

# CHAPTER 5

## AUTHENTIC FRIENDMAKING DISCIPLESHIP

—A DUTY—

### THE PARABLE OF THE DISHONEST STEWARD

AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF

*LUKE 16:1-13*

#### PREFACE TO CHAPTER 5

Somewhere and sometime, someone coined a rather correct proverb concerning stewardship, “You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.” That is certainly true of giving anything to Christ, but is especially pertinent as relates to money, or as our Lord termed it, *the unrighteous Mammon*. This parabolic teaching of Jesus relates to those worldly treasures that we are not to lay up for ourselves. He makes clear just how and what treasures can indeed be laid up in heaven; and makes clear that His disciples have opportunities to build the greatest treasure one could conceive, and do it with the *Mammon of unrighteousness*. The Mammon will not be stored in heaven, but each disciple has occasion to use what Mammon is at our disposal in order to gain treasured souls awaiting us in heaven. May God grant the authentic disciple to seize upon every earthly enterprise to build that kind of spiritual treasure by wisely using the world’s tainted treasure of unrighteous Mammon.

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# CHAPTER 5

## AUTHENTIC FRIENDMAKING DISCIPLESHIP

### —A DUTY—

#### An Expository Study of *Luke 16:1-13*

The skillful handling of physical resources is a most difficult responsibility placed upon discipleship because they are so critical to mortal life. Thus, when Jesus begins to focus upon these needed resources as the key to faithfulness to Him, many begin simultaneously to lose interest in true discipleship. But hear Him concerning its primary relevance to real discipleship:

*Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.*

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

*Luke 12:33-34*

Knowledgeable disciples understand that the whole world system, which is arranged by Satan essentially to thwart God's Kingdom and Gospel, is focused upon worldly riches and the power that they bring. Riches are at the core of all worldly enterprises that rival God. And similarly and surprisingly, those same riches are the underpinnings for operating the Gospel for advancement of God's spiritual Kingdom. That is why Jesus' teaching often centered upon worldly riches, money, wealth, or *mammon* as in our text. Jesus taught on several occasions and in numerous ways that worldly riches—both what one does to get them and what one does with them—are determining factors for measuring effective and faithful discipleship.

Christ intends that all His disciples use the wealth that is entrusted to their stewardship for winning and maturing His own people. It is into this noblest of works that He would have disciples plunge their worldly resources. Furthermore, He promised the greatest rewards for faithful use of the world's money. Those rewards will not be some sort of spiritual allotment of His eternal abundance and bountiful luxury, or some kind of apportioning of His resources of heavenly splendors to us. But they will be to witness the spontaneous inception of God's spiritual life, joy, and blessedness as it reached into what were otherwise wicked and eternally doomed souls, who, as a result of our wise use of worldly resources, received Jesus as Savior and Lord. Great indeed will be the sight of those persons won and then matured into Christ's altogether loveliness! This change will have been through proper stewardship of worldly wealth in accord with true discipleship, which alone is the wise use of worldly resources. To enter heaven and to see what our giving has done, and who is there because of its everlasting effect, will be the greatest reward possible. They will be the true *treasure in heaven*.

### **Mammon: For Better or For Worse?**

The reoccurring use of *mammon* in *verses 9, 11, and 13*, alerts us to the subject matter of the parable found in *verses 1-8*, and to Christ's subsequent teaching relative to it in *verses 9-13*. *Mammon* is a transliteration of an original Aramaic word for the false god of riches and avarice. It was formed from the Aramaic root which means, "that in which one trusts." The word, therefore, refers to riches that are the object of worship and greedy pursuit; that is, it is wealth as an evil entity, more or less personified. When Jesus affixed to it the words, *unrighteous*, in *verse 11*, and of *unrighteousness* in *verse 9*, He emphasized its tainted luster in His pure eyes. In fact, to every disciple these riches should appear *unrighteous*, since they do not measure up to the standard of true life. Hence, *unrighteous mammon* best expresses a very proper view of this false god of worldly greed and ambition.

Jesus referred to worldly wealth or money by this term to bring out its absolute foreign nature to His Kingdom. He also teaches this incompatibility of *mammon* in *Matthew 6:19-24*, but His teaching here in Luke is different. In Matthew these riches are warned against as being what worldly men gather (*Mt. 6:19 ff.*), and as being to what worldly men give their hearts (*Mt. 6:21*). Even in *Luke 12:15-21*, Jesus warned against seeking security in riches. But here in Luke, our text, riches are presented in an entirely different, though not contradictory, light. To be sure, the word *unrighteous* affixed to this *mammon* affirms those other warnings about its evil materialistic tone, its anti-God connotations, and its dangerous allurements to sin. But Luke would have us also to consider Jesus' teaching concerning the possible good use of what otherwise might be considered tainted riches. Of course this is not to suggest as proper any use of money from ill-gotten gains to further His Kingdom. It does, however, affirm that all monies, though they are tainted by the worldly system of gain and use, can be used by disciples for godly purposes. The obligation of discipleship is to gain *mammon* honestly to promote God's Kingdom and not Satan's. We are to use his *unrighteous* god of *mammon* to advance the true and living God, Jesus Christ, and His Gospel.

### The Obvious Connection

Upon close inspection there is a connection between this teaching from Jesus and His Parable of the Lost in *Chapter 15*. In the prodigal portion of *verses 11-32*, Jesus said that the prodigal *wasted* his substance, *verse 13* (KJV). The same Greek word is used by Jesus in this Parable of the Unjust Steward in *verse 1*. This is significant! In the Parable of the Lost, Jesus told of a son who took his portion of the inheritance and *wasted* it in riotous living. He had been unfaithful in the use of those resources allotted to him from his father's estate. Immediately following that parable, Jesus turned to His disciples and warned them that they must not similarly *waste* their Heavenly Father's resources that are allotted to them. The just given parable had been spoken

mainly to the Pharisees and scribes, *Luke 15:2*, but now Jesus turns to His own disciples to make application to them of their possible careless use of their Father's wealth, which presently is theirs to use for good or evil.

Unlike the prodigal who *wasted* his father's resources before he was converted, Christ's disciples are in danger of *wasting* their Father's resources after they are converted. Through this parable Jesus addressed His disciples about this possible *waste*, saying in effect,

*You are no longer lost prodigals; you have returned to your Father's house. Yet you could still be guilty of wasting your Father's wealth that He has entrusted to your stewardship. Listen to another parable just for disciples that will teach you not to be careless in your use of material wealth. In fact, this will teach you to be as prudent in the godly use of worldly wealth as are the worldlings in their ungodly use of it. Only, you should promote My Kingdom's aims with its use. You must learn to use it wisely for My Kingdom's work as they do to promote the world's evil kingdom. You should remember always, My servants, that you have no real wealth in this world, because My Kingdom is not of this world. All these worldly resources belong to your Father in heaven, Who simply entrusts them to your use for My Kingdom's sake. You must use them wisely to promote your future happiness. You must not waste them on this world as did the prodigal. He was ashamed for his selfishness and waste, and you will be too if you similarly squander your Father's wealth on this world's pleasures. He has entrusted the unrighteous mammon of this unrighteous world to your stewardship for your use, but be wise and benefit yourselves by using it to lay up in heaven the true treasure of true discipleship—the souls of men.*

—Jesus Christ, 32 A.D.

To help teach His disciples these fundamentals concerning stewardship and discipleship, Jesus used a parable in *verses 1-8*, followed by His interpretation in *verse 9*, and His application of its definite challenge in *verses 10-13*. In the parable each detail has some eternal significance meant to instruct disciples in the area of stewardship.<sup>1</sup> Christ's interpretation of His own parable found in *verse 9* applies its truth to stewardship. In the application of His parable in *verses 10-13*, which follows that parabolic challenge, Christ laid down four great eternal principles that further interpret mammon's effect upon true discipleship.

Therefore, this exposition will be divided thus:

I. Christ's Challenge concerning Stewardship in the Parable of the Unjust Steward, *Luke 16:1-8*.

II. Christ's Clarification of the Stewardship related in the Parable of the Unjust Steward, *Luke 16:9*.

III. Christ's Control of Stewardship through Four Great Eternal Principles, *Luke 16:10-13*

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 1, Authentic Inspired Disciple, p. 11, fn. # 6 for this correct kind of parabolic interpretation explained in the light of Jesus' own instruction concerning it in *Mark 4:13*.

## I. CHRIST'S CHALLENGE CONCERNING STEWARDSHIP IN THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

<sup>1</sup>*And He said to the disciples, There was a certain rich man who had an estate manager in his continuous employ. And an accusation came to him that this estate manager used his resources wastefully.*

<sup>2</sup>*And having called him, he said to him, What is this I hear concerning you? Make ready and return at once the account books of your estate management, for you no longer are able to be estate manager.*

<sup>3</sup>*And the estate manager said to himself, What can I do because my employer is transferring the management from me to himself? I have not the strength for manual labors, and if I begged I would be ashamed.*

<sup>4</sup>*I have it!—what I can do, in order that when I am removed out of the estate management they might regard me [and] receive me [and] be attentive to me with regard to their own estates.*

<sup>5</sup>*And having called each of his employer's debtors one at a time, he said to the first, How much do you owe to my employer?*

<sup>6</sup>*And he said, A hundred barrels of oil. And he told him, Take your contract of indebtedness, sit down quickly and change it to fifty.*

<sup>7</sup>*After that, to another he said, Now, how much do you owe? And he said, A hundred bushels of wheat. He says to him, Take your contract of indebtedness and change it to eighty.*

<sup>8</sup>*And the employer commended the fraudulent estate manager because he acted shrewdly, because the sons of this age are more shrewd in their own course of life than the sons of light.*

*Luke 10:1-8 ADT<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> The ADT stands for Author's Distinctive Translation. He will place his translation throughout this exposition. It is not meant to replace, or be anything equal to, the Authorized Version or to any other translation, but is included in order to help readers in personal study and understanding of this passage.



Jesus' parable centers attention upon one man, a steward who in his circumstances does certain things from which we should learn some basics as concerns wise stewardship and its necessity for true discipleship. The parable shows how best to use the *mammon of unrighteousness* which God has given to us for our oversight.

### A Trusted Steward

*And He said to the disciples, There was a certain rich man who had an estate manager in his continuous employ. And an accusation came to him that this estate manager used his resources wastefully.*  
*Luke 16:1 ADT*

This estate manager (*steward* KJV) was an overseer or boss entrusted with great responsibilities inasmuch as his employer was a wealthy man with great possessions. This *certain rich man* had placed the management of his entire household and other enterprises under this one business manager. He had authority over all other employees as well as the slaves of this rich man. Though a free man himself, he had a great obligation to fulfil vigilantly this trust placed in him. He had to use business acumen and administrative abilities, constantly watching out for the interests of his employer. Money or wealth—*unrighteous mammon*—was his main responsibility; consequently all matters which affected it for good or evil should have been his major concern. That idea of entrustment of another's wealth found in *verses 1-8* must be retained throughout the parable—in both Christ's application and explanation of it in *verse 9*, and in the eternal principles of stewardship as given by Christ in *verses 10-13*.

### Giving Account of One's Stewardship

*And having called him, he said to him, What is this I hear concerning you? Make ready and return at once the account books of your estate management, for you no longer are able to be estate manager.*  
*Luke 16:2 ADT*

This verse contains a principal lesson of the parable. This estate manager is not accused outright of dishonesty. The owner seemed to know it, but may have been short of proof. Note that

the steward had time to meet with the debtors, *verses 5-7*; therefore it could be concluded that his main fault was unwillingness to handle faithfully his responsibilities, which his lord had entrusted to him. It will become evident to the owner in *verses 5-7* that he was dishonest in his stewardship, but for now the owner has no clear reason to expel him with haste. He felt that his steward, soon to become his former steward, was a moderately honorable man. Besides, he probably needed the help of this steward for the orderly transition from one steward to another.

The picture presented by the Lord is of God's calling for our own accounting of our management of His resources that He has given for our oversight. While most Christians are fully aware of a yet future accounting at His Judgement Seat,<sup>3</sup> this parable with Christ's application makes plain that the handling of money or wealth will be of substantial importance at that time.

This estate manager was given a short time to set the books in order before passing them over to the estate owner. It is this time that he then used to insure his future good. It is that short time that Jesus also likens to our own opportunities to use what He has entrusted to our care for future good in His Kingdom. This estate manager did unethical things and made fraudulent use of the extended opportunity. Jesus is not condoning that, because the main purpose of the parable is not the particular means the steward used to effect his own future good, but the end result of it. It is this end result by honest means for which we shall give account of our use of the opportunities that our short stewardship afforded to us in this life. We, as did the steward, shall give account of our involvement in this worldly system and our use of its money to promote His Kingdom.

Someone has translated the demand of this estate owner to his estate manager as, "Render the reckoning." Imagine how that will sound coming from our Savior as we stand before His scarred Presence. Oh! What a day of reckoning it will be when

<sup>3</sup> *I Corinthians 3:10-15; Romans 14:10-12*

we are called into His presence to account for our stewardship over the properties, resources, and monies of this world that He had entrusted to our use! One day, perhaps soon, just in regard to our use of money, Jesus will say to each disciple, “**Render the reckoning.**”

### The Worldly-Wise Steward

*And the estate manager said to himself, What can I do because my employer is transferring the management from me to himself? I have not the strength for manual labors, and if I begged I would be ashamed.*

*I have it!—what I can do, in order that when I am removed out of the estate management they might regard me [and] receive me [and] be attentive to me with regard to their own estates.*

*And having called each of his employer’s debtors one at a time, he said to the first, How much do you owe to my employer?*

*And he said, A hundred barrels of oil. And he told him, Take your contract of indebtedness, sit down quickly and change it to fifty.*

*After that, to another he said, Now, how much do you owe? And he said, A hundred bushels of wheat. He says to him, Take your contract of indebtedness and change it to eighty.*

*And the employer commended the fraudulent estate manager because he acted shrewdly, because the sons of this age are more shrewd in their own course of life than the sons of light.*

*Luke 16:3-8 ADT*

This unfaithful steward seems to be an illustration of the typical worldly-wise person who uses every opportunity to advance his own self-preservation, achievement, and indulgences. In the parable, alongside which we are to draw our spiritual lesson, this worldly-wise steward or estate manager used the last hours at his position to better his future lot. It is that use that he makes of his last stint as manager our Lord uses as the picture for our instruction. After being called to account for his unwise and unfaithful use of his employer’s resources, the steward reasons thusly: “I do not know a trade, and I cannot begin to be a laborer now because I haven’t the strength. I am

ashamed to become a beggar, but I must make a living somehow.” The plan hits his mind at once, and he hastily proceeds to set it in motion. His ultimate aim is to produce thankfulness and respect toward himself in his employer’s several debtors’ minds. As manager he has dealt with each debtor in the past and had fixed a certain amount as the share that his employer would receive from each crop or venture. By lowering their indebtedness as if it were excessive, he feels that they will then be favorably inclined toward him when he leaves his present stewardship.

He called all the sharecroppers and others who had indebtedness into individual “account-setting meetings.” They arrived each at their appointed times and entered the manager’s office. The estate owner had given him this time to set the books up for inspection, but he uses it to his own advantage to change the amounts owed to a lesser figure. He meets with each one separately, and probably says something like this, “This debt that you owe is exorbitant. I must adjust it in order to be fair to you, and to be able to clear my conscience. Now, how much is owed according to your ledger agreement?” “One hundred barrels of oil,” replies the surprised and pleased debtor. “Right,” says the steward, “our figures correspond, but that is grossly unfair. That is double what it ought to be, all things considered. This may cost me my position, but I can’t stand for that owner to be so unreasonable, and to be taking advantage of you. Quickly change it to fifty and I will do likewise in my book. That will be the new and fair agreement figure.” With each one the amount of the reduction is different. Probably the differences were the amounts that he had planned to steal from the owner. That is, according to the official ledger books, the first debtor only owed fifty barrels of oil; but the unjust steward had planned to overcharge the debtor one hundred barrels and pocket the difference of fifty barrels. This he did with each account. What he had before planned to embezzle he now cut each debtor’s bill by that same amount. It was too late for him actually to get the fifty barrels of oil or whatever each was to overpay, but he could

use his position to a great advantage. He shrewdly took his dishonest plan and amended it to fit his new circumstances, which were caused by his getting caught before fully implementing the larceny.

“The numbers fifty and eighty, which he causes to be set down instead of the previous hundred, express the just amount which he had already given account to his lord, and he gains by this alteration the advantage that the leases agree with the sums previously stated to his lord, who had never yet had a sight of the authentic papers. But the farmers, who, as they suppose, had been required to pay an exorbitant sum to the lord, can by this moderating of the price only feel themselves personally obliged to the steward, from whose hands this deduction is made to them, and who has perhaps represented this unexpected favor as a consequence of his intercession and of his influence with the lord of the manor.”<sup>4</sup>

When the lord of the estate saw how his steward’s cutting the bills had outmaneuvered him by exactly the amounts which he had before planned to steal, he commended his resourcefulness and cunning in wisely handling his unfortunate circumstance. Even though it cost him a great deal of money, still he had to acknowledge the shrewdness of the steward for watching out for his future interests.

The Lord Jesus will use this setting to instruct His disciples about their need to use their continuing difficult circumstances to better their own future interests. This world system always presents the disciple of Jesus with difficult circumstances, but He will teach that disciples can use even the world’s greatest and most wickedly used resource—its *mammon of unrighteousness*—to improve their future in His Kingdom.

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<sup>4</sup> John Peter Lange (ed.), *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, Luke (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 246

### The Wiser Children of this World

*The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.* Luke 16:8-b KJV

*The sons of this age are more shrewd in their own course of life than are the sons of light.* Luke 16:8-b ADT

Immediately following His parable, Jesus made a profound criticism of the sons of Light. The *children of this world* are as the unjust steward, whose conduct was controlled by gain in this world's setting. The *children of Light* are those whose conduct is in the light of moral decency and understanding. That the Lord is not criticizing. The phrase *in their generation* means this course of life in respect to its events, interests, and character. Jesus says that the *children of this age* are more prudent in relation to their own kind of life than are the *children of Light* in relation to their own kind of life. Worldlings use all the resources of their circumstances and use every opportunity that this life affords them to promote their future in this life. They do this better, or as Jesus says, *are wiser*, at using this world's resources for their future than are the *children of Light* in preparing for their future in heaven with the same resources. They do it better by making friends within their worldly clan through fraudulent practices and uses of the world system. That shrewdness is greater than the wisdom displayed in their counterparts in the Light as they deal with various and sundry circumstances against them in the world system. Christ's appraisal is meant to challenge disciples to use the world's resources more shrewdly, more calculatingly, and more wisely to promote our heavenly position, just as the unjust steward did to promote his worldly position.

The children of Light often fail to use the wicked system wisely to make friends for themselves within their own clan in heaven. Jesus in no way is saying that the children of Light are to use dishonest means to gain eternal ends; then they would cease to be *children of Light*. But as the fraudulent steward in the parable made sure to provide for his earthly future in this world through wise, though dishonest, use of the means at his disposal,

so likewise, the sons of light are to make sure to provide for their eternal future in the next life, but by honest means. The children of Light are to provide for their eternal future in the next life by using this world system of greediness, wealth, and quest for gain, or money itself, to promote the eternal good of their clan, the body of Christ. In that way they also will be providing for their future in heaven. This is Christ's criticism of us disciples: We fail to take advantage of the wealth at our disposal to further the eternal Kingdom. We spend our wealth buying right into the world's system of values. We must buy the new cars, homes, clothes, etc., instead of making do with lesser valued earthly treasures so that we could have more to promote the eternal welfare of our own kind—the sons of Light. Our performance today reveals a spirit so different from the Spirit behind the early church's devotion,

*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.*

*Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.*

*Acts 4:32, 34-35*

This perspective of proper priorities is largely lost in today's church, but it need not be. We today, as well as they in the early church, have the same prospect of future good when we use the world's god of mammon to promote the primary and most important work in this world. But alas, this former proper perspective of *mammon* is dimmed, and now the world uses their *mammon* to promote their own future in Satan's world better than we disciples of King Jesus use worldly means to promote our future in God's Kingdom. As usual, Jesus' criticism of the children of Light is both accurate and justified.

## II. CHRIST'S CLARIFICATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

<sup>9</sup>*And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. Luke 16:9 KJV*

<sup>9</sup>*And I Myself am telling you, For your selves make friends from the unrighteous mammon, in order that whenever it comes to an end, they may be attentive to receive you into the eternal estates. Luke 16:9 ADT*

Christ immediately clarified His parable for His disciples. He applied its earthly values to His heavenly priorities. To help in our understanding we will interchange between the language of Jesus in His clarification of the parable in *verse 9* and that of the steward in the parable itself. In describing the parable we will use and underline the wording of Jesus which He used in applying the parable in *verse 9*.

The steward devised a plan to insure his future good by using the mammon of unrighteousness, that is, he used the indebtedness of his employer's tenant farmers and other debtors to gain worldly friends. He knew that his opportunity to use freely the power of wealth at his disposal was about to fail; therefore he made sure that these friends, recently won by his shrewd use of the mammon under his authority, would *receive him into their houses* when he lost his position. This interchange of language should help in the shift of the parable from the material into the spiritual realm.

Parables are earthly pictures that are drawn alongside the spiritual reality that they are meant to convey. There are striking differences between a parable and its interpretation and application. One striking difference between Jesus' parable and His immediate and subsequent clarification of it is *their houses* in *verse 4*, and the *everlasting habitations* in *verse 9*. The one is earthly dwellings and the other is heavenly mansions; and so



goes the parable and its application throughout. On the one hand is the earthly picture, with its dishonesty and shrewd manipulations by a child of this world for only fleshly gain; and on the other hand, there is Jesus' application which directs children of Light in the spiritual use of the same mammon for heavenly gain. In shifting from the physical or earthly picture in the parable to the spiritual or heavenly reality in His clarification, Jesus left only one thing unchanged; it remains the same in both the parable and Christ's application of it.

### The Unchanged Mammon of Unrighteousness

The one essential element of both the parable and its interpretation and application by Jesus in verse nine, the one thing which does not change from the parable to the spiritual reality which the parable only physically represents, is the mammon of unrighteousness. In both the parable and in the spiritual application of it, the same tainted and wicked and *unrighteous mammon* is used both by the unjust steward, who represents the *children of this world*, and by the *children of Light*. Everything else changes—a change from the parable to Christ's clarification in verse nine, from the material to the spiritual, from the earthly to the heavenly, a change from the temporal to the eternal, a change from what is valueless to what is invaluable—everything is altered except the *mammon of unrighteousness*. This fact emphasizes the possible devout reality of even *unrighteous mammon*. The worldly god of *mammon*, at least prospectively, is a spiritually valuable commodity worthy of everlasting stature, when used wisely for Jesus' sake.

### Mammon-made Friends

Jesus said that we disciples can use the circumstances in this worldly setting and its *mammon* to make friends who will welcome us into *everlasting habitations* (KJV). These are the *eternal estates* or the *many mansions* promised as part of our Father's house (*John 14:2*). The steward used his mammon-made position to win friends of his employer's debtors and their earthly

security. True discipleship uses what *mammon* is at its disposal to win friends in the security of heaven. Through the use of the money that is under our control, we can actually win eternal *friends* in heaven. These *friends* are the actual saved souls who were provided the Gospel through our monetary offerings. Christ faced a reality which true discipleship must also face; namely, it takes money, *mammon*, worldly resources, to carry the Gospel to the dying world. Those *friends* thus won through our offerings will *receive*, or heartily and happily welcome, us there.

To *receive* someone in Eastern cultures was to care and provide lavishly for, and even to wait on a somebody as a guest. It was a term of endearment and enjoyment. To *receive* another was to have a time of merriment and celebration in behalf of the person who was *received*. It was to spend unreservedly for and to be spent individually upon the comfort and happiness of the one *received*. That is precisely the nature of our heavenly reception by the persons who are present in heaven through the wise use of the *mammon* entrusted to our oversight. They will become our benefactors because of our wise use of *mammon* in their behalf. They will contribute greatly to our enjoyment of heaven.

Although the Authorized Version in *verse 9* reads, *when ye fail*, the better translation is *when it fails*.<sup>5</sup> The emphasis by Jesus is upon the limited opportunity to use money to further the work of Christ and His Gospel. Like the short time the steward had to change the invoices of the several debtors and had to advise them to change them *quickly* in *verse 6*, so there is a brief time when Christian's have any possibilities for winning these eternal *friends* with the *unrighteous mammon*. It is the timely use of money that is taught as an important concern. There are numerous opportunities that call upon disciples to give, which will never repeat themselves, chances which will lose the *friends* if not acted upon *quickly*. It is this use of money which is its

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<sup>5</sup> So also RSV, ARV, NAS, NEB, and the original Greek.

hrewd and honest promotion of the Gospel. Then when it, the *mammon*, comes to an end along with everything else in this world, those won to Christ through its opportune use will be *friends* forever, who joyfully and elaborately welcome us into those *eternal estates* of heaven of which there is no end.

### A Friendly Welcome into Heaven

As the steward gained newly won friends who received him into their earthly houses, so the souls who are won or else edified and benefited from our use of *mammon* for eternal things will receive us into everlasting joy and security in heaven. Paul knew this kind of joy and future treasure. He spent not only his *mammon* but his entire life for Christ to win the lost; and as a result he will have the *crown of joy* at Christ's coming, which crown is the persons won through his giving his all to Christ.

*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*

*For ye are our glory and joy.*

*I Thessalonians 2:19-20*

*Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*

*Philippians 4:1*

For Paul the real *joy* and *crown* of heaven were the souls there through his ministry. People are a real *joy* of glory. In addition to the greatest joy of Christ's presence, there will be those people, *friends*, who are there in heaven to welcome and cheer us because our *mammon* was used to promote our heritage, and not used to promote the world's. Encouraging that use of money is the purpose of Christ's Parable of the Unjust Steward. The *children of this world* and the *children of Light* too often are nearly alike in their use of *mammon*. Children of Light use *mammon* to promote the kingdom of darkness when they use it to gain more wealth or to improve more worldly enterprises, rather than to advance the Gospel.

The children of the world use the monies of this world system better to further their world system than the children of Light use those same monies to further God's heavenly system. That reality is Christ's reason for the parable, Jesus spoke it to help correct that failure in the people of God.

### III. CHRIST'S CONTROL OF STEWARDSHIP THROUGH FOUR GREAT ETERNAL PRINCIPLES

<sup>10</sup>*The one faithful in a very small matter also is faithful in a great matter, and the one untrustworthy in a very small matter also is untrustworthy in a great matter.*

<sup>11</sup>*Therefore, since you were not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the genuine [righteous mammon, or spiritual riches]?*

<sup>12</sup>*And since you did not become faithful in that which belongs to another, who will give you that which is your own?*

<sup>13</sup>*No one servant is able to serve two masters: for either the one he will hate and the other he will love, or he will cleave to one and despise the other. Ye are not able to serve God and mammon.*

*Luke 16:10-13 ADT*

Jesus, in the light of His Parable of the Unjust Steward and His application of it, gave to His disciples four great eternal principles by which they may gauge their own spiritual values and maturity as relates to stewardship. These four precepts underscore the reasons why the use of *mammon* is so very critical to true discipleship. According to Jesus' standards, how one gives to the work of Christ is a meaningful acid test of one's maturity and faithfulness as a disciple. These principles explain why it is so. These eternal fundamentals of true discipleship have to do with faithfulness in *verse 10*, the true riches in *verse 11*, one's own riches in *verse 12*, and the certainty of having only one Master in *verse 13*.

#### Eternal Principle # 1: Faithfulness in Every Area

*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.*

*Luke 16:10 KJV*

*The one faithful in a very small matter also is faithful in a great matter, and the one untrustworthy in a very small matter also is untrustworthy in a great matter.* *Luke 16:10 ADT*

This great concept is one which applies to every matter and to every kind of work, both of man and of God. The person who is faithful to exercise discretion in the function of the very small matter will be faithful to exercise discretion in the great matter. The person who is unfaithful in very small matters will be unfaithful in very great matters. Jesus considers *mammon* as the *least*, or as a very small matter. The *much* is the eternal work of His Gospel. This great eternal principle explains why some Christians are relatively poor when dealing with spiritual truth. They fail to understand the Bible properly; they fail to make the right decisions in God's business; they are not usually sought out by other Christians for prayer, counsel, or comfort. God will not entrust to them greater enlightenment or responsibility in His *much*, or in very great matters of Kingdom affairs, because they are unfaithful in the *least*, or in very small matters of material possessions, money in particular. True discipleship requires the quality to see as relatively unimportant the values of this life compared to the infinite values of the life beyond. God cannot rely upon any disciple who has not gotten over the basic and elementary obstacle of *mammon*. For the disciple, this *least/much* principle is an eternal truth that works as an obligatory law in every area of discipleship. But it applies especially to money and to its faithful use.

### Eternal Principle # 2: The True Riches

*If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*

*Luke 16:11 KJV*

*Therefore, since you were not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the genuine [righteous mammon, or spiritual riches]?*

*Luke 16:11 ADT*

This is a progression from the previously stated eternal principle in *verse 10*, but also one in its own right. Before God will entrust greater function concerning eternal affairs to

one's discipleship, one must exhibit faithfulness in the lesser responsibilities that have already been conferred. The *true riches* contrast the untrue riches of *mammon*. However, these lesser responsibilities just begin with money. Actually, *mammon*, or money, is the "first base" position of discipleship, being only that from which spiritual maturity and faithfulness can sprint toward the *true riches*—ultimate Christ-likeness (*Phil. 3:14*). Without committed dedication in this area of the *mammon of unrighteousness*, no real commitment can be expected from God in the very *rich matters* of the "Gospel of the mysteries of the Kingdom." Therefore, the harsh reality is that He may not *commit to your trust the true riches*, that are His major word in His creation. The *mammon of unrighteousness* is where true discipleship starts, and resistance in its use will terminate possession of the *true riches* before they even commence.

The *true riches* are the precious things of the Spirit of God; namely, understanding God and His ways with the Gospel, which discernment is essential in order that we may be used by Him. The *true riches* of this life is to share in the harvest of souls through the preaching of these *true riches* in the Gospel of God's Savior, Jesus Christ. Every disciple longs to know a portion of His victorious power of Gospel efficacy, to experience the richness of its truth as God uses its message to call a doomed sinner to salvation. But these *true riches* only come as disciples are proven to have been faithful in the temporal, the material, and the comparably "unrich" matter of money.

God cannot commit eternal souls and their destinies to the trust of anyone who is not faithful in the lowly trust of material wealth. This is an eternal principle of God's ways. Jesus has so stated it plainly. The one trust leads to the other: the cheap trust faithfully kept leads to the *true riches* entrusted; or on the other hand, the cheap trust failed leads to the *true riches* squandered. The one proves or disproves the

other. The free giving of earthly mammon into the cause or church of Jesus Christ exhibits a value system that corresponds to the realities of true life, and that the things of this world are of lesser importance than are the things of God and of eternity. When one gives money into God's work, it is evidence of a fixation of one's rationale upon the spiritual rather than upon the material. It is evidence of a life that values the *true riches* over the *mammon of unrighteousness*. God can indeed, and will indeed, give more and more of His *true riches* to that kind of spiritually useful person. True discipleship involves possessing values that manage the greater charges of eternal import in a similarly spiritual way as it handles the lesser charges of the transitory *mammon of unrighteousness*.

### Eternal Principle # 3: One's Own Riches

*And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?*

*Luke 16:12 KJV*

*And since you did not become faithful in that which belongs to another, who will give you that which is your own?*

*Luke 16:12 ADT*

One's own riches also concerns maturity, but much more so. The phrase *that which is another's*<sup>6</sup> is a reference to the mammon or wealth of the world. Jesus is acknowledging that no man ever really possesses anything of this world. The rich fool found that out. He discovered that no matter what a person seems to possess in this life, even his very own soul is not really his own, but another controls its destiny. (*Luke 12:16-21*). Nothing of the *mammon* will be taken from this world, but only the spiritual realities are *our own*. When Jesus contrasted what is *another's* with what is *your own*, He contrasted *mammon* with spiritual certainty and actuality. *Our own* is the measure of Christ

<sup>6</sup> The Authorized Version has *another man's*, but the word, *man's*, is not in the original Greek.



one possesses through the process of maturity and growth in Him and in His truth (*Eph. 4:13*). Only the portion of Christ and of His truth that one has acquired through spiritual growth is really *our own*. Jesus means that one must give up *mammon* in order to be given more of Himself in maturity.

The *friends* made through the wise use of the *unrighteous mammon* are also *our own* possession, because they will forever be present with us in glory. In one sense they are indications of the maturity which is similarly *our own*. Paul recognized his future possession of the Philippians whom he had won to Christ Jesus when he referred to them as, ***My joy and crown***. This kind of treasure never *fails* as will the *mammon*. According to Jesus, negligence in supporting the Gospel through wise use of *mammon* will result in a limited real estate of souls in heaven.

We are mere stewards of this world's *mammon*. If we are unfaithful to use it to promote the King's business, then God will not be able to give to us the maturity, understanding, and hence the position in His Kingdom which would otherwise be eternally ours. Again, this is not by His arbitrary choice as some sort of punishment against us. It is simply the necessary reality of the situation. God cannot entrust power, authority, and responsibility in His Kingdom to someone whose actual practice contradicts possessing any real spiritual value system that corresponds to His. Actually, unfaithfulness in money shows an immaturity that is not ready to take on more and greater obligations. The things of this life are not ours, and anyone who lives as though they are cannot be given those things which cannot be taken back, else they may be similarly misused and abused, and eternal harm should be done. God operates on this principle for our sakes, not to spite us. It is for our own good and for the good of His Kingdom and His work in the Gospel that He limits our spiritual possessions in accord with our self-imposed limits on the use of our material resources. We cannot control the one if we cannot control the other.

### Eternal Principle # 4: Only One Master

*No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

*Luke 16:13 KJV*

*No one servant is able to serve two masters: for either the one he will hate and the other he will love, or he will cleave to one and despise the other. Ye are not able to serve God and mammon.*

*Luke 16:13 ADT*

Jesus concludes this teaching on the proper use of God-entrusted wealth by reminding all disciples of just Who is our Master, which relationship involves a great eternal principle. He refers to disciples as *servants*, referring back to the *steward* in the parable. The word rendered *servant* (KJV) is akin to, though different from, the word translated *steward* in the parable. This emphasizes that in these matters of mammon, stewardship for disciples is a Master-servant relationship. On the one hand there is *Mammon*, the personified god of worldly assets; and on the other hand is the God of the spiritual riches, Jesus Christ. The one orders us to gain more of its resources in order to better our future in this world, while the other One instructs us to use what we have of this mammon to better our future in the next world. The one rules over us so that we will gain more of mammon just for mammon's sake, while the other One rules over us to give more mammon away just for Jesus' sake. Jesus Christ said, *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*. This clearly defines priorities and service. One must make a choice to love money or to love God, because love toward God results in hate or contempt for mammon... or the reverse will be met with: love for mammon effects hate for God.

Jesus desires His disciples to pursue His work with the same fervor as exhibited by the children of this world. The world worships, serves, and greedily strives for material wealth. It struggles for and is fashioned by *unrighteous mammon*. Indeed,

mammon is itself the possession of greatest quest, inquiry, enterprise, and relentless prosecution. Jesus refers to true mammon in *verse 11* as what His disciples' quest, inquiry, enterprise, and relentless prosecution must be. If one is to be entrusted with responsibilities in the true riches of godly service, one must also be faithful in giving away what the world considers its true riches that alone are sought. Christ's Kingdom is the true mammon for the children of Light. Christ's sons relish it and take great joy in the promotion and principles of His government, and not mammon's. They strive after and fashion all their happiness and good in order to promote His renown among men. They serve God and not mammon.

### The World's Real God of Mammon

One other observation must here be noted. In the parable, "cash in hand" was not to be at issue with the unrighteous steward. His obligation, his work, his whole livelihood, devotion, and enterprise was to be the gaining of more business for his employer. His duty was to spend his life and energies promoting, increasing, and cultivating his employer's expansion, to gain more and more, to spread out to new areas, to open more tenant farms, to increase more and more large empires of earthly production for the sake of more earthly production. Concisely, the steward's every breath was for worldly accumulation. Behind it all was the principle of unrighteous mammon, wherein a whole system exists like a great turbulent whirlpool, which when once entered, one finds himself sucked down away from good and godly enterprise into the worldly sweep of more and more, more and more, just for more and more's sake. That is the god of mammon.

Jesus teaches through this parable and His application of it that the same kind of complete devotion as the children of this world demonstrate to champion mammon—the same untiring enterprise, the same spending all and being spent disposition—should be aimed at promoting His Kingdom. He would have His

children of Light be entrepreneurs. But use their gain in this world to make friends in heaven, to make us mature in our priorities, to make us possessors of the true riches, to make us bounteous owners of our own constituency awaiting us in heaven, to make us slaves in every area to the One and only true Master, our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father in heaven. Truly, those real and alive persons placed in heaven's depository through our faithful use of what Jesus considers the *least*, or *the unrighteous mammon*, are the *true riches* that are *our own*.

Quite different from *the children of this world* who remain in their downward whirlpool of mammon, when we *children of Light* step into the heavenward whirlwind of faithful stewardship, we shall find ourselves carried aloft by a different Spirit, Who lifts us higher and higher just for heaven's sake. That sensation is a foretaste of heaven now, and will end in heaven's subsequent realities, made convincing when we use *the mammon of unrighteousness for Jesus' sake*, and not for mammon's sake, when our discipleship is true because our one Master is Jesus. Amen