

Sermon Luke 16 1 15 18th S after Pentecost Series C (22 September 2013)

Sermon: 18th Sunday after Pentecost

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

Theme: God knows your heart (v. 15)

Goal: By God's grace, we are managers of His goods to do His will.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Imagine that you have a good job. You have been employed for a long time and have won the employer's trust. He promoted you to a better position and many people are under your command. You are handling a lot of money. It doesn't belong to you, but you are in charge to manage it in the best way for your employer. One day you need some extra money; or someone offers you a bribe to get a special favor, and you take the money for yourself. After some weeks, the boss notices this and calls you: "What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer." You were not faithful to your boss. You misused your position and abused the trust your boss had laid on you.

What is Jesus teaching us about in this parable? He is teaching us to be wise, honest and shrewd with the goods He gives us, with the earthly goods as well as with the spiritual goods, to use all of them according to His will to help others and to promote His kingdom. We receive everything free and we shall share them with others. God knows our hearts and He will ask us to give an account of our management. Have we been good managers of God's possessions?

I - God knows what we have

Whatever we have is a gift of God, beginning with our lives. The patriarch Job, who was a very wealthy man and lost everything he

had in one single day, confessed: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord had taken it away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21).

Our family, our house, our job, our salary, our friends, our skills are not ours. God lends everything to us during our lifetime. Once we depart, others will take care of it. We cannot use it in a selfish way, no matter if we have less or if we have much. It’s ours for a while to be used according to God’s will. He knows what we have because He gave it to us. Nothing can be hidden from God.

The biggest gift we receive from God beside our life is the salvation by faith in Jesus. It’s given free to all who believe and trust in God’s grace. It is given to be shared as well.

II – God knows how we manage it

Good management includes the good care of our family, of our health, the support of God’s mission through the church, the payment of our taxes to support the government programs, the help of the needy people and so on. We cannot waste and squander our goods with drunkenness, with dishonest business, in a frivolous way ... Maybe some are doing it hidden from the family and from their friends; but “God knows our hearts” and He will call us to give account of our management.

We shall not serve the money and let us be enslaved by it. The money God gives us shall serve God’s purposes. Jesus says: “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” Money itself it not bad; it’s a blessing. The problem lays in the love of money. Our text says: “The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves

in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.

Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:6-10): “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grieves.”

“Jesus’ words, ‘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’ (v 9), direct our attention to the purpose of our earthly blessing received from God.” (CPH)

The Christians *“are urged to be faithful in the use of their earthly wealth because it is on loan from God. If they cannot be trusted with earthly wealth and possessions, how can they be trusted with the true riches of eternal life?”* (ABC 1236).

“The focus of this Gospel is to use earthly wealth, which is of value only in this world, in a shrewd manner so as to be received into “eternal dwellings.” What does this mean? The use of earthly wealth to secure eternal dwellings can mean only one thing! To practice stewardship in such a way as to use that which is entrusted to us in this life to extend the kingdom of God into the lives of other people, whereby they would have eternal dwellings! Wealth is only a tool to be used with proper stewardship to extend the kingdom of God.

“If we have not used temporal wealth for the kingdom’s work, how can we expect God to entrust us with spiritual gifts and blessings

for their use? There's a direct application to us who are here today when we realize how blessed we are to be children of our heavenly Father. We have received blessings in abundance and often we are guilty of squandering what's entrusted to us.

"God has placed us here in this world to be a reflection of his grace and mercy. When we allow God to use us in this way, those who dwell in the darkness of this world are transformed into sons of light, children of our heavenly Father." (CPH)

I'm sure that many will come in heaven to thank us for sharing the Gospel of Jesus with them and for helping them in their special needs while in this earth. These are the friends in the eternal dwellings Jesus is talking about. The money will not go with us, but the good deeds we performed with it as fruits of our faith in Jesus will accompany us, as promised in Revelation 14:13: "Then I heard a voice from heaven say, Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

Conclusion: God knows our hearts and He knows how weak we are. Temptations are all around us in this issue of money management. How much can I spend with my family? How much shall I give to the poor? How much shall I offer to the church? How much can I spend on leisure? – These are personal decisions between each of us and our God. Each of us must be sure to take decisions according to God's will and according to the possibilities we have and needs that are put in front of us. By God's grace, we thank God for all the gifts He gives us, and we ask for forgiveness for our failures. Forgiven and strengthened by Jesus' body and blood, we begin a new week of challenges and service, living our faith in Jesus in our daily lives and decisions. Amen.