kind of come to yourself. This is what happened to the prodigal son. It's actually very interesting that the word that is used for the dishonest manager when it comes to the master's things is the same word that is used of the prodigal son when it comes to his father's inheritance. He squandered it. He wasted it. He didn't do anything with it that was any value or any worth.

The prodigal son asked for his father's inheritance before his father died, which was kind of an insulting thing to do. And his father, out of his largesse and generosity, gave his son half of the inheritance, and the son took that money and that wealth that his father had earned over the course of his life, and he wasted it, is what it says, on wild living.

It's the same word as what the dishonest manager had done. He had wasted the master's stuff.

And so when the prodigal son is in the pigsty and he's looking at the pig food and he's going, "Oh, that looks like it's pretty good to eat," all of the sudden he

has an aha moment, and he comes to himself, and he asks himself that question really, "What should I do?"

And he says, "I know what I'll do. I'm going to go to my father's house, and I'm going to confess. I'm going to say, "Father, I've sinned against you, and I've sinned against God, and I'm not worthy to be called your son. Would you just please receive me back into your house as a servant?"

The same kind of aha moment happens with Zacchaeus, the tax collector in the Bible, when Zacchaeus is up in the sycamore.

tree and Jesus is walking by and he says, "Zakias, I'm going to your house today." And Zacchaeus falls out of the tree, and he says, "Oh, I've done so many things in my life that I'm not worthy to have you in my house." And he really has a moment where he, again, asks that question, "What should I do?" And he says, "I know what I should do." And he pays back fourfold everybody that he's cheated.

It's called repentance and it's throughout the pages of Scripture that when people have wake-up calls, when they have a moment in their life, whether you hit rock bottom or you have somebody confront you or challenge you or you get hit in your heart by a passage of Scripture and you're convicted to the core, that all of the sudden you ask yourself that question, "What should I do now?"

I think our society has gone through some of these. Certainly, 9-11 was one of those when I just remember I was a brand new priest at a church in Lake Mary, Florida. I had literally been there just, I think, for a week, maybe two, and then 9-11 happened when the airplanes went into the World Trade Center towers.

And that was a big wake-up call for our country.

People flocked to churches, and the churches were full of people that all of a sudden realized that we have not been following you, Lord, and now we've got this thing that has happened, and we don't have an explanation for it.

My congregation, you know, two weeks into my ministry, and there was standing room only. It was really quite amazing.

And I remember the congresspeople coming out on the steps of the Capitol and singing "God Bless America" together, Democrats and Republicans singing "God Bless America" together on the steps of the Capitol. We haven't seen that in a while, have we?

I think this assassination of Charlie Kirk's been a wake-up call for our country in a lot of ways.

People have realized that our political discourse and our way of framing each other as enemies has crossed a line.

And there needs to be a coming back to what does it mean to love God first, which was certainly the witness of Charlie Kirk, and what does it mean to love neighbor second, the two great commandments.

And I hope and I pray that it'll be a time of corporate and national repentance, of turning back to the Lord.

I'll tell you a story about a guy that was,  I had a friend.

I used to go and work out in the gym. I haven't been doing it as often. My wife would like me to go like three times a week. But I used to go pretty regularly, and I was pretty buff back then. I had a lot of muscles.

But I was working out with this guy who's a football player, and his name was Dallas Davis. And he was also a very strong Christian. And I love going and working out with him, not just because of his weight workouts, but mainly because of just I was so encouraged by his testimony and his witness and the way that he shared his faith to me.

And as I got to know him, I realized that his first love and his first passion was actually making movies.

And he had a vision for his life and actually for the movie industry that was really quite inspiring.

And his first movie that he made, and this is his testimony. His first movie, that he made, was called Bad Girl Island.

And which is not quite as bad as it sounds, but it was not a movie.

And his mother, who's very strong Christian lady, says to Dallas, "Dallas," I can imagine her like grabbing his ear while she's saying this, "Dallas, what are you thinking?"

You are not the person that I raised to be.

This is not who you are. You are a Christian man. You were raised with Christian values. And I cannot believe you're producing this kind of movie."

And it was a wake-up call for him, his confrontation by his mother, actually.

And he realized that his mom was absolutely right.

The next movie that Dallas produced was a Christian film. It was called A Measure of Faith. And it's pretty good. It's not, you know, Paramount Pictures, but it's a decent film about God's grace and God's forgiveness. And it was, ¶, But here's the thing that Dallas, and this actually, this parable is a very meaningful one to Dallas. He used to quote it to me all the time about the people of this world being more shrewd than the children of light.

And this is the way that he would frame it. He says, "If you look at the movie industry today and the entertainment industry, they are using this incredible medium of being able to tell stories and to take people into the world of a movie and put it up on a big screen and move people in their hearts and in their lives, and they are squandering that medium with gratuitous, you know, sex films, violence, horror movies, you know, fill in the blank.

And that is what the people of this world do with their shrewdness."



And then he says, "And then I look at the Christian filmmaking industry, and we put out things that are cheesy and stupid and dumb."

And he says, "I don't want to be like that."

I want to, "If that's," This is what he heard God say through this passage. He says, "If that's the way that people of this world use dishonest wealth, I want to use the same tools and the same resources, but I want to do it and do it for the glory of God and make films that are as excellent as what they're making, but ones that will lead people to Christ or to make them think about truth and about life and following better paths and better ways."

And I think Dallas' testimony really sums up the heart of what this passage is challenging us and what Jesus is challenging us to think about.

Are you living your life merely to, you know, get by in this world, basically?

Or even to succeed in this world or to make a difference in this world alone?

Or is your life taking the things of this world, which, from the scriptural perspective,

have been entrusted to you by the King of Kings and the Lord of the universe? He has given you everything that you have, your money, your time, your gifts and talents, your passions, the things that you're interested in. Everything has been entrusted to you as a sacred trust for you to do something with it for the kingdom of God.

I want to tell you about one last moment where that question of what shall I do really rings for this moment.

On the day of Pentecost, which was the day when the massive revival of this world was started. It was 2,000 years ago, and it was right after Jesus died on a cross for our salvation. He rose from the dead, and he told his little merry band of twelve disciples, he says, "You guys are going to be the beginning of a massive global revival."

And so I want you to go to Jerusalem and wait, and you are going to receive power to be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." And so there they went. They went to Jerusalem, and they waited for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God.

And the revival broke out in their midst on the day of Pentecost, and they started speaking in other languages, prophesying in the name of Jesus Christ, and praising God. And all of a sudden, thousands of people were hearing the name of Jesus proclaimed and watching the power of the Holy Spirit manifest itself on that day.

The Apostle Peter stood up, and he said, "This is the fulfillment that we've all been waiting for that was prophesied by the prophets of old that in the last days God is going to pour out His Holy Spirit on all flesh. And old men will dream dreams, and young men will see visions, and men and women, children, old people, slaves, free people across society will be filled with the Holy Spirit of the living God."

And this is all because of Jesus and Jesus coming and dying on a cross and rising from the dead.

And he says, "We are His witnesses that Jesus Christ is Lord of all."

In that moment, you probably could have heard a pin drop as Peter had his little mic drop.

And people, it says, were cut to the heart, and they asked the question, "What should we do?"

What should we do? It's a very important question.

And Peter responds with the very simple instructions. He says, "You all need to be baptized.

You all need to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and you need to repent.

You need to turn from your sins and turn to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior." And he says, "If you will do that, you will receive two things. You will receive the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit of the living God."

And then he says something really quite amazing. He says, "This promise is for you, and it's for your children, and it's for all who are far off whom the Lord our God will call."

The revival that was started 2,000 years ago is still going on to this day.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit has never stopped, and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That was the promise of that day, and that promise rings true to today.

"But what should I do?"

Repent.

Turn to the Lord. Give your life to Him. That's what Jesus is saying that the people of this world need to do.

You've surrendered your life to the God of mammon, but God would want you to surrender your life to Him.

Everything that you have has been given to you so that the Lord can use you as His ambassador's reconciliation in the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that you can be His witnesses filled with His power and take the name of Jesus Christ to the ends of this earth.

Let me pray with you.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the call of Your Word to wake us up to the realities of Your kingdom around us, and while we may have squandered opportunities in the past to live for You, every day is a new day.

Every day is a day that we can wake up in the morning and say, "Lord, how can You use me today for Your work and Your kingdom?"

And I pray that if this word today is a word of wake up to anyone that is here or anyone that is listening, that they would, and I'll ask the question for myself, "What should I do?"

That we would analyze our lives and take stock of the situation and see if we may perhaps be ready to surrender our hearts and our minds and our lives and sign everything over to You, Lord, for it's only in You that we find our salvation and our blessing.

So I ask You, Lord, and this is the prayer that you may want to pray for yourself, "Lord, I am so sorry for not stewarding my life in accordance with Your will.

Please forgive me, and please fill me with Your Holy Spirit and lead me into Your glory for Your name's sake." In Jesus' name we pray.