

LUKE 16:1-13  
JESUS ON MONEY:  
MAKING FRIENDS WITH UNRIGHTEOUS MONEY

“Jesus also said to the disciples, ‘There was a rich man who had a manager and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, “What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.” And the manager said to himself, “What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.” So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he said to the first, “How much do you owe my master?” He said, “A hundred measures of oil.” He said to him, “Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.” Then he said to another, “And how much do you owe?” He said, “A hundred measures of wheat.” He said to him, “Take your bill, and write eighty.” The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

““One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.””<sup>1</sup>

“**P**ut your money to work for you.” This slogan was popularised by a foreign owned bank during the time it sought to become established in Canada. Though you perhaps imagine that this slogan was coined by that bank, the concept is actually quite old. Money is a tool—nothing more and nothing less. Wealth can bless an individual, or wealth can curse an individual. The factor determining whether money is a blessing or a curse lies in how wealth is used. The Master provided an example of fiscal wisdom with a story about a manager working in the employ of a rich man. That story and the commentary Jesus appended serves as the text for our message this day. Jesus used the story to teach an important truth to the people of that distant day when He walked the dusty hills of Judea. The lessons provided by the story are still applicable to people in this day.

Wealth may not be all that we imagine it to be. Money could not keep an ex-President of our neighbours to the south from experiencing the effects of eating too many hamburgers—he required a quadruple bypass surgery despite his rapid accumulation of wealth through demanding payments of a half-million dollars for a single speech. Neither has wealth spared wealthy homeowners in Florida from the effects of repeated hurricanes, although it is undoubtedly easier to rebuild after the winds have passed on.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Money is a tool. To be of benefit, money must be put to work. If all that is accomplished with money is the accumulation of more money, it is doubtful that the individual accumulating understands the purpose of wealth. If all that is accomplished with wealth is consuming wealth on pursuing personal desires, it is doubtful that the spendthrift understands the purpose of wealth. It would be wise to learn how to use the tool of wealth wisely.

**A BRIEF RECOUNTING OF THE STORY JESUS TOLD** — The setting for this story is important if we will understand Jesus' teaching. The account is found in the sixteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel. Notice that Jesus told this story immediately after He had related three parables concerning the joy associated with finding that which had been lost. Jesus told of a lost sheep [LUKE 15:1-7], a lost coin [LUKE 15:8-10] and a lost boy—the latter account being the parable of the prodigal son [LUKE 15:11-32].

Our text then begins by informing, "He also said to the disciples." This is a literary device alerting us to the fact that what has preceded lays a foundation for what we are about to read. The stories Jesus told before relating this account were for the benefit of someone other than His disciples. Those others to whom He had been speaking were the Pharisees and the scribes [LUKE 15:2].

The verse immediately following our text helps us understand this parable. "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed Him" [LUKE 16:14]. The Pharisees and scribes presented themselves as moral arbiters of society and as paragons of ethical values; and yet, they are exposed as "lovers of money." Scripture informs us that contrary to their public personae, the Pharisees and scribes were completely materialistic.

The setting that we have for this story, then, is a crowd of people surrounding Jesus one Sabbath day<sup>2</sup> as He neared the Cross. In fact, this particular day was less than six months before the Cross. Time was short for communicating matters of eternal importance. On this particular day, Jesus addressed the religious leaders, telling them that all Heaven rejoiced at the salvation of sinners. He cautioned these religious men against materialism. Remember, despite claiming to be the spiritual and moral elite of the land, these religious leaders were utterly materialistic. Though addressing His disciples, Jesus knew that the Pharisees and scribes were listening with great interest.

The Master moved from a discussion of the joy realised at finding what was lost to the wise use of that which has been entrusted to each of us. If we claim to be moral and ethical people, we must realise that we will be judged by the manner in which we handle the goods entrusted to us. We possess nothing through our own strength. God gives strength, ability and opportunity [see 1 CORINTHIANS 4:7]; indeed, God gives every good and perfect gift [see JAMES 1:17]. Thus, all that we hold, we hold as administrators.

Jesus told the story of a crooked manager who worked for a wealthy man. Word came to the wealthy man that the manager had taken advantage of his position to steal. We witness something akin to this story as the Auditor General gives repeated reports concerning the mismanagement of government moneys. His reports forcefully remind politicians that the moneys they spend in such a cavalier do not belong to them; rather, the government is responsible to act on behalf of the people. The wealthy man in this parable was defrauded by one whom he trusted.

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<sup>2</sup> The full account of Jesus' actions throughout one Sabbath begins at LUKE 14:1 and ends with LUKE 17:10.

When the manager realised that the books were about to be audited, he had ample reason to be concerned since the audit would expose him as having wasted the money of the rich man who happened to be his employer. In light of his subsequent actions, we can well believe that he not only wasted the man's money, but he likely was stealing as well!

Continuing the story He was telling, Jesus portrayed the dishonest manager as weighing his options. He knew he was about to be fired, or even jailed. He reasoned that he was not strong enough to perform manual labour. We might conclude that it is likely that this was less a matter of disability than it was a disinclination to labour with his hands. Physical labour had no appeal for him. About the only decent thing we can say about this crooked manager is that he was ashamed to beg.

He was a scoundrel, a scamp, a scallywag, a rogue of the first order. The only answer that suggested itself to this man was to defraud his master to an even greater extent. Therefore, he went to one debtor who owed a hundred measures of oil and reduced the bill to fifty. Another debtor owed one hundred measures of wheat, and the corrupt administrator changed the debt to eighty. There is neither rhyme nor reason to the disparity in the reductions granted, except to say that he was a swindler and a cheat. These remissions of debt were at the expense of the rich man; but the thieving steward acted as he did in the hope that he would have a place to work after he was fired. He hoped that those who benefitted from his thievery would treat him kindly when he was at last dismissed from his position.

The strange twist in the story Jesus told, was that at the last, the rich man who had been robbed commends the thief for his shrewdness. Isn't that an odd way for Jesus to conclude a parable intended to teach moral precepts? It is certainly different from what we may have anticipated under most circumstances. Be very careful in any conclusion you may draw; the story conveys more than is apparent on the surface. Never does our Lord commend the thief because he was a thief. The actions of the dishonest manager were in no way laudable, nor does Jesus in the least hint that He approved of such action. Then, what conclusion can we draw? That is the matter we must now consider.

**THE PURPOSE FOR JESUS' STORY** — Why do you suppose Jesus told such a strange story? The answer to this question is revealed in the closing statements. "The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings" [LUKE 16:8]. I urge you to take careful note of the first of these two statements. "The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light."

Jesus is drawing a contrast between the sons of this world and the sons of light. The scribes and Pharisees were clearly identified as the sons of this world, as is anyone who lives only for the things that must pass away with the passing of this world. The disciples who were also listening were identified as the sons of light. The scribes and Pharisees, performing their assorted religious duties, would ultimately pass away and have no permanent impact; but the disciples were about to go out into the world to carry on the work of the Kingdom of God. God's work performed by the disciples would have an enduring and extensive impact. Jesus was contrasting both the motive and the method of the two recipients of his teaching—the sons of this age and the sons of light.

Warren Wiersbe is an exceptional expositor with great insight into the Word. Commenting on this passage he writes, “Jesus did not commend the steward for robbing his master or for encouraging others to be dishonest. *Jesus commended the man for his wise use of opportunity.* ‘The children of this world’ are experts at seizing opportunities for making money and friends and getting ahead. God’s people should take heed and be just as wise when it comes to managing the spiritual affairs of life. ‘The children of this world’ are wiser only ‘in their generation’; they see the things of time, but not the things of eternity. Because the child of God lives ‘with eternity’s values in view,’ he should be able to make far better use of his opportunities.”<sup>3</sup> Weigh what Wiersbe has written, “‘The children of this world’ are experts at seizing opportunities for making money and friends and getting ahead.” They live for the world with which their future is fixed and they advance the cause of that dying world.

Jesus commended the acumen of the dishonest steward. He said that the sons of this age are more astute in their own realm than are the sons of light in their realm. Jesus’ commendation is tantamount to stating that sinners are able to seize opportunity to promote wickedness while saints fail to advance the cause of righteousness. Another way of stating the matter is to note that the sons of this age are more proficient at being sinners than the sons of light are at being saints! Underscore that thought in your mind.

The inhabitants of this fallen world use wealth effectively to promote wickedness; but the righteous appear timid in using their wealth to promote righteousness. The sons of this world do not hesitate to use immorality to advance unrighteousness; but we Christians think it “worldly” to employ our goods held in trust for the cause of Christ to advance His Kingdom. Wickedness is used to advance the immorality of this fallen world. As result of tolerating just a little bit of evil, we convince ourselves that homosexuality is just another lifestyle, ignoring professing Christians living together and practising casual sex with unmarried partners and turn a blind eye to the escalating divorce rate among confessed believers!

However, Christians seem opposed to aggressively promoting righteousness! At various times I have been told that churches should not advertise because it cost too much or because that is the “wrong way” to reach people. Even cults such as the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses realise the value of quality advertising! Their ads on television are well done and attractive. Yet, we Christians are uncomfortable using our money to host an evangelistic tea because we do not want to be fanatics. We do not like to pass out tracts or distribute Bibles because it may make others uncomfortable. We do not like to speak vigorously against evil because we do not wish to appear judgemental. We designate small amounts of money for missionary advance in our world because we have told ourselves there are just so many needs right here at home. “The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.”

“Defining Deviancy Down” was an expression coined by the late United States Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan in 1993. Moynihan based his phrase on the theory of Emile Durkheim that there is a limit to the bad behavior that a society can tolerate before it has to start lowering its standards. In 1993, the Senator applied his slogan to the “moral deregulation” that had eroded families, increased crime and produced the mentally ill “homeless” population.

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<sup>3</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, **The Bible Exposition Commentary: An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series** (Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1989) 239

That same year columnist Charles Krauthammer expanded Moynihan's point by proposing the reverse—that not only was society “normalizing what was once considered deviant,” but society was also “finding deviant what was once considered normal.” (Think sexual morality, political correctness and politically incorrect speech.) In time, the inevitable lower standards and moral relativism brought us the movies, TV shows, fashions, sex norms and web pages we have today. *Deviant and normal swapped places.*

We laugh as comedians ridicule authority with biting, sarcastic humour and then we are surprised that the members of our society no longer respect either lawmakers or the law. We teach our youth that all things arose through natural processes as result of time and chance and then we wonder why they will not worship God. We assure ourselves that all mankind has descended from animals and wonder why people act like beasts. We insist that faith is a private matter, insisting that it be confined to a few moments on a Sunday morning and then we marvel at the degeneration of moral and ethical behaviour. We adopt values clarification as an instructional method and wonder why our youth are so influenced by their peers to act wickedly. Jesus was assuredly correct! “The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.”

Joseph Epstein tells a story that illustrates some of the changes that have taken place in a very short time. He writes of having lunch with a lawyer in his late seventies. A number of his partners had retired and he planned to close his office. He had arranged to move in with a large firm where he would provide counsel. I pick up Epstein's story at this point. “The deal was set, but before the actual move, he took 12 of what were to be his new firm's associates to lunch, to explain to them how he worked with his clients. The day after the lunch, he was called by a senior partner of the firm and informed that the move couldn't be made after all. When he inquired why, he was told that, at the lunch, he apparently made a joke about a fat man and more than once referred to women who had worked for him as ‘my girls.’ The associates, as a body, found this unacceptable and wanted no part of him. ‘When I was in college, there were certain words you couldn't say in front of a girl,’ Tom Lehrer remarked. ‘Now you can say them, but you can't say “girl.”’

Epstein continued his story. “I happen to know that the lawyer in fact paid these women well, treated them respectfully, and as a result they were as loyal to him as he to them over the decades they worked together. None of which, though, signified, since the associates made their judgment of him on grounds of political correctness, and from the kangaroo courts of political correctness there is no reprieve, no time off for good behaviour, and no parole.”<sup>4</sup>

Jesus continued by admonishing those individuals who seek to honour Him to “make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.” Jesus did not say that we were to make “unrighteous wealth” our friend—we are not to be “lovers of money.” There is a wide difference between “of” and “by means of.” What Jesus did clearly say is that each Christian bears responsibility to use “unrighteous wealth” to make friends. In short, it matters to God what you do with your wealth!

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Epstein, “The Unassailable Virtue of Victims: On the rise of Hillary Clinton and Other Underdogs,” Weekly Standard, May 18, 2015, Vol. 20, No. 34, [http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/unassailable-virtue-victims\\_941011.html](http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/unassailable-virtue-victims_941011.html), accessed 8 May 8, 2015

Remember, *money is neither immoral nor moral*. Money is non-moral. There is neither evil in money nor is there good in money. Money is a tool; and the only value of money is as it is used as a tool. However, the manner in which money is used results in either evil or good. Money can either blast or bless; it all depends upon how we use it.

In **VERSE ELEVEN**, faithful administration of “unrighteous wealth” is contrasted to being entrusted with true riches. Consider one commentator’s thoughts concerning this verse. “It is possible that disciples may not act faithfully in respect of *ádikos mamōnós*; the phrase here used’, but the use of *pistós* indicates that even such material wealth is regarded as something of which men are stewards, not owners. It is contrasted with ‘true’ (wealth); *aláthinós* refers to what is characteristic of the new age ... and hence has an abiding, permanent quality. It is thus ‘real.’”<sup>5</sup>

Another insightful writer has spoken of this verse and provided words of wisdom. “If only the Christian was as eager and ingenious in his attempt to attain goodness as the man of the world is in his attempt to attain money and comfort, he would be a much better man. If only men would give as much attention to the things which concern their souls as they do to the things which concern their business, they would be much better men. Over and over again a man will expend twenty times the amount of time and money and effort on his pleasure, his hobby, his garden, his sport as he does on his church. Our Christianity will begin to be real and effective only when we spend as much time and effort on it as we do on our worldly activities.”<sup>6</sup>

How can I make friends with the wealth of this world? The answer lies in a thorough understanding of who owns the wealth that I hold. I am responsible to bless others with my wealth. It is not mine; I merely administer the goods of this world for a brief season. I must give an account to the owner of these goods. If the people of this world are shrewd in use of unrighteous wealth, how much more shrewd must I be? They use unrighteous wealth to pander to their own desires, and thus they advance wickedness. I am responsible to use that same unrighteous wealth to honour God.

There comes a day when wealth must be left behind. One second after you have died, you will no longer be able to write a cheque. How is your wealth being used now? Are you making friends with God’s wealth that you administer? Especially, are you making friends that will be willing to receive you into the eternal dwellings? A hundred years ago, Christians sang a song that raised the question of who would be waiting for us.

When my final farewell to the world I have said,  
And gladly lie down to my rest;  
When softly the watchers shall say, *she is dead*,  
And fold my pale hand o'er my breast;  
And when with my glorified vision at last  
The wall of *That City* I see,  
Will anyone then at the beautiful gate  
Be waiting and watching for me?<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> I. Howard Marshall, **The New International Greek Testament Commentary: Commentary on Luke** (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 1978) 623

<sup>6</sup> William Barclay (ed.), **The Gospel of Luke: The Daily study Bible**, Rev. ed. (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia PA, 1975) 208

<sup>7</sup> Found at <http://suvvw.org/pr/art036.htm> and accessed 30 May 2015

Is anybody waiting to meet me because I acted wisely in using “unrighteous wealth?” This question should concern each of us who name the Name of Christ the Lord.

The thrust of Jesus’ words is that each Christian is responsible to use the wealth entrusted to his or her oversight; they are not to hoard it. Wealth is to be the disciple’s servant and not his master. This pericope concludes with Jesus’ solemn assertion that “you cannot serve God and money.” Either we master our money, or our money masters us. What else can be meant in the words of the Apostle recorded in **1 TIMOTHY 6:6-11**? “There is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

“But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.”

The evidence of how we view these words is witnessed by our use of money. How is your money now used? Is the amount set aside in your RSP greater than the investment you have made in souls? I am not suggesting that you neglect caring for the needs associated with the advent of old age. I am suggesting, however, that you dare not neglect eternal issues. Do you spend more time accumulating moneys for your pension than you do in preparing to advance the cause of Christ through this congregation? The work of Christ is hindered more through the failure of Christians to provide for the advance of His work than it is through the opposition of a hostile, secular society. Have you thought of providing for the work of the congregation after you are called to leave this life? Have you arranged to leave a legacy of the work of the assembly?

Too often we fail to support the labours of our churches beyond a pittance left over after we have ensured our own ease. Few Christians actually practise the tithe as the minimum gift with which to worship God. We ensure that we provide for our own luxury—attempting to beautify aging faces, seeking ease for dying bodies and comfort for dissolute lives—without considering the needs arising from the conduct of Christ’s work. If anything is left over after we have addressed our wants, we may think of God.

Jesus urged His disciples to seize the fleeting opportunities to do good. With this parable, He encourages disciples to consider how best to use skilfully the wealth entrusted to them as they prepare for eternity. He speaks of the need for Christians to live to please God. Instead of asking what is the minimum effort required to honour God, He is urging on us the need to find how to maximise our investment in His cause.

**THE PRINCIPLE OF STEWARDSHIP** — “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for 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 God and money” [**LUKE 16:10-13**].

Jesus, in **THE TENTH VERSE**, contrasts “little” with “much.” “Unrighteous wealth” is clearly considered “little.” In comparison, eternal life is presented as “much.” Those who are faithful in little will prove faithful in much. Take careful note, however, that Jesus did not say that “one who is faithful in a very little *will be* also faithful in much.” We must consider cause and effect. The one who is faithful in much—that is, the one who is faithful in spiritual matters—is also faithful in little—that is, such a one is faithful in handling the wealth of this world. Simply because one is faithful in handling wealth does not mean that the individual will be spiritually astute. However, the individual who possesses spiritual acumen will demonstrate that astuteness through wise employment of the wealth of this world.<sup>8</sup>

Barclay addresses this passage, providing this insight. “The lesson is that a man’s way of fulfilling a small task is the best proof of his fitness or unfitness to be entrusted with a bigger task. That is clearly true of earthly things. No man will be advanced to higher office until he has given proof of his honesty and ability in a smaller position. But Jesus extends the principle to eternity. He says, ‘Upon earth you are in charge of things which are not really yours. You cannot take them with you when you die. They are only lent to you. You are only a steward over them. They cannot, in the nature of things, be permanently yours. On the other hand, in heaven you will get what is really and eternally yours. And what you get in heaven depends on how you use the things of earth. What you will be given as your very own will depend on how you use the things of which you are only steward.’”<sup>9</sup>

It matters little how much of this world’s wealth you hold, you still hold little. Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, George Soros—each alike are but administrators of what belongs to God. The day will come when each is required to give an accounting to Him. However much one thinks he has in this life, it is actually little. In the economy of Heaven the wealth of this world is but a tool, it has no value beyond immediate use. If the use of wealth fails to glorify Christ, it has no eternal value.

Do you doubt that statement? Consider that perhaps gold isn’t as precious as we think, if gold is just paving stones for the eternal city. If diamonds serve as foundation stones, should we be so taken with accumulating them? However, in a more practical vein to prove the point that wealth that is not used to glorify the Master has no eternal value, think of this. What is the cost for one minute of extra life when God says, “Life is over?” Can you barter with God to purchase life eternal? How much money is required for the restoration of your youth? God has promised those who belong to Him a glorified body just as the Saviour has. What is the value of that glorified body? Though you may be able to purchase a younger person to hang onto your arms, how much money will you need to purchase love? Will money actually purchase character?

However, that which is great—eternal life, the commendation of God, our acceptance by Him—each is freely given without cost to each of us when we have received Christ the Lord and submitted our lives to Him. Those who understand this and who have submitted themselves to Him will not cling to mere baubles and trinkets destined for dust. Instead, they will realise that wealth is only a tool to be employed either to the glory of God and to the good of mankind or it will be used to damn and to destroy. Each of us is responsible to act christianly in the employment of our wealth.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. G. Campbell Morgan, **The Gospel According to Luke** (Fleming H. Revell Co, Old Tappan, NJ 1931) 187

<sup>9</sup> William Barclay, op. cit. 209



Do you believe the words of Jesus to be true? We read the words attributed to Him and we profess that those same words thrill us; yet, too often we live as though those same words had never been spoken or as if they have no meaning for us as Christians. Jesus said, “Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” [MATTHEW 6:25-33].

Did Jesus speak the truth? Does what He said have any application to our lives? Let’s get specific. Are you allowing your anxieties to define you? Do you constantly worry how you will provide for tomorrow? Is it because you no longer trust Him that you are constantly fretful? Here are some additional questions to assist in applying His teaching to your life. Is His Kingdom foremost in your mind? Is His glory the primary consideration of your life? If you do not have that which He defined as “little,” is it because you are not trustworthy with that which is “much?”

Here is a little test that will perhaps help you to determine if you believe the words Jesus spoke at that time. I will not ask you for the answers and I will not assign a grade for you. However, be assured that God knows the answer and that you are the one who must answer to Him. Here is the test each one must apply to life. Do you spend more money on your hobby than on missionary causes? Do you spend more of your income on clothing than you do on support to advance the outreach of this congregation? Do you spend more of what you earn on cosmetics and toiletries than you do on caring for the needy as an outreach through the congregation of the righteous?

Among the churches of our Lord, there will always be found some who wish to be identified with Christ, calling themselves by His Name, who yet invest little or nothing in the work that bears His Name. Ultimately, such people impoverish only themselves. There are people whose energies are spent on their own interests and not on the welfare of the work of God. They are not labourers together with God, but rather they are lollygaggers.

I cannot know the amount of your gifts to the cause of Christ, nor do I wish to know. I do not know the time you invest in the work of Christ, though I do note the consistent absence of some even from this congregation who fail in their service and in their worship of Christ. I observe the failure of some to be involved in the work of Christ; their failure to do any great task in the Name of Christ is obvious. The attitude of others is combative, even belligerent toward the church; they refuse to be involved in the life of the Body. I am compelled by the truth to remind each one that Christ, whom we name as Lord of life, does know the investments we make. He knows whether we honour Him, or whether we promote only those things associated with death.

Perhaps you recall another parable Jesus told about a master who distributed ten minas [see **LUKE 19:11-27**]. I would urge you to remember the Master's commentary on that parable, applying His words to your own life. "I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away" [**LUKE 19:26**]. When we are thoroughly committed to advancing the cause of Christ and when we vigorously seek His glory, He entrusts to us everything necessary to accomplish the work. When we seek the accumulation of the accoutrements of this world—things we imagine to be necessary for our own comfort, we suffer the loss of both the material supply and the spiritual power to do what He calls us to do.

The message is intended as a stewardship message calling each Christian to aspire to be great in the sight of God. The work of God must not be hindered through failure of His people to invest their lives in His cause. Each Christian has a role to play. Each of us must accept the responsibility to share the labour if Christ will be honoured among us. This, then, is the call of God. Each Christian must review whether Christ is foremost in the conduct of her or his life. Each Christian must determine that he or she will be faithful in those matters that are great and each one must determine that she or he will be faithful in administering the little things. Each Christian must assure herself or himself that they are investing in the ongoing work of His Kingdom in a proper manner.

If, after review, you determine that you are not appropriately investing your life and your influence or that you have not been faithful in matters great or little or that Christ is not pre-eminent in your life, today is the day to take action. I urge any such person among us this day to ask Christ to give strength and grace to honour Him in these matters. Then act on the request that you have made of the Master.

Those who are outside the Faith, whether members of this church or not, need to first receive Jesus as Lord of life. This is the call of God as communicated through Paul when writing to Roman saints. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" [**ROMANS 10:9-13**].

Come, even as we conclude this message, confessing Christ, submitting to His reign, seeking to honour Him. Come, you who have yet to obey His call to identify with Him through baptism as a believer, and we will gladly witness the administration of this ordinance. Come, you who have failed to honour Christ through openly uniting with this congregation and taking your position as a worker among the people of God. The church even now stands ready to encourage you through receiving you into the fellowship of the Body, whether through confession of faith and baptism or through transfer of membership from a sister congregation. Come, find your place and labour with us. This also is a part of the stewardship of life that is expected of those who name Christ as Lord. Amen.