

Introduction:

- Jesus often spoke in pictures when He taught the people. Those pictures are called parables.
 - We looked at a parable two weeks ago. When Jesus used the expression, “A man who has a lamp doesn’t cover it. No, he places it in the room so that the whole room gets light. You are the light of the world.”
 - Last week the parable of the waiting father (lost sons).
 - A parable essentially is a comparison, it is putting something alongside something else to compare. Parables were originally to be heard and not to be read. What came out of that was the fact that the hearers of parables had to make an instant appraisal of what the teacher was saying. So, there wasn't time for them to sit down with a black-and-white text and dissect each detail, and try to correspond it to spiritual truth, whilst we can do that now they did not have that privilege. They had to, in a moment, grasp what the speaker was saying, and because of that we need to remember that really in all the parables there is one main fundamental point that the Lord Jesus was getting across.

1. The Key to the Parable of the Shrewd Managera. The context of the parable:

- i. Luke 14, Jesus is at the home of a leader of Pharisees. Many people were watching him. Jesus has been quite confrontational with these religious leaders at their party. Chapter 15 is bringing things to a head. Notorious sinners are coming to Jesus to be near him. In addition, the Pharisees are putting distance between themselves and Jesus.
- ii. In Luke 15, Jesus gives us three parables in a row. The lost sheep, lost coin, lost sons.
- iii. In Luke 16, the first thing to note is that all of Luke 16 is dealing money in one way or another. There are two parables about money...this one and the closing one about the rich man and Lazarus with some money-grubbing Pharisees providing the filler between the two. That is a hint to what this parable is about. And, verse 14 lets us see the sneering Pharisees response to what Jesus has said.

b. Characters:

- i. The ‘certain’ rich man: He is in the story to point out the shrewdness of his ‘x’ manager.
- ii. The manager: He is the man between the certain rich man and the clients.
- iii. The people of the world and the people of the light: It is not speaking of Christians and sinners. It is speaking of sinners and those who are to be the light of Israel (Pharisees fall into this group) and the disciples also, because they are being entrusted with the Kingdom message.

c. The main point. Jesus gives us the ‘take away’ from this parable: *“Here’s the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your earthly possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.”* (Luke 16:9, NLT)

- i. The manager formulated a plan and acted before his window of opportunity closed. Note that in the next parable, in Luke 16, it is too late for the rich man to act. Watch the progression. In Luke 15, the Father is looking for what is valuable to Him—us. He wants relationship with humanity. In Luke 16, a decision must be made now. Moreover, if no decision is made it will be too late when all has been stripped away in death.
- ii. Therefore, the message to the disciples, the Pharisees, and the tax collectors was the same—use your present situation to take care of your future.

d. Let me break this parable down for us now.

- i. First, it is not embracing dishonesty whatsoever! It is not admiring the methods of the dishonest manager. The parable is embracing the motives of the dishonest manager—preparing for his future. Evidently, Jesus was seeing his audience as unprepared for that future.
- ii. Remember that parables are meant to be heard not read. So, it requires the hearer to think fast as to what is the point of this parable. The audience is the notorious sinners, the disciples and the Pharisees. What they hear about the manager is that he has been ‘cooking the books’ and is about to be fired! For the manager that means three things. 1. There is an impending judgment that is coming. 2. That impending judgment is leading him to a crisis point in his life...now! 3. He must act quickly to avoid an awful impending future. Impending means imminently threatening or menacing.

2. The Impending Judgment vs. 1-2

- a. A report comes to the certain rich man that his manager is wasting his money.
 - i. Diaballo- Greek word meaning accusation. It also means to separate. Accusations always separate people. This man knows a judgment is coming his way that will separate him from this rich man and the job he has held.
 - ii. He is told to give an account of his stewardship of the certain rich man’s money. NLT uses the word ‘report’ again but it is a different word in the Gr., it is logos. Prepare to tell me what you have been doing with my money. How have you been stewarding/managing what I entrusted to you.
- b. There is an impending judgment that this coming to this manager. He knows that it is coming. And, he knows that he cannot stop it. He knows that he will be stripped of all he has when that judgment comes.
- c. Everyone present is relating to the manager at this point and the impending judgment that is facing him. Jesus is pointing out the impending judgment. This throws the manager into a crisis. By the end of the parable, we all relate to the impending judgment and the urgency to act now. The judgment is bringing him to a point of crisis.

3. The Impending Crisis vs 3--8

- a. The dishonest manager is facing an impending crisis. His crisis is a crisis of unemployment and the inability to provide for him and his family.
 - i. No job
 - ii. Cannot dig ditches for he is too weak.
 - iii. And, he is too proud to beg. That sounds like a crisis! No provision.
- b. His past choices are bringing him to a future crisis and his present choices will cause a desired future outcome. When the pressure is on, this shrewd manager comes up with a plan! I have a plan!!! Even as a wicked manager, he has the foresight and ‘wisdom’ to plan ahead and look out for his own future. He knows that his job is ending, so he prepares a path forward so he will be provided for and looked after by others.
 - i. He cut the bills of clients that owe his employer. That sure makes them happy! Now they are obligated to him and that makes him happy.
 - ii. In doing so, this shrewd manager makes friends that will take care of him when he has lost all or is powerless to care for himself.
- c. Then we read in vs 8 that the rich man admired this dishonest rascal! Jesus is not saying be dishonest. His point is this: The dishonest manager facing an impending judgment that creates for him a crisis comes up with a plan for his future! Therefore, Jesus is commending this manager in his shrewdness not his dishonesty. And, this brings us to our pending future.

4. The Pending Future vs 9-15 Pending- meaning not yet decided, waiting for.

- a. The pending future means that the future is not yet decided. The manager was shrewd because he put together a plan of action to secure his future. That is the point of the parable. Are you shrewd enough to put together a plan of action to secure your real future? *“Here’s the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your earthly possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.”* (Luke 16:9, NLT)
- i. Did you notice the combination of “when your earthly possessions are gone” and “welcome you to an eternal home”? The Pharisees and tax collectors, both of whom were rich, would one day lose their earthly possessions. Who on earth would be able to welcome them to an eternal home? Only God, or in this case, Jesus!
 - ii. What you do right now does count. If all you have is this current world, then you will make selfish choices based on that short amount of time. If you have life on this earth and also life in heaven, you will use all you have right now to live by the principles of heaven. It all depends on where you see your home.
- b. The Pharisees were facing an impending judgment and crisis because they, like the dishonest manager, had been wasting kingdom resources.
- i. The Jewish rulers needed to reduce the burden placed upon the people. Jesus says this about them in Matthew 23:4 *They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.*
 - ii. However, Jesus instructions to the people were: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Matthew 11:28-30
- c. When you die, worldly riches will cease to exist for you but those you used for others will greet you when you enter your eternal home. It not about works getting us to heaven it is about investing here for the return that we get there.
- i. There are only two eternal things we deal with in this world—the souls of men and women, and the Word of God. So, that is where we should be investing our money. In I Timothy 6:17-19 God says, *“Tell those rich in this world’s wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage—to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they’ll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life.”* (The Message)
 - ii. Simply put, a disciple (such as you and I) are to use their wealth, money, resources, energy, and talents, in this present life with an eye on the future life. Be a good steward of what the Father has entrusted to us.
 - iii. Your management of God’s resources determines if He can trust you with true riches (vs. 10-12) Are you being a good steward of God’s resource as you see the coming future? Your best investment is to take the resource God has given us to manage and invest in people that hopefully we will see in Heaven (vs. 9)

Conclusion:

- Jesus knows we too are facing an impending judgment/crisis. We are also facing a spiritual deadline where we will give an account for everything that we have been given in this life.
- So, the question we must ask of ourselves is, How are we preparing for our eternal future with the resources that God has given us in money, talents, gift and abilities?

- Your best investment is to take the resource God has given and to manage and invest in people that hopefully we will see in Heaven (vs. 9)
- Jim Elliot serves as a wonderful example of this. He left his young wife and baby daughter to visit the Waodani people, who are an indigenous people in the Ecuadorian Amazon. It was well known to Elliot and his four companions that the Waodani were extremely violent. They were killed, but as a result, many Waodani became Christian. This was the story told in the documentary Beyond the Gates of Splendor. Jim Elliot said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”
- Do you have a creative plan to influence your world before that deadline? Are you letting opportunities pass by?
- Matthew 10:16 - “Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.” (NLT)