

Making Friends with Dishonest Wealth

In order to understand the parable of the dishonest steward in Luke 16, it is necessary to know some of the customs of the people who lived at the time of Jesus, particularly how stewards conducted their business. At the time of Christ, the practice of usury was common to those who were employed as stewards of their master's goods. They would charge more than what the debtors actually owed to their master, and they would pocket the difference. Thus, when the parable mentions that the steward proceeded to reduce what the debtors owed to his master, the steward wasn't shortchanging his master; he was simply forgoing his commission in order to gain favor with his master's debtors, in the hope that after he gets fired from his position, these debtors would repay the favor and welcome him into their homes.



When the master found out how the steward dealt with his debtors, he commended the dishonest steward for forgoing his own commission in order to gain favor with the debtors. One of the lessons of the parable of the dishonest steward is for us to make use of “dishonest wealth” to make friends, so that when it fails, we will be welcomed into

eternal dwellings (Luke 16:9). What does this “dishonest wealth” mean? In the case of the dishonest steward, “dishonest wealth” refers to his usurious commissions which he used to make friends. What about for the rest of us? “Dishonest wealth” as used in Luke 16:9 literally means “mammon of iniquity,” which refers to earthly riches or wealth that is characterized by dishonesty, corruption, or injustice, either in how it was obtained or in its potential to lead one astray from spiritual values. For us, therefore, the lesson of using “dishonest wealth” to make friends means using our money or wealth for acts of charity, so that these good deeds might lead to a more secure future. It would make more sense if we make this connection with what Jesus said in Luke 12: “Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy.” (Luke 12:33)

The second lesson of the parable of the dishonest steward is that those who cannot be trusted with “dishonest wealth” cannot be trusted with “true wealth.” Here, “true wealth” refers to the eternal treasures of heaven; i.e., eternal life, in contrast with the temporary “dishonest wealth” of this world. In other words, the second lesson teaches us that if we cannot be trusted to make good use of the wealth we have here on earth by giving alms, then we cannot be trusted with the “true wealth” of eternal life in heaven. It is important to note that the underlying theme of Luke 16 is about the dangers of riches. According to the Gospels, the right way of managing our wealth on earth is not by accumulating more and more of it like the rich fool, but in giving it away in the name of charity.

The third lesson of the parable of the dishonest steward is that “no servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Luke 16:13) Jesus could not be more direct: either you serve God or serve mammon. One cannot serve God and at the same time serve mammon. Mammon is used here as if it were itself a god. Inasmuch as people would like to think that they can be attached to their wealth and at the same time be a servant of God, that balancing act is virtually impossible to do. A lot of Christians have this idea that charity is about giving our “loose change.” And yet, “loose change” in this context means more than the coins that we can

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find in the seats of our cars or in the couch at home; it also means the minimal time and effort that we give to the poor or to the church.

An older gentleman once remarked that he worried a lot because a certain priest said in a homily that anyone who has substantial savings and dies will not be able to get to heaven. He asked, "I have that, does that mean I will not be able to get to heaven when I die?" I said to him that the Gospels didn't say that. Abraham died a very rich man, he possessed large amounts of livestock, silver, and gold. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) indicates that Lazarus ended up with Abraham in a place of comfort, in contrast to the rich man who ended up in a place of torment. I finally said, "What matters is not what we have or do not have when we die, the Gospels teach us that what matters is what we do with what we have while we are still alive."

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Attention children and parents: We will have Sunday School class on Sunday.

September 21 is potluck Sunday! This is a great activity for everyone to foster fellowship in our church community. Lunch begins after the 10:30am Mass. Please bring your favorite dish to share. If you are celebrating your birthday in the month of September, we have ordered a birthday cake for you.

We will celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival on Oct. 5. Our monthly pot-luck for October will be on Oct.5 instead of Oct.19. Please bring your favorite Mid-Autumn Festival dish to share!

Our parish pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche in St. Augustine, Florida, will be from November 24-26. This peaceful and beautiful site is where the first recorded Catholic Mass in the United States was celebrated in 1565. Participants will arrange by themselves to carpool to the shrine on Monday, November 24. We have negotiated a discounted group rate at Hampton Inn with hot breakfast for our 3-day/2-night stay. Parking fee is \$20 per day. Each room has two queen beds and costs \$155 plus tax per night. Participants will book the hotel rooms on their own. Please sign up with Long Che with your email, and we will send you an email with the booking link so that you can get the discounted rate. The last day to book your rooms at the discounted rate is September 24.

The 10th year anniversary of the dedication of our church will be on November 19, 2027. One of our goals is to publish a 10th year anniversary commemorative parish book. Be a part of the history of our church by having your family picture taken. Please sign up with Tommy Puk.

Prayer List: Xie Yannong, Xu Chunmei, Bian Meiyi, Chen Kun, Chen Shupeng, Ni Yufang, Lydia Chen, David Wang, Chen Jianxin, Liang Chenjing and Xu Taicheng.
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Mass Schedule	Confessions	Bible Study
Sundays 10:30 AM (Chinese)	Sundays 9:00-9:30 AM	Wednesdays 10:00 AM (Chinese)
Sundays 2:00 PM (English)	Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 PM	Mondays 6:00 PM (English)
	By Appointment	
Mondays 12:00 PM (English)		Eucharistic Adoration
Tuesdays 12:00 PM (English)	Anointing of the Sick	Sundays 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM
Wednesdays 12:00 PM (Chinese)	First Sundays after 10:30 AM Mass	Tuesdays 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM
Fridays 12:00 PM (English)		
First Friday 7:00 PM (English)		
First Saturday 10:00 AM (Chinese)		