

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon April 26, 2020
Luke 16: 14,15 – “Correction for Covetous Hearts”

1 He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. 2 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.' 3 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. 4 I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.' 5 So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' 7 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.' 8 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. 9 And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. 10 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. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. 14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. 15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. 16 The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. 17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. 18 Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.""

I. Introduction

- a. Calvin “Where riches hold the dominion of the heart, God has lost his authority. True, it is not impossible that those who are rich shall serve God; but whoever gives himself up as a slave to riches must abandon the service of God: for covetousness makes us the slaves of the devil.”¹
- b. In verse 8, our Lord states the moral of the parable of the shrewd servant: “...the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.”
 - i. At that time around AD 30, those outside the Kingdom of God, those considered sinners by the Pharisees, were more careful, diligent and active in securing their temporary, physical livelihood than the “sons of light” were in advancing the Kingdom of God. Jesus shames the Pharisees by making it clear they love God less than sinners love their money.

¹ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 337). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

- ii. And, as we've considered in past sermons, our generation in AD 2020 has also earned this rebuke. The slumbering Bride loves Her comfort more than Her King, while the diligence of sinners shows they love their money more than the Church loves Her Lord.
 - iii. And, we discussed how this coronavirus pandemic is being used by our Lord to shake His Bride unto repentance, to awaken and return to Him with pure hearts of grateful devotion.
 - iv. Will you examine your own heart today as God's Word comes to you? Does your love for money blind you to the truth about God's teaching regarding generosity, faithfulness and love as His steward?
 - c. In v9-13, our Lord teaches some specific applications of the parable of the shrewd servant.
 - i. V9 – Steward God's resources **Generously**
 - 1. **Generosity** with the wealth of this world displays our love and worship toward God. God's matchless generosity toward us in Christ moves us to be generous like our Father in Heaven.
 - ii. V10 – 12 – Steward God's resources **Faithfully**
 - 1. Faithfulness flows from our union with Christ, thus existing as a fruit of inner spiritual life no matter what situation we face. Faithfulness is tested by having worldly wealth. And, faithfulness is tested when we are made stewards of someone else's possessions. Will we use God's resources for His glory?
 - iii. V13 – Steward God's resources **Lovingly**
 - 1. Syncretism is rejected. Imagine two trees growing together, intertwined as one as high as our steeple. Looking up, the trees diverge and become two trunks, separating. Now, think of climbing. At first, no choice is needed, but a time is coming, if you keep climbing to the top, when you cannot climb both trees at once. It is an impossibility. You must say a permanent goodbye to one tree and embrace the other to the end. You will either love God and His Kingdom, or you will love yourself and your own kingdom. You will serve God, or you will serve this world's system of mammon. Idolatry vs. Authenticity.
 - d. Today: Luke 16:14,15 – "Correction for the Covetous Heart"
 - i. V14 – About the Pharisees
 - 1. They were listening to Jesus teaching His disciples
 - 2. They derided Jesus because of His teaching about wealth
 - 3. Their derision flowed from their idolatrous, covetous hearts
 - ii. V15 – Jesus replies to the Pharisees
 - 1. Self-justifying to gain the praise of men
 - a. Doing that which is highly esteemed among men
 - 2. But, God knows their hearts
 - a. Their actions have been an abomination before God
- II. About the Pharisees v14

- a. "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him."
 - i. They were listening to Jesus teaching His disciples
 1. V1 – "He also said to His disciples..." – Jesus focuses this parable of the shrewd steward (v1-8), along with the subsequent points of application (v9-13), upon the ears and hearts of His disciples. Yet, His plans were broader than just His disciples. He spoke in a way that the Pharisees could also listen and learn.
 2. Why were they listening? Likely the continuation of their motive stated earlier in Luke 6 "So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, ***that they might find an accusation against Him.***"
 3. So, even though our Lord knew the Pharisees would use His teachings to accuse and attack Him, He nevertheless taught publicly so they could hear.
 - a. Lk 11:33 "No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light."
 - b. Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."
 - c. 2 Timothy 1:8 "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God"
 4. The Jews hated Jesus because of His teachings -they arranged His murder. The Jews hated Paul because of his proclamation of the gospel, and they had him imprisoned and murdered. Paul tells Timothy not to shy away from the Gospel suffering, not to miss the power of God, not to fear threats of loss, prison and death.
 - a. Where is your heart with the Gospel and the power of God? Do you shy away from public speech and actions that preach and display the Gospel of the Kingdom of God?
 - ii. They derided Jesus because of His teaching about wealth
 1. They had heard "all these things" Jesus had just taught about wealth and stewardship as a servant of God. They heard Jesus teach about generosity beyond the basics of tithing, about faithfulness with the little things (mammon) leading to true riches (Kingdom riches), and the impossibility of syncretism. They heard Jesus accuse them of loving God less than sinners love their money.
 2. "derided" = turning up the nose, to sneer at, to scoff at

- a. Bock “The graphic term literally means “to turn one’s nose up” at someone; it indicates strong contempt”²
 - 3. Jesus tells the Pharisees they don’t even love God as much as sinners love unrighteous mammon, and they just scoff at Him. He points to their selfish, unfaithful, and idolatrous use of money as evidence they don’t love God, and instead of repenting, they find His teaching ridiculous and disgusting. As a group, they all with one voice mock Christ and His instruction about life as a steward of God, apparently also rejecting Christ’s categorization of their economic system as “unrighteous mammon”.
 - a. Isaiah 1:18-23 ““Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; 20 But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. 21 How the faithful city has become a harlot! It was full of justice; Righteousness lodged in it, But now murderers. **22 Your silver has become dross, Your wine mixed with water.** 23 Your princes are rebellious, And **companions of thieves; Everyone loves bribes, And follows after rewards.** They do not defend the fatherless, Nor does the cause of the widow come before them.”
 - b. FRACTIONAL RESERVE BANKING IN THE ROMAN REPUBLIC AND EMPIRE by Andrew Collins and John Walsh. (Ancient Society, Vol. 44 (2014), pp. 179-212)
 - c. Coin clipping in the Roman Empire as a means to expand their money supply.
 - d. Unrestrained use of debt in the Roman Empire.
 - e. Instead of God’s instructions about wealth, money, debt, interest and loans.
- iii. Their derision flowed from their idolatrous, covetous hearts
 - 1. “Lovers of money” cannot love Christ and His teaching. Note the immediacy of syncretism’s power here. “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. 14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.”
 - a. Immediately, the Pharisees serve as examples of Christ’s teaching. The hate Jesus. They despise Jesus. They love

² Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1349). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

their money, and they are loyal to their money, being servants of their money, enslaved to mammon.

2. Covetousness is idolatry. When our hearts become sinfully attached to the things of this world (honor, life, family, wealth, reputation, pleasures, influence, power, position, our church life, our national status), we covet these things because for us they come to represent life, security and happiness. The Pharisees were in this devil's snare. Are you?
3. Poole "As hypocrites can never endure to have their beloved lusts touched, and persons that have drank in an error have no patience to hear it contradicted; so the Pharisees had no patience to hear that doctrine, which crossed what they had taught, and struck at their darling lusts. *They derided him*: the word used signifieth a deriding with the highest degree of scorn and contempt."³

III. V15 - Jesus replies to the Pharisees

- a. And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.
- b. Self-justifying to gain the praise of men
 - i. "Doing that which is highly esteemed among men"
 1. Their external actions of religion, and their (likely) full participation in the system of unrighteous mammon at that time, was highly esteemed among men and gained them the appearance of wealth, with the power and acclaim that accompany it.
 - ii. The goal of the Pharisees was not to please God, but to have the favor and esteem of men. They used all the means available to feed their pride and self-promotion.
 1. Bock "The idea to be supplied contextually may be that the Pharisees give alms, but they do so to impress others...It is the heart that God knows, and exaltation of the self does not please him"⁴
 - iii. They had not learned the lessons of their first destruction and exile by Assyria and Babylon. They had returned and would not hear the Word of Christ's prophetic judgment.

³ Poole, M. (1853). [*Annotations upon the Holy Bible*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 249). New York: Robert Carter and Brothers.

⁴ Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51-24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1350). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

1. Hosea 6 “O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, And like the early dew it goes away. 5 Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And your judgments are like light that goes forth. 6 For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”
 2. Will we learn the lessons God has for us at this time? Will we examine our hearts and actions?
- c. But, God knows their hearts
- i. Their actions have been an abomination before God
 - ii. While the Pharisees really believe they are loving and pursuing that which God loves, in reality, their hearts and actions are detestable to God.
 1. Bock “Jesus goes on to say that he can make this complaint because...the things that people exalt are an abomination before God....[this is] a strong term of rejection ... Idiomatically, it indicates something that stinks. God rejects such self-adoration... He considers those who exalt themselves detestable.”
 - iii. They have turned their noses up at Jesus, finding Him disgusting, worthy of scorn and mocking. Jesus makes it clear to them that their hearts, their actions, have made them a stench to God. God is disgusted by them.
 1. Proverbs 16:5 “Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.”
 2. Isaiah 2:11,12 “The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. 12 For the day of the Lord of hosts Shall come upon everything proud and lofty, Upon everything lifted up-- And it shall be brought low”
 3. RC Sproul “The Pharisees thought that because they had power, wealth and authority in the community, they could use their success to justify their sinful lifestyle. People were willing to be blinded to the evils of the Pharisees, but Jesus reminded them that God knows the heart. He reminds them that we live in a topsy-turvy world, where those things that are highly esteemed among men, are detestable in the sight of God. Power and success, if achieved at the expense of human beings, by the exploitation of the weak and poor, are despicable to God.”⁵

IV. Questions to know, love and obey God

⁵ Sproul, R. C. (1999). *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke* (pp. 313–314). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.