LEARNING TO BE SHREWD
LUKE 16:1-13

A LESSON IN *SHREWDNESS*--A LESSON IN *FAITHFULNESS*

Wiersbe: "The *Wall Street Journal* quoted an anonymous wit who defined money as "an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider for everything except happiness."

The preceding story, the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), revealed **two contrasting views about money:**

1) **The younger brother's view: <u>He wanted to spend it all; he wasted everything he had</u>.**

2) **The older brother's view: <u>He wanted to keep it all; he worked away as a slave to accumulate all he had coming to him.</u>**

Our Lord offers another perspective: **<u>WE ARE TO *INVEST* OUR LIVES, FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS AND FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.</u>**

We are to use our resources faithfully, as stewards, administrators, that will have to give an account to God for our use of that which He has placed in our hands.

Those who use their resources unfaithfully, to get gain for themselves, will lose their privileged position.

Jesus' followers ought to use their possessions faithfully, so as to please God and prepare for the future, rather than for their own financial gain which will pass away.

Instruction in view of rejection 12:1-19:27

True nature of rejection 13:10-16:31

Luke combines a series of incidents from Jesus' ministry which demonstrate the true nature of the rejection he is describing (13:10-16:31).

He wants the reader to understand that the theological objections to Jesus were a smoke screen, intended to veil the true motive of Israel's leaders.

Significance of Jesus' ministry 15:1-16:13

When the Pharisees reject Jesus, one excuse they use for rejection is the unacceptable people who follow Him: tax collectors and sinners (15:1-2).

Their complaint causes Jesus to explain the significance of His ministry (15:1-16:13)
He uses three parables to demonstrate God's attitude toward the lost (15:1-32).
For the lost 15:1-24
For the Pharisees 15:25-32

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DANGER OF PHARISAIC ATTITUDE 16:1-31

After answering the objection of the Pharisees to Jesus' reception of the lost, Jesus deals with their real problem (16:1-31).

Though esteemed by the people as religious, they were serving for personal gain. They resisted Him because He threatened their position.

Theme coming forward: demonstrates that through all the smokescreen raised, their real purpose was personal gain (power, prestige, money).

For the disciples 16:1-13

TWO LESSONS FOR THE DISCIPLES:

A difficult parable. It clearly presents 2 major principles, but the relationship between the two isn't always quite so clear.

We should use our possessions as faithful administrators to **please God** and to **prepare for the future**.

LESSON #1 THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITHFULNESS 16:1-2

The most important lesson for a steward is to remember that he does not own the things that have been committed into his hands.

They belong to another and are to be used for his benefit.

The ultimate test of a steward is *FAITHFULNESS* (1 Cor. 4:2).

This steward forgot that he was a steward and used what he was given for his own benefit. He acted as if he were the owner.

He wasted his master's wealth for his own profit.

The master held him accountable for the use of the resources he had placed in his hands. Because of unfaithfulness, he lost it all. He used it dishonestly, for his own profit, therefore he lost it.

They should be careful to avoid imitating the same attitude.

We are to use our resources faithfully, as stewards, administrators, that will have to give an account to God for our use of that which He has placed in our hands.

Those who use their resources unfaithfully, to get gain for themselves, or who waste it on meaningless trivialities, will lose their privileged position.

This isn't a loss of salvation issue. They lose the right to be administrator's of the master's resources.

LESSON #2 <u>THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING OUR RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE</u> (= ETERNITY) <u>16:3-9</u>

The administrator was placing all his confidence in his possessions. When he realized that he was about to lose all that he had, he used the resources at his disposal to prepare for the future.

If they use their possessions for personal gain, they will lose the privilege of serving God.

If they use them faithfully, invest them for their future, they will reap the benefits of their wise investment.

The positive side--vv. 8-9

He was thinking about the future, not just the present. This was a typical pagan way of protecting himself for the future.

The "unjust riches" of this world should be invested in something that brings eternal reward, not just temporary advantage.

His master commends him--not for his dishonesty--nor even for his deeds!

He commends him for acting wisely--for using the resources at his disposal to prepare for the future--that was a wise, last-minute effort to protect himself. **HE HAD THE FORESIGHT TO PREPARE FOR TOMORROW!**

Then our Lord injects a parenthetical conclusion: Often the pagans in the world around us are wiser than God's people. The children of light are often not as careful at preparing for the future as the pagans are.

Our Lord warns us to prepare for tomorrow--not from an earthly materialistic perspective like the world does--but rather, from an eternal perspective!

vv. 4 & 9 - **SUMMARY**: Notice the theme of preparation for the time when the work for the master here is through.

In verse 9, *where will the friends greet them?* What does that tell you about the issues involved here? This is making adequate preparation ***for eternity!***

While the NAS is more literal in this verse, the NIV captures the spirit of the passage better: "Use worldly wealth" (NAS--"unrighteous mammon") to gain "friends" that will welcome you into eternal dwellings. ***Our financial resources--that serve the world as a means of accomplishing ungodly goals--ought to be invested so as to accomplish godly, eternal goals!*** That's the point here.

How do verses 10-12 help us understand His point?

The key issue is **TRUSTWORTHINESS**! Can we be trusted with God's resources?

If we are trustworthy with a little, we will be trusted to handle a lot.

If we can't be trusted with "worldly wealth" (unrighteous mammon), we can't be trusted with the real thing--genuine prosperity--divine, spiritual resources.

If we can't be trusted with the master's resources, He isn't going to entrust us with our own resources.

A bank employee was due for a promotion. One day at lunch the president of the bank, was standing behind him in the cafeteria, and saw him slip two pats of butter under his slice of bread so they wouldn't be seen by the cashier. That little act of dishonesty cost him his promotion. Just 10 cents' worth of butter made the difference. The bank president reasoned that if an employee cannot be trusted in little things he cannot be trusted at all.

FAITHFULNESS AND A JUNK BOX
*The sign in the window read: "BOY WANTED." Young **John Simmons**, though he was lazy, saw his opportunity and applied. He was quickly hired by elderly Mr. Peters. The pace was leisurely so he enjoyed the job. Toward the middle of the afternoon, however, he was sent up to the attic--a dingy place full of cobwebs and infested with mice. "You will find a long, deep box there," explained Mr. Peters. "Please sort out the contents and see what should be saved." John was disappointed. It was a large container, and there seemed to be nothing in it but old junk. After a few minutes he went back to the ground floor. Asked by the proprietor if he had completed his work, he replied, "No, sir, it was dark and cold up there and I didn't think it was worth doing." At closing time he was paid and told not to return. The next morning the old sign "BOY WANTED" appeared in its usual place.*
***Crawford Hill** was the next to be employed. When he was asked to tidy up the same box, however, he spent hours separating the usable nails and screws from the things to be discarded. Suddenly he raced down the stairs all excited. "At the very bottom I found this!" he exclaimed, holding up a 20- dollar bill. At last the store owner had discovered a conscientious boy to whom he could entrust his business when he retired. Years later Mr. Peters said, "This young man, who is now my successor, found his fortune in a junk box!" Then, correcting himself, he added, "No he actually found it in his mother's Bible because he heeded the verse she made him memorize: 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much!'"*

More than 2,000 years ago a sculptor was employed to erect a statue in a Greek temple. He spent much time making it beautiful and ornate, even the part that was against the wall. When asked why he carved the back with the same care as he did the front, he replied, "That's the way I always work. Men may never see it, but I believe the gods do!"

Ultimately, the real issue is, WHO ARE WE LIVING FOR? <u>15:13</u>

What's the problem with trying to serve two masters? v. 13

The two loyalties conflict--they get in each other's way. They come into conflict and force you to make a choice.

Are we going to serve God, or money? *WHAT ARE WE GOING TO LIVE FOR? WE CAN'T SERVE BOTH!*

IMPLICATIONS FOR US TODAY:

1. WE ARE TO BE FAITHFUL IN OUR USE OF THAT WHICH GOD HAS PLACED IN OUR HANDS

Are we trustworthy?
Do we use what God has given us faithfully, for His glory?

2. WE SHOULD USE THE RESOURCES GOD HAS GIVEN TO US FOR ETERNAL BENEFIT (ETERNAL VALUES)

Are we using the resources God placed in our hands for eternity?

Are we "storing up our treasure in heaven", or on earth? Are we living for today, or for tomorrow? For eternity?