

A God-Lived Life – Month 4
Text Study: Luke 16:1-15



Month 4 - The God-Lived Life is a Life Lived Shrewdly

Key Concept: Stewardship of Treasure

While stewardship of our finances isn't the only part of stewardship, it is a part of it. Today God's Word encourages us to use all of the financial gifts God has given us with an eye on our purpose. May God grant us grace to use money for what really matters!

Gospel: Luke 16:1-15+ - The Parable of the Shrewd Manager

Jesus tells a parable about a shrewd manager to make the single point that a God-lived life uses its resources for God's purposes.

First Reading - 2 Kings 4:8-17* - The Shunnamite Woman

Our first lesson gives us an example of a godly woman using her resources for what really matters. She wasn't giving to get, she was giving to support ministry.

Second Reading - 1 Timothy 6:6-19# - Instructions on Stewardship of Money

The love of money and what it can buy can destroy, but the shrewd use of the resources God gives can bring immeasurable blessing. God wants us to be rich in good deeds and generous.

Psalm 16##

Gospel Acclamation

Proverbs 19:4 - Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend deserts him.

Note: If doing a full-length service, use the readings as appointed. If following the suggestion for in-service Bible Study, see below:

**This lesson is read during shortened service*

+This lesson serves as sermon text

#This lesson is the basis for 19-minute Bible Study

##This is dropped.

Hymns

Opening Gathering Rite (CW467)

Hymn of the Day - CW 477 – What is the World to Me

Closing Hymn - CW 341 – Crown Him with Many Crowns

Alternates/Hymns for daily devotions:

CW 421 – All Depends on Our Possessing

CW 444 - If You But Trust in God to Guide You

CW 456 - Forth in Your Name, O Lord I Go

CW 563 - Go Labor On

CWS 757 – Where your Treasure is

Related readings:

Matthew 6:25-34

Acts 16:11-15

CONTEXT OF THE READING:

This takes place during Perea ministry. Jesus is in the last year of his life and is teaching. In Chapter 15, Jesus taught tax collectors, sinners and Pharisees about how much God values the lost and the great lengths he goes to for them. In Chapter 16, we transition to some teaching to his disciples about the disciples' attitude toward possessions. Jesus tells a story to make his first point. Just as the point of the lost sons and the lost coin and the lost sheep was a focus on the love of God and his rejoicing over those who turn back—this parable focuses on the mercy of God and how the disciple is to use it and all that it gives.

TEXT STUDY: LUKE 16:1-15

For each verse, a hyper-literal translation has been provided in italics to help communicate some of the thoughts hidden in the Greek vocables and grammar.

Luke 16:1 -

Ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς· ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος ὃς εἶχεν οἰκονόμον, καὶ οὗτος διεβλήθη αὐτῷ ὡς διασκορπίζων τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ.

And he was saying to the disciples, "A certain man was rich who was having a steward (household manager), and this one was brought charges against him as squandering his possessions.

Jesus doesn't distract us with what exactly he had been doing wrong or any other details. He gets right to the point. The steward failed. He had been given

responsibility over the master's mammon, and he was found to not have used it according to the master's wishes.

God can teach us lessons in the strangest places. Jesus uses the picture of a jerk, a self-centered narcissist—and tells us to learn from him. But pay attention to the singular lesson he wants us to learn—*shrewdness*—being prudent.

Luke 16:2 -

καὶ φωνήσας αὐτὸν εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τί τοῦτο ἀκούω περὶ σοῦ; ἀπόδος τὸν λόγον τῆς οἰκονομίας σου, οὐ γὰρ δύνη ἔτι οἰκονομεῖν.

And hearing it he said to him, "What is this I hear concerning you? Hand over the word (the account, ledger) of your management, for you are not able yet to be steward (to manage the household)

This makes sense. The master has to fire the crooked household manager. He tells him to get the books together and hand them over. He's done. This is how God should act toward any of us who are stewards of all he has given us. He should say, "That's it. Give it back."

Consider what God asks of us as his stewards. God has given us everything and tells us to be generous with it. Help people. Give for his work. Let's take 10% as a starting point. Imagine a job where the employer says, "I am giving you all this wealth to take care of. Every year, you take 90% of the income and use it on yourself and give me back 10%." Who wouldn't jump at that job? Yet we hem and haw at 10%?!? Yes, God should say, that's it, you're done, give it all back. But, our God is a merciful master. Keep reading.

Luke 16:3 -

εἶπεν δὲ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὁ οἰκονόμος· τί ποιήσω, ὅτι ὁ κύριός μου ἀφαιρεῖται τὴν οἰκονομίαν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ; σκάπτειν οὐκ ἰσχύω, ἐπαιτεῖν αἰσχύνομαι.

And the steward said to himself, "What will (or should) I do because my master is taking away the stewardship from me? I am not strong to dig, I am ashamed to beg.

The steward shows his shrewdness, his ability to act prudently. He considers his new situation. He thinks it through. His options for taking care of himself aren't good.

Luke 16:4 -

ἔγνων τί ποιήσω, ἵνα ὅταν μετασταθῶ ἐκ τῆς οἰκονομίας δέξωνταί με εἰς τοὺς οἴκους αὐτῶν.

I know what I will do, in order that when I am removed out of the stewardship they will receive me into their homes.

“The steward’s great insight is to see that the solution must come from outside himself” (Concordia Commentary: Luke).

Luke 16:5 -

καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος ἕνα ἕκαστον τῶν χρεοφειλετῶν τοῦ κυρίου ἑαυτοῦ ἔλεγεν τῷ πρώτῳ· πόσον ὀφείλεις τῷ κυρίῳ μου;

And calling each one of the debtors of his master he was saying to the first, “How much do you owe my master?”

Here we see who the “they” of verse 4 is. He takes what he has (for the little time he has left with it*) and does what he has the power to do with it. Some argue that he is helping the master build better relationships with his debtors. Some say that he is just removing the unjust interest he had previously put on. It doesn’t really matter. He says why he is doing it. He wants them to welcome him. He is using money to build relationships (for his own benefit**).

*Consider the application for us. You know you can’t take it with you. When you die, someone else owns all that you’ve worked for. What does that say about how we use it while we have it? Remember what your goal is with all your mammon.

**The Christian steward, living for Christ, will have different outcomes in mind for his stuff than just him having more stuff. He wants to do what matters eternally.

Luke 16:6 -

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ἑκατὸν βάτους ἐλαίου. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· δέξαι σου τὰ γράμματα καὶ καθίσας ταχέως γράψον πενήκοντα.

And he says, “100 baths of oil.” And he said to him, “Take your bill (writings) and after sitting down quickly write 50.”

Approx. 800 gallons of olive oil, the yield of about 450 olive trees.

Lenski gives all sorts of background on what would be legal and the comparative value of the discount for the two debtors, but again, the point is—this is a lot of wealth changing hands here, and the shrewd steward has a purpose for it.

Luke 16:7 -

ἔπειτα ἑτέρω εἶπεν· σὺ δὲ πόσον ὀφείλεις; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ἑκατὸν κόρους σίτου. λέγει αὐτῷ· δέξαι σου τὰ γράμματα καὶ γράψον ὀγδοήκοντα.

Then he says to the other, "And you, how much do you owe?" And he says, "100 kors of wheat." He says to him, "Take your bill and write 80."

100 Kors – 1000 bushels of wheat, the yield of approx. 100 acres.

Most likely these people were renting land from the master and owed him the produce of it. Consider how they would feel toward the master and this steward. This could do nothing but help the relationship with both. Extreme gratitude!

Luke 16:8 -

καὶ ἐπήνεσεν ὁ κύριος τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας ὅτι φρονίμως ἐποίησεν· ὅτι οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου φρονιμώτεροι ὑπὲρ τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτὸς εἰς τὴν γενεάν τὴν ἑαυτῶν εἰσιν.

And the master expressed admiration of the steward of unjustness, because he acted prudently (Shrewdly, using his head): "The sons of this age are more shrewd than the sons of the light toward their own generation (their own kind)."

This doesn't make sense, but that's kind of the point. So often, in Jesus' parables, the master doesn't act like we'd expect. Although, Arthur Just makes the point that this guy was in a bind. He had just (as far as his debtors knew) done something impressively generous for them.

"When the lord discovers what the steward has done, he is in a bind with two options. He can reverse the steward's decisions to adjust the accounts, but in doing so, he will receive wrath from his renters and force them to reassess whether he really is a 'generous and merciful lord. If he lets the adjustments stand, he has further secured the goodwill of his renters...He must commend the steward for shrewdly managing his personal crisis since the steward trusted the character of his lord and staked everything on the lord's mercy" (Concordia Commentary, 615).

That brings up the point: How did the steward get away with this? The master could have and should have punished him immediately and undone his actions. But, the master is *merciful*. The steward knew that about his master and counted on it. When we realize this teaching story isn't so much about the unjustness of the steward, but the *mercy* of the master, it makes more sense. The steward is commended because he trusted the mercy of the master.

Luke 16:9 -

Καὶ ἐγὼ ὑμῖν λέγω, ἑαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας, ἵνα ὅταν ἐκλίπη δέξωνται ὑμᾶς εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς.

And I say to you, make for yourselves friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness, in order that when it gives out (either money or your life) they will receive you into eternal dwellings (tents).

Here Jesus gives us the proper use of mammon (our stuff), the stuff that the unrighteous live for but we live with. Notice the perspective. Those living for anything but righteousness make mammon their goal and the point of what they do. The sons of the light are looking at another goal and so will use mammon with the eternal dwellings in mind.

This mammon of unrighteousness: so often money is that god to the unrighteous. Jesus is telling us to use something that is so often misused for a purpose that will have eternal results. Whatever friends you gain through your money (through anything you do) will remember how God used you for them. And when you enter heaven, they will be there welcoming you with joy, appreciative of your role.

What impeccable common sense from the lips of the Lord! If we understand who's possessions these are, that they are not ours, will it not change our outlook on how we are to use them? Out of love for God, we'll want to use them wisely. And at the same time—we only have them temporarily, so let's do what will last with them. And look at what he suggests to use them to do. Use them to *make friends* with the people of the world—so that you can cross those bridges with the truth and they can come to know their Savior, and they will be in heaven rejoicing when your time comes, praising God and you for how God used you in their life.

That changes the whole outlook on stewardship. Instead of taking care of myself first—it is “how can I best put myself in a position to reach out to others, how can I “make friends” with those around me so that I can do the most loving thing possible for them and share my faith? What can I do here that God will use to create eternal results? What an opportunity we have for an easy answer—this congregation, this church. In the beginning phases of it, our work is exponential. So one of you knocks on the door of someone who sees the joy of salvation and starts knocking on doors, and she knocks on the doors of five others that see that joy, and each of them bring four family members, two of them knock on doors, two of them have the gift of giving and fund a new evangelism event, that brings three others into contact. And the web keeps growing and growing and

growing. And your effort brings about a whole crew of welcomers in heaven for you.

Or look at money. It may put one stone upon another so that many more are drawn to visit and find out about the master that doesn't oppress, but gives freely. Think about that master, not like money, but one who gives and gives and gives. Money always demands more and more, never letting you be satisfied.

The idea is to “gain friends”, to gain fellow believers with it. That means that you are to be a good example, in trusting God and using what he has given you to take care of yourself—really trusting him. That means getting by on less than your full income. The first goes to God and his work. A chunk goes to the government. Some goes to provide for self and family. And some helps take care of those less fortunate. Yes, as much as Satan tries to tell you otherwise, there are those less fortunate. Why does he want us to be *faithful* with money? Well, it trains us in the first commandment. And...

Luke 16:10 -

Ὁ πιστὸς ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ καὶ ἐν πολλῷ πιστὸς ἐστίν, καὶ ὁ ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ ἄδικος καὶ ἐν πολλῷ ἄδικός ἐστιν.

The faithful one in the least is also faithful in the great, and the one unjust with the least also is unjust with the much.

Here again, we see it is how we deal with what God gives us that matters. Right now, God has given you control over a small sphere of the universe, “your” possessions. If your priorities get skewed over these, how can we expect you to be able to handle truly important things.

For Christians, money is a means to an end. For unbelievers, money is the end in itself (the mission).

Luke 16:11 -

εἰ οὖν ἐν τῷ ἀδίκῳ μαμωνᾷ πιστοὶ οὐκ ἐγένεσθε, τὸ ἀληθινὸν τίς ὑμῖν πιστεύσει;

Therefore, if you are not faithful with the unjust mammon, who will entrust to you truth (true riches)?

And it isn't just the stuff, but true riches, the things that last for eternity. We should use our mammon for eternal purposes, for the truth, the spreading of the Gospel, the message of the mercy of our master that can be counted on.

Mammon—Just says that many derive it from Aramaic from the root ܡܡܢ —“that in which one puts their trust.” This is the same word we get “amen” from.

Luke 16:12 -

καὶ εἰ ἐν τῷ ἀλλοτρίῳ πιστοὶ οὐκ ἐγένεσθε, τὸ ὑμέτερον τίς ὑμῖν δώσει;

And if you are not faithful with what is not your own, who will give to you your own?

Another point made. It matters how we use what God has entrusted to us. Consider the lesson of the parable of the talents.

Luke 16:13 -

Οὐδεὶς οἰκέτης δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν· ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἓνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταφρονήσει. οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾷ.

*No steward is able to serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold fast to one and look down on the other. **You are not able to serve God and Mammon.***

This is what it boils down to. Either we are in it for God, or we are in it for the stuff. Notice he gives the generalization (“no one can serve two masters) and then brings it home—“You are not able.” He’s making the application.

“Mammon is not evil in itself but becomes evil when it becomes the object of one’s service, i.e., when one worships mammon instead of God” (Concordia Commentary).

“The steward was commended because he chose to serve his lord, who he trusted would be merciful. He used unrighteous mammon to achieve his goal, though he trusted not in the mammon, but in his merciful lord.” (Concordia Commentary, 621)

Jesus makes very clear what money is to be used for. So often it happens when it becomes the master instead of the servant. I.e., cigarettes—started for pleasure and then it takes over; alcohol—same story; money—the natural generosity of kids is so quickly forgotten. Kids are ready to give away because they have no doubt parents are taking care of them. They have no needs. How quickly we change from firstfruits to “Whatever is left can go to Jesus.”

The principle is simple. There can only be one number one. The International Olympic Committee has done all they can to avoid giving out multiple gold medals, like in the case of Paul Hamm in the 2004 Olympics (google it). And there is a reason. It just isn’t right. It goes against all justice to say that I’m the best if you tied. There can only be one true number one. Maybe number two is very close behind, but only one number one. God agrees. No matter how much we try

to explain it away or give defense or justification for it, no breaking of first commandment is acceptable.

Luke 16:14 -

Ἦκουον δὲ ταῦτα πάντα οἱ Φαρισαῖοι φιλάργυροι **υἰάρχοντες** καὶ **ἐξεμυκτήριζον** αὐτόν.

And the Pharisees, lovers of money, being there, were hearing all these things, and they were ridiculing him.

Of course, the Pharisees didn't like what Jesus was saying. They considered wealth as a sign that you were doing the right thing and living the right way. Jesus tells them they are serving mammon instead of God. That stung.

Luke 16:15 -

καὶ **εἶπεν** αὐτοῖς· ὑμεῖς **ἐστε** οἱ **δικαιοῦντες** ἑαυτοὺς ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁ δὲ θεὸς **γινώσκει** τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν· ὅτι τὸ ἐν ἀνθρώποις ὑψηλὸν βδέλυγμα ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

And he said to them, "You are the ones justifying yourselves before the man, but God knows your hearts; because the highest thing among men is loathsome before God.

What we consider as so important is an obstacle, a distraction to what is really important—and so loathsome in his sight. Even if it appears perfectly acceptable to the world, what matters is the priorities God sees.

It's easy to read this parable and stress about the unjust actions of the steward, but notice that the point is the mercy of the master. Just like chapter 15 talked about lost things (sheep, coin, sons) to highlight the grace of God, rejoicing over their return, this chapter, too, stresses the mercy of God with us who so often misuse what he has given.

The point is that the master is merciful. The servant knew that so he could use the stuff. For us, the point is that we know our master is merciful and we can give and use our stuff knowing we are provided for by a merciful master.

HOMILETICAL NOTES:

Malady: Not using what God has given us for his purposes. Using for self instead of to "make friends." Prof. John Jeske said, "There are a lot of things God will put up with in the human heart, but 2nd place isn't one of them."

Telic Note: Jesus used his time here entirely for us. He went without a place to lay his head so that he could prepare a place in heaven's mansions for us.

There is a slight, though understandable, disconnect between the parable dealing with shrewd money dealings of the manager and Jesus' active obedience of shrewdly using his time and truth for our salvation and then going back to our shrewd use of money. The point of the parable to "act shrewdly" applies to every gift he gives: our time, talents, truth, and temple that we've been talking about. But, it also applies to our treasure blessings like the parable talks about.

Theme brainstorm

Now what shall I do?

- I. Shall I use my stuff (money, opportunities, time) for self (Rude)
- II. Shall I use my stuff for God (Shrewd)

- I. Live for the now.
- II. Live for the new.
 - a. Heaven
 - b. New purposes, relationships

A Lesson in Shrewdness / A Life lived shrewdly

- I. It's easy to be rude instead of shrewd
- II. The God lived life is shrewd for the proper purpose

- I. Live Rude – or –
- II. Live shrewd

CHILDREN'S SERMON IDEA

Let's say that I give you \$10 and tell you to buy me a loaf of bread and get yourself a candy bar and then bring me the change. Would that sound fair?

What if I said: Here is \$10. Give me \$1, then go get me a loaf of bread and yourself a candy bar and **you** can keep everything that's left. That sounds even better, right?

I know that we grown-ups like to think that we make our own money—we earn it. Maybe you like to think that any money you have you deserved. But here's the thing: When we grown-ups go to work for our money—we can only do that because God gave us the health and opportunity to have that job. And yet, we convince ourselves that it's ours.

You know better, right? Who really owns everything? Who made everything? God. It's all his. But look at how great God is. He gives it to us to use while we're alive here. He tells us to first give some to him and then use the rest of it for what really matters. And that's what we're going to be talking about today. What really matters? Is it being rich and having a bunch of money? While that may be nice, that runs out. When we die, we suddenly have nothing. Today, God tells us to use all our money and stuff on things that last—like his Word and sharing it—and people—every person you meet lives forever—but where they live depends on whether they know Jesus. How cool is it that God lets us use our stuff to help people and make friends as we help them and then we can tell them about what really lasts. In other words, we're using our stuff for what is really important. Let's pray and ask God to help us do that.