

The dishonest Manager

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 August 2026

Preacher: Pastor Dave Thompson

[0:00] You could be turning to Luke chapter 16. Luke 16.

! What do you work for? Not who do you work for? What do you work for? What gets you up in the morning?

I say with a smile, nothing. Some people, nothing gets them up in the morning. But what gets you up in the morning? Why do you have bank accounts?

Why do you have the possessions you do? We just looked at the parable of the prodigal son. Why did he want his money?

Why did the father do what he did with his money? Why was the older son so angry with both the younger brother and the father for what they did with their money?

[1:17] Why? All three of them did what they did with their money and their means because of what was in their heart.

That's true of you and I too. We do with our money and with what we have because of what's in our heart.

What do you do with your money? And what does that say about what's in your heart?

I'm glad I'm on safe ground today because Jesus addressed this. Luke chapter 16 in verse 1.

Let's read the parable of the dishonest manager verses 1 through 13. And he said to his disciples, There was a rich man who had a manager.

[2:20] And charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, What is this I hear about you?

Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager. And the manager said to himself, What shall I do? Since my master has taken away the management away from me.

I am not strong enough to dig. And I am ashamed to beg. I've decided what to do so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.

So summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, How much do you owe my master? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said to him, Take your bill, sit down quickly and write fifty.

Then he said to another, How much do you owe? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said to him, Take your bill and write eighty. The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.

[3:33] For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And 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.

One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much. And one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for your word. And I thank you, Father, that as we mentioned in the pastoral prayer, it cuts right to the heart.

And I thank you, Father, that you see our heart. And Father, I pray that you would be with us. As Jesus addresses a heart issue here, with his own disciples, I pray that you would address that same heart issue here, with your disciples.

[5:08] And I pray, Father, that we would love you, serve you, with all that we are and all that we have. And may it glorify you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

So Jesus has been teaching, really, the sermon, if you could say, or the set of sermons, started a couple of chapters, or a chapter back, with, well, chapter 14, chapter 13, some of the things that are going on.

He's been addressing the Pharisees and their attitudes. And we looked last time at the parable of the prodigal son.

And Jesus was addressing the grumbling of the Pharisees and the scribes. Why does he receive sinners and eat with them? And they thought that that was wrong.

And so he teaches the parable of the prodigal son to show how God has this lavish love, this prodigal love.

[6:11] Remember, we defined the word prodigal properly in that it is that which defines someone who is generous or wasteful with their money.

The prodigal son was generous and wasteful with his money. The prodigal father was generous. And we could question whether it would be wasteful with his money.

The elder son wasn't generous or wasteful. But he had his own problems. And so Jesus has addressed this situation of why he's sitting down with tax collectors and sinners.

Why? Because he loves them. Because they're coming to him. Because he's accepting them.

They've seen their need and they've come to him and he's accepting them. And he loves them and he gives to them generously.

And as he finishes that, that which he has addressed to the Pharisees and the scribes, he says, Luke says in the beginning of chapter 16, and he said to his disciples, now a bunch of what we've been dealing with and more of what we will deal with, Jesus has been addressing the scribes and the Pharisees.

[7:26] And he's been addressing situations. But every once in a while he stops and turns to his disciples. And this is one of those moments. Now we'll find that the Pharisees are listening.

Verse 14 tells us that. And we'll talk about that, Lord willing, next time. But he's talking to his disciples. And finishing the first parable, he simply turns and begins, and he said this to his disciples, is Luke describing what went on.

It's not what Jesus said. And so turning from the parable of the prodigal son, he turns to his disciples and tells them a parable.

He talks about a rich man who owned, well, he was rich. He was rich and apparently owned a lot of land. It's typical. For some people in that day, there were many rich people who owned large chunks of land.

And they would own those large chunks of lands, but they could not manage them by themselves. There was too much day-to-day details. There were too many intricate things that would go on. And for one man to manage it all would have been too much.

[8:43] And so what these rich men would do is they would find someone who was considered a manager, someone who had abilities, and give them a section, not give it to them, but give responsibility for a section to that manager.

And that manager, as we see in other parables in Scripture, was to take what this master, this rich man, this owner, had, and these managers were to take to use it to the owner's profit.

In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, it talks about how a rich man gave one man five talents and another man two and another man one. And each of them was to make money with what he'd been given.

That's the same kind of situation here. So we have a rich man who owned a lot. And by the way, the numbers that are here, this is one manager managing several debtors we only hear of two, but we know there are more.

And the debtors are dealing in two and three years worth of profits in oil or in wheat, or if not two or three years worth of profits, vast acreage.

[9:58] This was not a manager of a little mom and pop store. This was a manager of a very large farm that was part of something that was much bigger.

And of course, it's a parable, but Jesus is laying out something that they very much would have understood. So this man was to manage this land for his master.

And so in the process of time, we don't know from who, but someone told the rich man, hey, this guy who's managing your property over here, he's making a mess of it.

He's wasting your money, wasting your possessions. And of course, the rich man's not going to stand for that because he's not in this to just watch everything he's worked for whittle away and go to someone who's wasting things.

And he goes and confronts the manager and says, what is this I hear of what you're doing? You cannot be manager anymore.

[11:05] Bring me the books. Bring me the records. This rich man wanted the books so he could take and pass on the managerial position to someone else.

The manager didn't argue because he knew he was guilty. because he knew that what the guy was saying was right. And if he turned over the books, the manager would see the proof of what he'd been doing.

The manager would be ruined. Not only would he lose his job, but it would get around. He wouldn't be able to manage anywhere else. He would be ruined. No one would hire him.

Let alone hire him, no one would give him a place to stay. And there was this inner turmoil that went on.

Some of those verses weren't things that the manager said out loud. He said them in his head.

What am I going to do? I won't be able to be a manager anywhere anymore. And he makes this comment.

[12:18] I'm not strong enough to do manual labor. Dig. That was the kind of way they talked about a lot of things. Dealing with cultivating crops involved digging.

He's talking about, I can't do manual labor. I'm not strong enough. And I've been a manager. Everybody's known. I claim to have these talents. And I just couldn't bear the weight, the thought of begging.

And so I won't be humiliated to beg. What will I do? I know what I'll do. I know what I'll do. He hatches a shrewd plan.

He says, I know what I'll do. I'll make it so that people will take me in. I'll be able to stay with other people. And so what he does, is he begins to call his master's debtors.

These people that the master has been doing business with through him. People who have borrowed stuff. People who have had parts of the land and were working it to be able to bring a profit, as these people were supposed to do.

[13:33] And so he calls these people in one by one. And each of them owed a debt. And it was a debt that they themselves had made with this manager. And they said, oh, whether they borrowed or they promised based on their crops, oh, I will give you this much.

He brings them in one by one. And as I mentioned, the amounts that were mentioned showed that this man was, this man was a very rich man.

And as he called them in, and as he addressed each one, he says, he asked them so that they would say, he says, how much do you owe me, the master?

And the first guy says, I owe him a hundred measures of oil. Now it's a lot of money. Like I mentioned, these were a lot. The other one, he says, how much do you owe?

I owe a hundred measures of wheat. He reduces the oil by 50%. He reduces the wheat by 20%. Both of them are a reduction of about 500 denarii.

[14:43] 500 days worth of work. What you'd be paid for 500 days worth of work. So this was no small thing. And he says, here, you take your bill, and you write down 50.

You take your bill, and you write down 80. He has them write the change to what they owed in their own handwriting. So that this manager who's doing the managing and doing these deals could not be blamed.

This makes these debtors to be indebted not only to the owner, to the master, but also to the manager.

They can't complain. The master can't come along and complain. Because they have the bill. And that's what was said that was owed.

But this also makes the debtors grateful. Wow. I got a 50% reduction on my bill. Wow.

[16:01] I got a 20% reduction on my bill. So these debtors would then feel obligated. Obligated so that one day, when this man left his managership, which was going to be very soon, he could walk up to the first debtor's house, and the door would open.

Oh. Can't send him away. He saved me 500 denarii. And I can't argue about it because I wrote it in my own hand.

He's put them in a difficult situation. He's been, the Bible says here, shrewd in the way he's dealt with these people. He's made it so that these debtors are obligated to help this manager out. This man used money to gain friends who would welcome him into their dwellings. A shrewd man. Now the master finds out about this. And this parable has twists and turns. The master finds out about this. And he ends up commending the manager.

[17 : 29] What? He's been a dishonest manager. And he's pulled this shenanigan whereby the owner loses 500 denarii from every debtor, at least the two that are mentioned.

And yet, his response is to commend this man? This doesn't make sense. Well, the master didn't command the manager for wasting his possessions.

The manager, the master did not command the manager for losing more money by reducing the amount of debts owed by the debtor. The master didn't command the manager for the way he made the master look in the debtor's eyes.

Now some say, oh, he did this so that the debtors are all going, oh, what amazing master. After all, he lost 500 denarii per debt. So the master, the manager was commended, but it wasn't for any of those things that he did.

The Bible says that the master commended the manager for how shrewdly the manager used the means at his disposal to build relationships for his future.

[18 : 54] And remember, Jesus is telling this parable. And that makes it a little hard. Why would the manager commend him for his shrewdness?

Well, I heard an illustration in one of the commentaries that I read. I'm just going to give you the gist of it. I thought it was pretty good for understanding that. You and I might hear about a bank robbery. And maybe someone was hurt in that bank robbery. And robbing banks is wrong. And hurting people is wrong. And so we would never command a bank robber for robbing a bank.

But maybe, like in some movie we've watched, they found a way to be under the bank. And maybe they found this new way of drilling a hole up into the vault that made no noise and could not be detected.

And maybe they escaped. Maybe some of you are thinking about one of the movies you've watched where something like this has happened. And when it's all said and done, no one commends the bank robbers for robbing the bank, but some of us might say, that was an amazing idea.

[20 : 09] I have to hand it to the man or to the woman. What they did was wrong, but what they thought up was ingenious. When the master is commending the manager, that's what's going on.

He's commending the shrewdness. He's commending the genius of a man who takes what is at his disposal and uses it for his future.

I think that is the core of what we want to get. Now, people can take this parable in wrong ways.

People can blame or accuse Jesus of thinking or saying that it's not what's going on.

It's clear by what Jesus goes on to say. He is simply talking about how shrewd this man was to take and use his means to prepare for the future.

And Jesus builds on that. Jesus, in chapter 16, verse 8b, talks about how the sons of this world are more shrewd at using their means to try to better their future situation than the sons of light are.

[21 : 26] So what's he talking about? He's saying that those who live for this world, those who do not serve Christ, are often more shrewd at taking what is at their disposal to try to build for the future in the way that they want.

And Christians often aren't like that. Now, is Jesus talking about wanting us to be dishonest? No. Is he talking about wanting us to rob banks?

No. Is he talking about wanting us to abuse or misuse the master's possessions? No. In fact, the very opposite. Jesus is teaching his disciples a principle that they ought to apply to their daily lives. People in this world are more shrewd at getting their situation. What ones of us don't know about workplace politics, that one guy that always knows how to talk or always knows just where to be so that he gets all the days off that he wants or he gets all the overtime that he wants.

And again, Jesus is not commending them for doing wrong things. He's not commending the goals of the sons of this world. He's commending people who take their means and use it towards improving their future.

[22 : 57] In verse 9, Jesus teaches that his disciples should use the means God has given them to work for the things of eternal value. In other words, use what you have, your money, the means that you have, so that God and those whose lives are changed because of your investments will rejoice

and welcome you in heaven.

salvation. So let me ask you this, do you work right now so as to make your life more comfortable and pad your retirement on earth?

Okay? Now, don't take away from this that I'm not saying oh, we need to save and we need to be careful. I'm talking about the mentality of you saving.

I'm talking about the mentality of preparing. Jesus is thinking you're not taking that with you. He's thinking about what you do with it now for him.

Do you remember the parable of the rich fool? It's back in Luke 12 and verse 20. Oh, what am I going to do with all my goods? Oh, I know what I'll do. I'll build barns that are bigger and I'll put everything there and at the end it says in Luke 12 20, but God said to him, fool, this night your soul is required of you and the things that you have prepared, whose will they be?

[24 : 35] The things that you have, the things that you're working for, where are they aiming? What are you going to use them for?

Working for comfort in this life, just ask the rich fool, a rich young ruler, doesn't work out very well. so do you work and manage your means so as to see your profit in souls you will win and see in heaven or in the kingdom of God built here?

You say, are you saying you should not have a retirement fund or not retire? I'm not saying that. Why do you have a retirement fund? Why would you retire?

Is it to relax and do nothing with the rest of your lives? That's a waste of what God has given you.

Is it rather, do you rather work, save, plan, use now, put at the disposal all your things for the Lord as you think about eternity?

[25 : 53] do you earn for the sake of serving the kingdom? Do you save for the sake of serving the kingdom? Do you do all that you do?

Do you manage your finances? Do you manage your house? Do you own possessions for the sake of the kingdom of God? God? Jesus is saying the children of this world are doing their best to try to make for them a soft end.

And Jesus is saying you ought not to have that mentality. Again, not saying it's wrong to prepare for retirement, but he's saying you have a further end. You have greater goals.

everything in your life should be aiming at serving Christ. You should be as wise as these sons of this world who know how to finagle everything.

And I'm not talking about being dishonest at work. But if you consider a pay raise or you're looking at a pay raise, what's your first thought? Is it how would God have me use this money for his glory?

[27 : 03] or I finally get that boat that I've always wanted. Nothing wrong with a boat. Why do you have the boat? What are you doing with your life?

Manage and use your money wisely for the advancement of the kingdom because that's where we're going. We think too small or too large of our lives instead of how small they are.

We live this short life. And those who know Christ will spend eternity in heaven. Manage and use your possessions wisely for the advancement of the kingdom.

Manage and use your time wisely for the advancement of the kingdom. 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 19 and 20. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have for God?

You are not your own for you're bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. Do you work so you can have so you can glorify him?

[28 : 15] Do you work so you can have so you can serve him? Is his goal, do you say, Lord, this is what you've given me, what would you have me do with it? how would you have me serve you?

How should I spend my time for you? I'm not advocating poverty, but we've hit this topic sort of before.

I think this is much more pointed than before, but Luke chapter 12 verses 32 to 34, fear not little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Salvation, yes. Working of the church here, yes. But beyond. And Jesus says there, sell your positions and give to the needy, provide yourselves with money bags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail where no thief approaches and no moth destroys, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also.

This work comes down. Where's the heart of the sons of this world when it comes to their money? Their treasure is here.

[29 : 37] And it will end with their life. Maybe before the end of their life. If you know Christ, your treasure is there where you will spend all eternity.

So what are you doing with what God provides you? Why do you work? Why do you plan? What's the goal of what you do for work? What's the goal of how you plan? Is it to serve God and his kingdom?

He goes on verses 10 through 13. saying, one who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you've not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? we're going to be faithful with our money. What we do now with what we have shows what we would do if we have more.

[30 : 52] Oh, if I had more money, I'd give to the Lord. Or if I had more money, I'd do more for the Lord. If you won't trust God with what you have now, you won't trust him with what he gives you later.

If you're dishonest with your money now, you'll be dishonest with whatever he gives you, he gives you more. And so the money that we have, the goals that we have, often shows our hearts.

If we're dishonest and unfaithful with our money now, how can God entrust to us true riches? And we could look back or look over to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25.

Jesus finishes this application of the parable with verse 13. He says, No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. It's possible that one slave could have been the inheritance of two children. Who does he obey?

[32 : 11] He's going to obey the one he likes. I mean, in a sense, he'll have to obey both, but his real allegiance is to the one he likes, the one he really loves.

Jesus is saying, just as a slave cannot give true allegiance to two masters, so Christians cannot serve both God and money.

There is no middle ground. Some try to give God, this is not talking about a tithe, I'm talking about a portion of their lives.

God, I'll do this much for you and no more. They try to do both. I'm going to do a little bit, I'll give you Sunday mornings, but don't ask for the rest of the week.

Or I'll give you so much of what I earn, or I'll give you so much of my goals in life, but I won't give you everything. They try to give God a portion and money a portion.

[33 : 12] How can we say that we serve God if we keep a portion to ourselves? God is because all of it is His. Why should we care who we serve with our money, what we own, or our lives?

We should care because we are His creation. We should care because we're not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. We owe God everything. Because the one who loves us so, loves others and desires them to come to Himself.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost, Luke 19, 10. Luke 13, 34, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.

we say, oh, part of what I have is mine and part of what I have is God. Are we not denying the one who loves the rest of the world, loves people throughout the world, of that which means he chooses to use in sharing the gospel?

[34 : 34] people who you serve with your money and what you own reveals your heart. Now, right up front, I'll admit, this parable is pretty strong, and it sounds like do, do, do, do.

And I don't want to leave you with do, do, do, do. Now, obviously, Jesus said this, and Jesus taught this, but he didn't ask us to do it because that's how we earn heaven.

He didn't ask us to do it because he's just grinding us to pieces. We were not redeemed with such things as silver and gold.

We were redeemed with the blood of Christ. He's speaking to disciples, he's speaking to those who are seeing him as that Messiah who was coming, and they didn't understand it all, but they would someday recognize that this Messiah was coming to give his life for them.

And this Messiah loved them more than anything else loved them. He loved these people as only God could love these people.

[36:02] God and so I don't want you to walk away from here today going, oh, this passage said do, do, do, do. I want you to see that because of Christ we are acceptable before him and we're not doing anything to earn right pleasure.

I'm saying, and Jesus is saying, this is the right response to those who have been saved. This is the response of love. this is the response of grace.

Everything I have should be his because he's done everything for me. He is my creator. He is my redeemer. He walks with me.

And this should not be a, oh, do, do, do, do. This should be he has done. I want to do this for him. And so I challenge you.

Look at some of the principles he said. You can't serve God and mammon. And evaluate what's going on. But most, and I would say that there are none of us here who do this perfectly.

[37:19] There are many of us who do this terribly. Probably all of us do this ultimately terribly. But we need to be people who repent of trusting in preparing for ourselves and padding our own comfort.

And we need to be people who trust God to help us to be people who say, I want to serve Christ with everything I have. He's given everything for me. He deserves everything from me.

Let's pray. Thank you Father for your word. And Lord, a very strong parable here today. It must have just shook the disciples to their core as it can us.

But I pray that we would see the right response that a disciple would have to this one who would give everything for them. And may we not do, do, do this to earn something.

May we do this out of a response of what Christ has done. And Father, where we fail, make us to be quick to confess where we have served ourselves instead of you.

[38:38] And where we fail, make us to be people who are quick to believe that you will help us to serve you. and you forgive us.

And I pray that we would be people who are walking, standing on the truth of the gospel. And I pray that you would be with us in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's take our hands and we with us.