

**The Rev. Charlie Holt:**

Your Word speaks to us that we need to examine our hearts and what we're serving in this world, whether it's mammon or wealth or whether it's you. We want to serve you, Lord. So please speak to us. May the preaching of your Word be your Word for the sake and glory of your Son Jesus. In His name we pray. Amen.

Please be seated.

We've come to what I like to consider the Bob Dylan passage.

I don't know if you remember, but Bob Dylan had a Christian phase in his music where he came out with the album "Slow Train Coming."

Anybody remember that one?

And one of the songs in there is "You Gotta Serve Somebody."

"You gotta serve somebody."

It might be the devil. It might be yourself, but you gotta serve somebody. That's the best I can do in terms of Bob Dylan. I got a good Tom Petty impersonation too, but I'll spare you that.

Bob Dylan is exactly right.

And this is what Jesus is saying.

We will serve somebody.

That's just the nature of our human nature is we are designed to be under authority.

We are designed to be under a God.

And so if we're not under the lordship of Jesus Christ and we're not under that God,

we will serve somebody else.

And it might be the devil. It might be yourself.

What Jesus names as the chief rival to the lordship of God in our life is money, or more specifically, it's the Greek word, and actually it's the same in Hebrew, it's the word mammon.

And it has to do with wealth, actually.

Whether you have a lot of wealth or a very little bit of wealth, all of us, I think, if we're honest, will recognize that we put a lot of stock in wealth, in building it, growing it, having it.

And there's a very logical reason why wealth would be the chief rival to God. And it's because wealth in a worldly way is our home. It's our possessions.

It's our jobs that provides money so that we can put food on the table for our families and our kids and so on. And it's also wealth in our mindset gives us a sense of security. If we have a lot of wealth, then we might feel a little better about our future, for example, and be able to retire. And remember the words of the rich man who had the bigger barns, to be able to retire and say to soul, "Eat, drink, and be merry.

There is a lot that wealth has to commend itself to our worship, and yet what Jesus is saying is that's completely inappropriate.

Wealth is, for all of its good things, penultimate. It should never be the ultimate God in our life. We shouldn't serve it. We shouldn't give our allegiance to it. We shouldn't worship it. And yet, unfortunately, that is the way of the world.

That is fundamentally the way of the world, especially in a capitalist, consumeristic society like we live in.

It's all about making money, about acquiring wealth, about building your capital.

And unfortunately, in many cases, it's about resenting those that have by those that have not and so on, or protecting what I have so that those who have not can't get what I have.

And when a society or a family or an individual puts wealth as God, we are worshipping an idol, breaking the Ten Commandments. We're putting other gods before the Lord. And so what Jesus is trying to get us to see through this story of the dishonest manager

is that we all need a wake-up call when it comes to the wealth of this world, and it's a lure.

Every single one of us needs a wake-up call. And so he tells this story about this guy who's a dishonest manager. He's a bad employee, basically.

Has anybody ever managed somebody that's a bad employee? I mean, you don't have to be too honest about it, but I think we all have. If you've been a boss of anything, or you've probably had people that have worked for you for your home or that sort of thing, and at some point you realize they like getting my money, but they don't like delivering on what they're supposed to do.

And that's this guy. He liked getting the master's money. He liked having his paycheck and his salary and that sort of thing, but he didn't really want to do any work to earn it or to own it. And so, like happens with a lot of situations like that, word gets to the master that this guy is freeloading.

And a word is used that is the same word as what was used in the chapter before this about the prodigal son.

Remember the prodigal son who went to his father, and he asked for half of the inheritance, and he basically insulted his dad. He said, "Dad, you're not dying fast enough. Can I just go ahead and get my share of the estate before you die?" Pretty insulting. But he then takes the money. His dad, for some

reason, gave it to him. I don't think of any situation where I've ever heard that, where somebody would go ahead and do that. But he gives his son the fullness of the estate, and then the kid goes off, and this is the

word squanders it on wild living. It's the same word as what the dishonest manager is doing with this master's money. He is squandering it. And so word gets to the master, and the master has the talk. And if you're ever a boss, you hate having these conversations with your employees. Much better to hire a good employee from the start, right, than to have somebody that you've got to have this talk with, where you sit down with them and you document, "Hey, I don't think you're doing your job." And so he sits down and he has a talk with them and he says, "You need to give me an accounting. You're going to lose your job." And this is the wake-up call. And if you've ever, ever lost a job or had this talk given to you, you can relate. But the man thinks to himself. He goes, "Well, I'm too lazy to do any kind of manual labor. I don't actually enjoy working. And I'm too prideful to go out and beg. So I know what I'll do." And he asks himself a question, "What shall I do? I'm about to lose my job. This is a great question. What shall I do?"

So he goes to his master's debtors and he asked him, "How much do you owe my master? A hundred barrels of oil or a hundred jugs of oil." We're not talking crude oil, we're talking olive oil. So he says, "A hundred jugs of olive oil. We'll make it 50." And then he says to the guy with wheat, "A hundred bushels of wheat. We'll just make it 80." What's he doing? He's doing a little, "You scratch my back, I'll scratch your back. I'm making this deal with you, so I'm about to lose my job. But I'm giving you this good deal so that when the time comes and I need a favor, you know, he's getting chips. And one day, he's going to call in those chips from these guys he's helped out. Shrewd is the way it's described. And when the master gets word that he has done these transactions,

he basically commends him as the interesting thing. And I think what it means when he says he commends him for his shrewdness it's kind of like, "Well played, dude." Something like that. I see what you did there. Well played. Now I think he still lost his job. We don't know, but I think he still lost his job. But what Jesus is saying is, is of course, this is not just about business practices and management, is it? This is an illustration, a parable to

get us to think about the spiritual realities of life. And of course, the master who owns everything is God.

He's the one that has given us all of our wealth. Everything that we have has been entrusted to us to steward for the sake of the kingdom of God. But how have we been stewarding it? Have we been creative for the kingdom? Have we been using it? Have we been investing it for the sake of the mission of the gospel and the work of God in the world? Or have we squandered it? And this is the wake-up call is, is what if it was the Lord coming to you and asking you to give an account? And what Jesus says is, when you think about the way that people act when it comes to their earthly wealth, most people are pretty darn shrewd. They make sure that they have a paycheck and that they have a place to live, and they figure it out. And even if they figure it out in a dishonest way, they figure it out so that they have wealth, dishonest wealth. He's talking about worldly wealth. He says, "But what about the children of light? Do they have that same kind of urgency and attentiveness and creativity and detail when it comes to stewarding what God has given them for the kingdom of God? Is that the way people are living as children of the light, and what Jesus' verdict is? Not really. People are very shrewd when it comes to their worldly wealth, but not so much when it comes to securing their eternal future. And so what Jesus is trying to encourage is to get a wake-up call. You know, it's interesting, our society has these things happen all the time, moments where we where we get wake-up calls. I think 9-11 was one.

I remember I was a brand new rector at a church in Lake Mary, Florida when 9-11 happened. I'd been there on the job for like one week. 9-11 happens. And the very next Sunday, that church was packed with people. Because when the bad event happened, all of the sudden, people get this wake-up call like, "Oh my goodness, this world really needs us to be paying attention to God and spiritual things, and I've got to get my spiritual life in order." And the country needs to get its spiritual life in order. And all the congresspeople came out on the steps of the Capitol and saying, "God bless America." Do you remember that? Oh, how quickly we go back to just focusing on the worldly wealth, don't we? We just had one of these kind of wake-up calls with the assassination of Charlie Kirk. And it's interesting because a lot of people are observing that people are going back to church, and people are coming to church, and they're getting serious about their faith, and they're digging in.

And you know, today there's going to be this big ceremony, and his honor and people from all over the country, all the political leaders and spiritual leaders from all over the country are all going to gather, and they're going to renew in a lot of ways. Honor Charlie Kirk, but there's something spiritual happening there. There's a revival type thing happening with all of that. And it makes sense that that would happen. It's a wake-up call. And so, you know, the real question is the one that the man asked, "Whenever we have these moments happen in our life as a country or as individuals,

what should I do? What should I do?" I had a friend, I used to work out with this trainer. One of the reasons why I'm so muscular and buff is because I work out with these trainers. When I was working out with this trainer in Orlando, his name was Dallas Davis. He was a football player and played in college, and I think he played in the pros a little bit, wide receiver. And he loved training people on how to do weights and that kind of thing. So I just loved it. But his real passion was actually making movies. And when I was working out with him, he was a very strong Christian. But when he first started, his first movie was called Bad Girl Island. And I'll just let your imagination kind of think about that. But he wasn't really walking with the Lord at the time, and his mother heard the name of the movie that he had made, and she like grabbed him by the ear and said, "Dallas, what are you thinking? God didn't put you on this planet to make movies called Bad Girl Island." She says, "You're a Christian man. You were raised better than that." You know, she just gave him a what for. "You want to make movies, fine, but you better make movies to the glory of God." That was what his mom told him. "Yes, ma'am." That was his wake-up call. And it's wonderful to hear Dallas's vision for his sense of calling and his life now. And this parable is actually one of the parables that he made his life verse. He says, "When I look at the movie and the entertainment industry, what I see is a lot of people making a lot of money with unjust movies." You know, movies like Bad Girl Island and things like that, where they're making movies in order to just make money. And they'll use sex, rock and roll, violence, whatever it is, horror, evil. And yet, Christians who God has given with the same talent, the same resources, the same all of it. And yet, our movies are junk. Our movies are cheesy, they're goofy, they're B average, and that sort of thing. And he says, "God put it on my heart that Christians need to make movies that are the same quality and excellence and glorious as the worldly movies, but do it for

the glory of God." And so his second movie that he made was called A Measure of Faith. It was about forgiveness and the forgiveness of God. Very good movies, powerful. It's not quite a paramount pictures level, but God bless somebody that gets a wake-up call and says, "I was using my worldly wealth, and let's just put not just money in there, but everything that God has endowed you with, your talents, your gifts, your brains, and everything. He was using it for worldly means, and then all of a sudden, he had a wake-up call, and he decides, "I'm going to use it for God's glory." The same wealth,

and this is what the Lord is saying here. Use your worldly wealth to make friends so that they will welcome you into the eternal habitations. Use your worldly wealth to make disciples of the nations of the world, to lead people to Christ, to evangelize, to fulfill the mission of the church, to make this world a better place, so it's filled with the salt and light of God. Go back to that question, "What should I do?" That's a question that's asked throughout the pages of the Scriptures when it comes to people having a conversion moment. That's the question the prodigal son asked when he ate the pig's diet. He's looking at the pig's pods and going, "Well, I got a lot of good food here," and he goes, "What should I do? I should go to my father and repent and say I sinned against God, and I sinned against you, and I'm not worthy to be called your son. Would you just receive me back?" That's a "what should I do" kind of moment. Zacchaeus, when he's up in the sycamore tree and the Lord walks by, and he says, "I'm coming to your house today, Zacchaeus," and Zacchaeus says, "What should I do? I know what I'll do. I'll give back all the money that I've cheated everybody," and he repented.

On the day of Pentecost, and this applies to the baptism families actually, and all of us, on the day of Pentecost, the Lord poured out His Holy Spirit on the church, and a plan was announced for the renewal of this world, that God wants to bring revival and renewal and spirit-filled living to every single person on this planet, and Peter stands up and he says, "These are the last days. These are the days when God is going to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. Old men will dream dreams. Young men will prophesy. Men, women, slave, free. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," and he says, "This is all because Jesus came and He died on a cross, rose from the dead, and God has made Him Lord of all." And it was interesting the question that

was on the lips of the people that were there on that day of the beginning of the revival.

"Brothers, what should we do? What should we do?" It's always the question when you have a wake-up call. "What should I do?" And Peter very clearly says, "You need to repent. You need to turn your heart back to God. Put God first, not mammon. Put the Lord first. Repent. Turn. Make God first in your life. Submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Be baptized. You're not baptized. Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ," and he says, "and this is what's going to happen if you do this. You will receive the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit of the living God."

And this is a really wonderful promise that's made to these families that are entering into this revival today, because the promise is for you and your children and all who are far off whom the Lord our God will call. See, what the Lord wants more than anything else for the people of this world is for us to have our hearts aligned to Him, for us to be filled and renewed by His Holy Spirit and His presence so that He would be all in all. I mean, this is the heart of the Spirit-filled life, is that we would be baptized in the Spirit of the living God, and the beginning of that is to wake up to the reality of the kingdom of God and ask that question of ourselves, "What do I do?"

And the answer is, of course, I need to turn back to God and ask Him to give me His grace and His forgiveness and His love and His Holy Spirit. So let me pray, and then we'll offer our baptism of these two young children of God today. Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of Your Word that challenges us to wake up to the realities of the kingdom, to see that we're not just stewards of worldly wealth for worldly world's sake, but You've been giving us incredible blessings, amazing abundance in order to be stewards for Your kingdom. And so maybe there's somebody here today who has had a wake-up call spiritually recently or even today, and so I ask that You would help them in the answer to the question, "What should I do to know what to do?" And that is simply to say, "Lord, please come into my life," and maybe you might just pray that with me today, "Lord, please

come into my life through the gift of Your Spirit.



I want to be filled with Your presence. I want to follow You, however You would put it. Heavenly Father, whoever is in Christ is a new creation. The old is gone and the new has come." And we pray for these families that You would make that new creation spring forth in their lives and in these children's lives. In Jesus' name, amen.