

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

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Word, where you have called us to take stock of our relationship to the things of this world, what you described as wealth and relationship to your kingdom. And so we ask that we would not just be hearers of your Word, but also doers of your Word. May the preaching and ministry of your Word be your Word for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please.

Every time I hear this particular gospel passage where it talks about, "You can't serve two masters," it always reminds me of Bob Dylan's slow train coming.

He had a Christian song period where he started to integrate some of his Christian faith into his lyrics, which I know you probably don't think Bob Dylan and Christian faith that maybe doesn't go well together in your brain, but he did have a Christian period, and he... And slow train coming, it's, "You gotta serve somebody. It might be the devil. It might be..." He probably said it more like that. "It might be the devil. It might be yourself, but you gotta serve somebody."

That's my best Bob Dylan. That's all I have. Sorry. But Bob Dylan is right. You know, he says, "You can't serve more than one master." That's Jesus' point.

And the other point of this is you will be serving somebody.

So the question is, who is it? And the dichotomy, of course, that Jesus puts before us is you're either going to serve wealth or you're going to serve God, and these are forever the dilemma of human nature, wealth being almost always the chief idol rival to the Lord. And there's a good reason for that. What makes sense if you just take some time and think about it is it's that accumulation of goods, the accumulation of possessions, whether you have a lot of wealth or you have a little bit of wealth, it's wealth that from a worldly standpoint in our brains we go, "Well, that's how I'm going to have my future." You know, that's going to be what puts bread on the table and food for my kids and my family and the house that I get to live in and the cars that I drive. And so wealth is my provision.

And part of what the testimony of all of the Scriptures actually is that wealth is not the ultimate but the penultimate aim of our lives. It is not given to us as an end in and of itself that we would serve it and worship it, but it is subservient in our lives as a tool to be brought under the lordship of God.

And it's easy to get that upside down.

This was one of the warnings that Moses gave the Israelites when he wrote the book of Deuteronomy that he says, "When you start to have a lot of wealth, when you have nice houses and your bank accounts are increasing and you're experiencing the blessing of your flocks and your lives, it will be very easy for you to say in your brain," this is Deuteronomy chapter 8, "My hands have gotten me this wealth."

And the Lord will remind you in that moment that it wasn't you that gave you the wealth,

that that was a gift from God that you are building on the shoulders of not only those who have gone before, but also the beneficence and the benevolence and the goodness of God as He has provided for you. And so this is a running theme throughout the Scriptures, and this particular parable is hated by clergy actually, because it's so complex in the way that it's worded about,

you know, stewarding dishonest wealth.

But I think we overcomplicate it. I mean, put yourself into the scene that Jesus is describing here to His disciples.

Here's a wealthy master, and He has a steward of His resources. And of course, what we should be thinking in our brains is we are the stewards of another's possessions. God is the master. God is the one who has given us all these things. But sometimes we sort of write the master out of the equation in our thinking, and we just live with the blessings and the wealth. And this is what Jesus is trying to get our attention with this story is that we actually have an accounting to give to a higher power, to God, to the master.

And so here is an example of a,Ä¶ it's described as an unjust or a corrupt manager who is working for this master, and the word that is used is squander.

It's the same word as was used a chapter earlier in the story of the prodigal son, which we all know pretty well, I would hope, is the young man that asks for his father's inheritance, his share, and he takes all the money of his father's hard-earned money and he squanders it on wine, women, and song, right? You know that story.

Well, it's the same word. This is a steward of this master's money, and he's wasting it.

He's wasting his master's time, his master's investment, his master's resources, his master's network and vendors, and salespeople, whatever is part of this particular industry.

And has anybody,Ä¶, if you ever had employees that have taken advantage of you, has anybody ever had that experience in their life? Yes? No?

I mean, I have. I mean, I've had people who work for me who seem to be enjoying the paycheck but don't really care to do much of the work.

Well, that's this guy.

And inevitably morale goes bad, and when you have that happening in your organization, and it eventually gets up to the boss like it did in this case, and reports started coming in that this guy is just wasting your money and wasting time, and everybody's really disheartened by him.

And so the master does,Ä¶, and these are always hard conversations, never like to have them, but says to the employee, "Hey, I hear you're squandering the industry here.

You need to give an account. I need to see what you,Ä¶ where things are. How have you been stewarding the money?

And you're going to lose your job."

This is what you call in real life a wake-up call, right?

Has anybody ever lost a job?

I've been in,Ä¶ I've had occasions where I've been confronted when I've worked for other people, and people have pulled me aside and they said, "Hey, you're not doing the job that you're supposed to here." I've had that kind of wake-up call where I had to give an account to a boss.

It is not a pleasant experience, and what it normally does when you have those kind of confrontational moments is you get somebody's attention, and that's what happened with this man. All of the sudden, the conversation got his attention and he asked himself a very important question.

What should I do?

Now this is a question that is throughout the pages of the Bible when it comes to our relationship with the Lord, because, of course, this is not just an illustration about how to manage employees in a company, right?

This is about how are we as people relating to the kingdom of God?

Do we take our calling as people who are to steward what God has given us seriously?

Or are we wasting, in a sense, God's time? Are we wasting His resources? Are we wasting the gifts and the talents and the abilities that He's given to us and not using them at all for His kingdom?

And so what the Lord is trying to do with this parable is have us have the experience of a spiritual wake-up call, a kingdom of God kind of wake-up call.

That's interesting to me that our culture seems to be experiencing that right now with the assassination of Charlie Kirk. You'll see a lot of the commentary. I think the memorial service for him is today.

A lot of people coming from all over the country to come and be a part of that.

But one of the things that people are observing is that that has woken people up to how spiritually

Poor, we are in the way that we're treating one another in our political discourse.

It's woken people up because of the testimony of His Christian faith that here He was contending for the faith. Am I doing that? Do I have His courage? Do I have the kind of testimony of going out and trying to reach college kids or whoever for the gospel or for what God has given me?

And you're starting to see people seeing the shock of that moment be a spiritual wake-up call. And we have these kinds of things happen in our lives all the time. We have big events like whether it's a natural disaster or an assassination or a war, or something. 9-11 was one where people all of a sudden start to come back to the Lord, and they start to ask themselves questions of, "Am I living for you, Lord? Am I doing it? What should I do?"

That's the question.

The steward in this moment does something. He secures himself an earthly future. He goes to his master's debtors, and he says, "Well, how much do you owe my master? A hundred jugs of oil. We'll tell you what.

I'm going to make you a deal. Just cut the bill down to 50 jugs of oil. Can you give me 50 jugs so I have something to take to my master? And then, hey, by the way, when I lose this job, I might remember this. Remember this little deal we made?" And then he goes to the guy that owes him a hundred things, a wheat, and he says, "How much do you owe? A hundred things a wheat?" "Just cut it to 80." By the way, remember this. When I...

I might need you later. So you scratch my back, I scratch your back deal. Do you remember?

And what Jesus says is, "All the people of this world are pretty darn shrewd about securing their earthly needs."

And you just think about your own self, you know.

You're probably pretty shrewd when it comes to managing your own money, securing your own livelihood, your business, your home, etc. Doesn't mean you don't make mistakes or you don't do it exactly right, but for the most part, the people of this world do a pretty shrewd job securing their earthly future.

But then he kind of turns the corner on that, and he says, "But what about the children of light?"

What about the people of the kingdom of God? How well do they do securing their eternal future? Do they put the same kind of emphasis and same kind of energy and creativity in the way He uses shrewdness in order to secure their eternal future?" Because I think this is what Jesus was saying.

I'm not seeing a lot of effort here for building up the kingdom of God and for stewarding God's resources and what God's wealth that He has given to us. I'll give you an example of a, ¶ This is a guy that I used to work out. He was a professional football player and he was a trainer and so I was trying to get muscular and strong and so I would go and work out with him, but his real passion was making movies and the training was really just a side gig. So I got a lot of time with him to hear his testimony. Very strong Christian guy and his first movie that he made was called Bad Girl Island and he went home to his mom and can you imagine taking that home?

"Mom, my first movie, Bad Girl Island," but his mother gave him the "what for."

And basically said, his name is Dallas, said, "Dallas, God did not give you the talents

and the gifts that He has given you and the creativity for you to use it to do things like that," making movies called Bad Girl Island.

You are a Christian man and if you're going to make movies, fine, but you better make movies to the glory of God.

That was his wake-up call. That was his accountability. Sometimes it's your mom that gets you, isn't it, pulling you by the ear.

But it was wonderful. He took stock in that moment and he asked himself the question of this parable, "What should I do?"

And he thought about it and he got creative and he became,Ä¶ he said, "I want to make movies, but I am going to make movies to the glory of God." And so he started a Christian movie production company called Fishers of Men Entertainment.

And he actually was sharing with me about this particular parable. He says, when I,Ä¶ and this was his heart that was on his,Ä¶ he says, "When I look at the entertainment industry and all of the junk that is being put out there and then I look at what Christians put out and we don't put out high quality stuff. We're not,Ä¶ we're not doing the same level of excellence and engagement and storytelling that the secular world is doing. They're being shrewder than we are as children of light in the way that they make movies versus the way we make movies." And so he said, "My passion is to make movies with the same level of excellence and storytelling and drama and all of the actors and actresses that the secular world is, but to do it for the glory of God." And so the first movie that came out was called A Measure of Faith.

And you know, it's pretty good.

Better than Bad Girl Island, I can tell you that.

But I love that.

And I think the Lord,Ä¶ that's the point of the Lord.

You know, we've all been given, in a sense, the dishonest wealth of this world. And you might,Ä¶ we might think to ourselves, "Well, I earned my money fair and square and I didn't do anything dishonest to earn my job." But I think,Ä¶ I think part of what Jesus is saying is corruption is inevitable in the life of this world. I mean, it is a sinful and fallen world. And even if you've done the best thing that you can do to secure your earthly future, when it comes right down to it, it's still dirty money, so to speak.

But the point is not to renounce the dirty money and say, you know, "I'm never going to touch money. I'm going to take a vow of poverty and I'm going to become like St. Francis." That's not the point.

What he's saying is, "Do the best you can with that dishonest wealth. Take the gifts, the talents, the brokenness of this world and get creative in your thinking and in your brain like the movie maker guy and think about how,Ä¶ what God has uniquely entrusted you with and use it for His glory and for His kingdom. Put the stewardship of the dishonest wealth under the lordship of Jesus Christ so that the mammon serves God and not us trying to serve the mammon."

I want to,Ä¶ I'll end with this one last thought about this question of what shall we do. We're starting this week the kickoff of the Spirit-filled Life Study and that's going to be the spiritual emphasis of our church over the next few weeks.

And that question, "What should we do?" is the very question that was asked on the Day of Pentecost.

Peter stands up on the Day of Pentecost, which was the day that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and he quotes a prophecy from the book of Joel, which is all about a spiritual wake-up call for this world where God is going to pour out His Holy Spirit on all flesh.

And old men are going to dream dreams, young men are going to see visions, men, women, slave-free, it doesn't matter. Every single person is going to be invited into the spiritual renewal of the world, of the entire world. That's the plan of God.



And when, Ä¶ and it's all going to be through the message of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

And that's Peter's sermon, basically.

And when people heard that sermon on the Day of Pentecost, what it says is they were cut to the heart.

They had a spiritual wake-up call. And they, Ä¶ and they asked the question, "What should we do?"

And what Peter said is the same response that this man is modeling for us, that the prodigal son modeled, and everybody else who's ever had a spiritual wake-up call. You have to repent.

You have to turn away from the God of wealth and turn to the God, the true God, to turn your life back to the Lord and say, "I want to live for you, and I don't know what that means exactly, but whatever it takes, Lord, I'm yours." It's almost like signing a quick-claimed deed to your entire life unto God. Give Him it all.

Give Him everything. Say, "Lord, I'm yours."

That's repentance.

And there's two amazing promises from the Day of Pentecost.

You will receive the forgiveness of your sins.

God wants you to be reconciled with them. He wants you to be filled with His Spirit. And that's the second promise. You'll receive the forgiveness of sins and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of the living God.

Because what the Lord wants to do more than anything else in this world is renew it.

He wants to see revival breaking out across this city, this community, this church, everywhere.

And He will do whatever it takes to get our attention and have us turn back to Him and call upon His name and receive that grace of forgiveness and the outpouring of His Spirit so He can use us as instruments and ambassadors for His kingdom.