

Jesus is commending the shrewdness of using money to make friends.

Three parts to this parable of the wasteful steward:

Part 1: Sketchy Parable: there is a rich man and a sketchy employee in V1. The servant is a manager of the rich man's assets, which would have been considerable based upon the evidence of the outstanding accounts and the nature of land ownership at the time of the parable. It follows the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. Both were wasteful.

>>The master in Luke 16 doesn't beat his servant or imprison him, instead he gives him additional time to settle up the outstanding accounts.

>>V3, the servant doesn't want to go back to digging or begging. The servant is not trying to get in good with his master to give an account, but to have favor with those whom he is settling up on behalf of his master, V4-5.

>>V6-7, the forgiveness of debt is sizable. The amount of oil owed was about 850 gallons (50% forgiven). The amount of wheat owed was 100 measures of wheat which is 1,000 bushels (20% forgiven).

>>The response of the master would have been expected to be what Jesus shared in Luke 20:16, that the master would kill the servant for being wicked. In this instance, the master commends the servant for his shrewdness. Commend means: praise, adoration. Shrewd means: an act of practical intelligence, clever, wise, from V8. Jesus is not commending dishonesty or greed.

>>Some ways to interpret this parable: **1)** A penitent steward taking a personal hit to restore their master's portion by reducing his (the manager's) share. **2)** The manager is removing his master's interest into conformity with the Law of Moses.

>>But Luke and Jesus want us to see a) the servant is wasteful and dishonest (V2,6, 7) and b) he was wasteful in his personal business when times were good, but in difficult times the manager is able to be shrewd to take care of his future needs.

3) The parable should be interpreted as a negative parable of how the manager prepared for his future after leaving his current master, by reducing debts to his master's loss.

Jesus is commending to us: 1) Jesus is the story teller and can tell us whatever He wants. 2) He wants to grab our attention and irritate some with this parable.

Part 2: Specific Conclusion: V8, men of the world are more shrewd than the sons of light. Jesus wants the disciples to consider the future and exchange temporal things today for things that will bring them eternal riches. The world's payoff is temporary, but for believers the conclusion is this: Use your money for God's kingdom and to gain true, eternal riches.

Part 3: Surprising Take Away: 3 Applications:

- 1) Don't wait until you are old to be generous. V10, be faithful in little, be faithful in much. Generosity starts with small amounts.
- 2) You are supposed to be motivated for a reward: the shrewd servant was wasteful and motivated by selfish ends, V11-12, a believer is motivated by eternal ends.
 - a. Unrighteous wealth in V11, is that money perishes, but it can be used to show faithfulness and be used to make friends in heaven (V9).
- 3) Jesus wants more than a balance in life. He wants us to serve God with our money, V13. There will be a time when there is a choice between serving money or serving God.

Further Discussion and Application

The rich young ruler was a good steward of wealth, but he needed to follow Christ, Luke 18:18-23. What idols in our life are we holding onto that keep us from creating true riches in heaven? What things do we consider important in life? From Scripture what are the most important things in life?

Luke 18:28-30 and Mark 10:29-31 provides a perspective of heaven and serving the Lord that Jesus gave to his disciples. How does an eternal perspective of the future help us put a value on the things that we have here and now? What is the Lord's assurance for those who lose their life for the sake of the kingdom? What is the Lord's assurance for those who have left their families and homes in this life and in the life to come?

2 Peter 3:10 and Proverbs 27:24 give a straightforward view of what happens with wealth, riches, and things of this world. How can we use what we have been given to further the kingdom of God and proclamation of the Gospel?

How do we learn to prioritize the work of the Lord and our service to Him? What are we able to give (money, time, talents, etc.) to make the best use of our time here on earth? What would we have to be let go of in order to better grasp the eternal things of heaven?

What are the results of the generous giving of believers to the church? What things can be done with the generous giving by the saints in the local church?

Make a list of the things you prioritize in your life? What is your reason for doing those things? Why do feel they are important? Why do you need them in your life? Prayerfully consider each item and how it impacts your life.