

LIVING FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

March 16, 2014

Luke 16:1-13

“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

In this parable of “The Unjust Steward” Christ told a story that was unforgettable for its contradiction, thereby enhancing its effectiveness in teaching those who would be citizens of God’s kingdom.

A steward was the employed supervisor of a wealthy man’s possessions, and thus controlled many of his employer’s financial dealings. Accusations of impropriety had been made against a steward, whose employer summonsed him to give an answer to these charges. The steward’s response indicates that the charges were true, and would result in his dismissal from employment.

Immediately, he began to strategize. Recognizing that he was too old to dig ditches and too proud to beg, he hatched a scheme focused wholly upon his own self-interest. He asked his employer’s debtors to come with their bills of indebtedness. As each came, he exercised his legitimate authority to reduce the debt each owed. One owed for more than 800 gallons of oil, doubtless olive oil. His debt was cut in half. Another owed for 1000 bushels of grain. His debt was reduced by 20 per cent. By this means the steward ingratiated friends to aid him during his certain economic collapse.

When his master learned what the steward had done, he commended his crafty creativity. Although he acted unethically, the steward was within the bounds of his authority, and thus ensured his survival. Our Lord observed that people whose life is focused solely upon earthly existence, show a prudence that is absent in “children of light,” who ought to be focused entirely upon Christ’s kingdom of light. He then instructed His own on three points.

First, children of light must prudently utilize “mammon of unrighteousness,” which is money. Whereas “children of this world” use it for what they deem is best in this life, children of light must utilize it with “everlasting habitations” in view.

Second, money is but a small matter when contrasted with things of eternity. But faithfulness financial stewardship is an indicator of one’s faithfulness in matters of eternity. One who is unfaithful in the small cannot be entrusted with the large. If one manages earthly wealth heedless of eternal things, he handles eternal things unfaithfully also.

Third, no man can be ruled by money and by Christ simultaneously; by zeal for earthy gain and for eternal. If he does not handle financial matters in a godly manner, money will rule him, and he will not be a servant of Christ. On the other hand, if he is truly a servant of Christ, he will handle financial matters in a godly manner. But he will not have both money and Christ as his master. He will have one or the other.