

**SERMON Luke 16 :1-11**  
**A WISE STEWARD LOOKS AHEAD**

**There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.**

**Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, How much do you owe my master? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. So 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? So he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said to him, Take your bill, and write eighty.**

**So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?**

What is a “steward”? A steward is someone entrusted with keeping the affairs of the household or business or organization on the up and up, tracking expenses, paying bills, etc. The word “steward” is made up of two Old English words. The one is “ward.” Years back a common piece of furniture was a wardrobe, a portable closet for keeping clothes or “robes” safe and clean. A prison has a warden, one responsible for keeping the prison and the prisoners in order. The other part of the word “steward” is “stew”—a house, a hall, an enclosure. (Not to be confused with the food called “stew”). The word “stew” for house is related to the word “stye,” the place where pigs stay—not to say that your house is a stye! The Greek word which is here translated “steward” means one tasked with the “rules of the house.” Probably the most well-known steward in the Old Testament was Joseph. Joseph was in charge of all the affairs of Potiphar's estate—except Mrs. Potiphar, which is a story of its own.

In our text, Jesus tells a parable, a make-believe story, about a steward. Jesus begins, “There was a certain rich man”—we might start out, “Once upon a time.” The rich man had a steward. The steward was an unfaithful, self-serving steward. His actions became known. Words were “thrown across” to his master, charging him with wasting—literally “scattering”—his master's goods. It was the very opposite of what a steward was supposed to do! Imagine, if I entrusted a book to you from my library. What if you threw it around, tore out the pages, etc.? Not a good position to be in when the truth comes out. The rich man promptly sent word to call in the steward to answer for his conduct—scattering the master's goods— as if candy in a parade which gets chomped on, stepped on, and driven on. The steward knew he was in trouble—he would no more be steward!

Are you a faithful steward of all that God has given you? It's all His, not yours. Manage and use it to His glory. Do you waste and scatter money foolishly—gambling, or overindulging? Do you waste good food—into the trash it goes—I don't like leftovers? Do you waste long periods of time—parked in front of useless television shows or a game screen? Do you waste your physical strength, health, or mental intelligence—with careless living and lack of challenge? Do you “waste” the family God has given you—letting them fend for themselves so you can do your own thing? What do you suppose God thinks? Not happy! So, what will you do? Humbly go to the Lord for forgiveness, which He offers and provides in Jesus. Jesus is your propitiation, your payment for peace, your pardon. In Him you are forgiven. In love for Him, strive to do better.

The dishonest steward in the parable was about to face the music and answer to the Boss. He would lose His job. Then what? He knew “I cannot dig.” He didn't have the physique for hard manual labor. “I am ashamed to beg.” It was too embarrassing for a man of his “stature” to beg. However, he was as ingenious as he was dishonest. His plan? Make some friends at my master's expense while he still had the authority. He went to “every one of his master's debtors” and slashed the amount of the bill! A hundred containers of oil—precious olive oil—and these containers were likely larger than a five gallon pail! The bill was cut in half; one hundred became fifty! What a deal! Next, one hundred containers of wheat—likely containers holding ten or more bushels each—for us perhaps barrels or drums—100 barrels of wheat slashed by 20%. Another great deal. “Hey, this steward guy is OK!” The unjust steward was making friends for the future—the very near future.

When he stood before the master, he had no defense. In fact his latest actions only added insult to injury. It is at this point that the parable takes a most unusual turn. Before showing him the door, the master commended the steward—not for his dishonesty, but for acting shrewdly! “Shrewdly”—with keen insight into business and human nature—with a “use whatever is at my disposal” attitude to make a go of it, whether honest or not. Jesus adds **For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.** To be dishonest, sly, underhanded, in business, politics, or competition is easy for children of Satan. That’s the devil’s game. The New Man in the child-of-God-through-Christ is too honest and too conscience-bound to bow to such self-seeking ways. Temptations from Satan will come—to make a shady deal for your own profit and someone else’s loss—to use your positions and some deceit for your own gain. Don’t give-in! You are the loving Lord’s child, saved by grace, spared from the noose by Jesus, rescued from your eternal death for sin by His death, granted new life, and eternal life, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Be His faithful steward! Jesus says, “Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16). In your dealings, be wise, not foolishly naïve, falling for the “it’s too good to be true” scams that come along. But also be harmless. Do not act so as to the hurt, harm, and take advantage of those around you.

Jesus encourages you to be awake to the future. **And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.** Be shrewd in your use of “unrighteous mammon”—money, filthy lucre. Is that a fair statement, to call money/mammon/wealth “unrighteous”? Didn’t God make Abraham rich, and Solomon rich? Yes, He did. Wealth is a gift to be used and managed faithfully for God. However, recognize that money itself is not a “godly” thing. There’s no connection between how much money you have and how close to God you are. Money/wealth never make you close to God. Of itself money is neutral. However, the devil uses money and wealth as a trap to draw men, women, and children away from God. “The love of money is (the) root of all evil” (I Timothy 6:10).

Jesus says, **Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home** As a child of God and a steward of God, the best thing you can do with money is—not just to prepare for your earthly future, but—to prepare for your eternal future! The day will come when you will lose your “position” on earth. Dead! Therefore, as the unjust steward did, use your unrighteous mammon so that **when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.** When you fail does not mean “when you fail to be a faithful steward.” When you fail means “when your life fails,” when you die, and leave earth behind. At that point see the joy of having used unrighteous mammon to bring the Gospel, the Good News of forgiveness in Jesus to others, so that they, who die before you, may **receive you into an everlasting home!** They will welcome you to heaven to be with them and to be with Jesus forever! By your use of wealth and all the blessing from God, lead others to know Jesus the Savior and Rescuer.

Imagine the joy of entering eternal life to be welcomed by those whom you befriended-in-Christ on earth. Surely, some of them will be individuals you were never be aware of helping to Christ! Yet they will say to you, “Thank you! I’m So happy to see you! The Lord used you to help bring me here.” On earth having someone say, “I’m so glad you’re here; you’ve been such a help to me” is a joy to hear, whether it’s family, relative, or stranger. Such a day of glory awaits you in heaven. As a good steward of Jesus, live for that day!

The text concludes, **He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.** Manage the little things in this life well, and you will be entrusted with more. If you can’t handle a little responsibility, who will give you greater responsibility? If you receive a gift of \$50.00 only to blow it foolishly, who will give you \$100.00? Thus, if you cannot handle physical blessings and use them to the glory of the Savior, how will you be entrusted with the real joy of God’s blessing in Christ forever? **Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?**

You are a manager, a steward, a keeper of the house, for all that God has given you—time, family, friends, possessions, health, wisdom, talent, money. Use all the blessings in life, looking ahead to the future glory of being with the Lord and all believers in heaven!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---