



(Luk 16:1-13)

The plot advanced by the parable: a manager who uses his master's wealth to not only grow his master's business, but also secure his own future.

The main players and who/what they represent: The master or "rich man" = God, the "manager" = the church, the master's wealth = the additional money God gives to the church, and the "debtors" = those the church are to be winning to Christ.

Jesus uses this parable to teach His church the following lessons:

**1. We are wasting the additional money God gives us if it is not being used to win more people to Christ .**

(1) "his possessions" = The master/ rich man's money. All the money God gives to us is still owned by Him. Like managers of His estate (i.e. Creation), we are entrusted w/His monies for the purpose of advancing His cause and kingdom. And the number one way we do that is by winning more people to Christ. Any church therefore that is not using large portions of those additional monies that God provides (i.e. those monies which are above and beyond what they need to care for the house of God, her pastors and her people) is a church wasting that money since they are (once more) not using it for the reason God gave it (in the first place) (e.g. Paul praises the Philippians for not wasting their money - Phi 4:15-16 w/1:3-5; that it was indeed additional monies can be seen by Paul's ref. to aid given by the churches in 2Co 8:4-5 w/12-14 = giving for the purpose of supporting all ministerial efforts outside our church is to come from those additional/surplus monies God has provided).

**2. We run the risk of God taking away our ministry/church if we do not use the additional money He gives to us to win more people to Christ.**

(2) = Wasting God's additional monies by not using it to win more people to Christ will eventually mean that church/ministry no longer exists. Jesus will remove us as His kingdom managers. This (ml) is the threat being made by Jesus to the church in Ephesus (Rev 2:1-5) = This church was doing an excellent job in the areas of justice ("you cannot bear those who do evil"), sound doctrine and the exposure of false teachers ("you...have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false."). They were also incredibly faithful and steadfast in their separation for Christ even in the midst of persecution from others (3 – "enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake" = willing to separate – and as a result be condemned by the wicked, b/c of love/honor for Christ – Heb 13:12-13; also 1Pe 4:4). They however were (now) neglecting the "love" or focus that had made them a church "at first" – i.e. the evangelization of people (since w/o this no church would exist). IOW: you need to win people to Christ (first) to even establish a church (or have somebody to disciple in justice, doctrine, etc.). Hence the order of Jesus' great commission (Mat 28:19-20). So then, the risk is real. If we want this church to be here in the future (for our kids) then it means investing the additional money we have (now) in winning more people to Christ. As stated in my intro, this is similar to how wise companies plan for their future. They prioritize cash flow over debt reduction (i.e. using their additional monies to increase cash flow since this is a far more effective strategy for sustaining your present situation and creating opportunities for growth in the future than using those same monies to reduce manageable/existing debt) . Successful businesses/people understand and use this principle whereas those not so wise in relation to money management tend to put the priority on the other side (debt reduction). Yet when debt is manageable that makes no sense b/c what gives stability to any company or household – even the church, is not the absence of debt, but positive growth. In the world that means an increase in cash flow, in the church, that means an increase in disciples (i.e. winning more people to Christ).

**3. We are to be thinking of creative/ingenious ways to use the additional money God gives to us to win more people to Christ.**

(3-8a – "shrewd" = creative/ingenious) = The "master's debtors" are those unable to pay back the full amount owed (and so are paying nothing at all). The manager of those debts creatively comes up w/a plan to reduce each debtor's "bill" as the means to not only seeing that his master received some income from these individuals, but also to secure his future (after being fired) (since these individuals would most likely return the favor). The creative measures employed by the manager represents what today we refer to as buying down debt or agreeing to write off the remainder of what a client owes if they pay an agreed upon portion/percentage of the monies owed. As mentioned, the benefit of such creative/ingenious actions is that it provides revenue – where before, there was the potential for none. It is this kind of creativity that Jesus expects from His church (the "sons of light") when it comes to dealing with "their own generation" (i.e. the people of their world/culture/day). They are to be creative – or thinking of ingenious ways to win such people to Him w/the monies He has placed under their management. Unfortunately, Jesus realizes this often where the church misses it – meaning the world does a better job at this than the church (8b). Yet again this is what we are being called to do with the additional monies that God provides to us (9) = Use the additional monies given to you ("by means of unrighteous wealth") to increase the number of people going to heaven/to win more people to Christ ("friends" who "receive you into eternal dwellings"; see again verse 4 – "when I am removed from management" = when we die or our

management of those talents/resources God has given to us comes to an end; “people may receive me into their houses” = b/c we were wise to win souls for Christ, they now welcome us in heaven; Mat 25:14-30; examples of creativity/ingenuity to accomplish God’s will = Exo 2:1-10; Example of creatively using our additional monies to evangelize/win more people to Christ in our world/culture/day = Investing in the resources/people who can help pastor produce evangelistic YouTube videos that are culturally relevant and appealing to the world of our day; Revelation commentary).

**4. Using the additional money God gives to win more people to Christ is one of the ways we as a church prove that we can be entrusted with greater kingdom opportunities.**

(10) = The “very little” of Jesus’ instruction refers to our additional monies. This is confirmed by considering verse 10 w/11(11 – “unrighteous wealth” represents the “very little” of verse 10 whereas “true riches” represents the “much”). According to Jesus (then), this money is given as a test. What we choose to do w/it (i.e. how we spend it) proves whether we can be trusted w/more opportunities to advance God’s kingdom (on earth) since – in Jesus’ estimation, our faithfulness (now w/the “very little”) reflects how faithful we would be if we were given even more responsibilities or oversight of His kingdom on earth. So then, the impact Christ Covenant Church will ultimately have on this world (even Denver) for our King is dependent on what we do with the additional monies we now possess.

**5. Not using the additional money that God gives to win more people to Christ will mean forfeiting our own salvation.**

(11 - “true riches” = salvation) = If Jesus’ previous words haven’t convinced us of how important our proper use of those additional monies are to God, this should do the trick. Our own salvation is dependent on it. IOW: if we hope to get to heaven, then seeing that the additional monies of our church are used to win more people to Christ is imperative (i.e. not optional). Like the manager in the parable, this (too) is our way to secure our future. Hence the reason Paul can say what he does to the Philippians who had invested their additional monies in this way (Phi 4:3).

**6. Not using the additional money that God gives to win more people to Christ will mean forfeiting God’s personal/earthly blessing to us.**

(12) IOW: If you have not been faithful to use God’s money for those things He has commanded you to use them for – which again is winning more people to Christ, why would He bless you w/money for your “own” personal use? The connection between these two things (using our additional monies to further God’s ministry in the world and God blessing us w/money for personal use) are referenced in several of Paul’s letters (Phi 4:17-19; 2Co 9:6-12).

**7. When we don’t make winning more people to Christ the priority and focus of those additional monies given by God, we are guilty of serving money (not God).**

(13) = This is how Jesus sees it. We only have two choices: 1) use *His money*, His way - and as a result, be identified as those serving God or 2) (like thieves) use it on what we want (or think best) – and as a result, be identified as those serving (the god of) money. It’s obvious then, if we want to be a church truly serving God, then we must be a church who makes the priority and focus of our additional monies the advancement of His kingdom thru the winning of more people to Christ. An example of how churches can end up serving money instead of God is (once more) a church saving their additional monies so that they don’t have to worry about the future or using it to pay off debt so that future expenses won’t exist. Anytime we do those things to the neglect of evangelism, we are serving money and not God (Luk 12:15-34).

**CLOSING CONTEMPLATION/CHALLENGE** = What are we doing/going to do w/those additional monies that God has so richly blessed us with? According to JESUS there is only one right answer (USE IT TO WIN MORE PEOPLE TO HIM!) (Pro 11:30).