

Announcements:

- New Here Lunch April 28th after 2nd service.
 - Cinco de Mayo Youth Fundraiser. Selling taco plates.
 - Last day of Spring Life Groups: May 18th.
 - Sign-ups and more can be found at trinitywax.info
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QUESTION: What is one thing that you took away from Sunday's message?

Shrewd Manager, Wise Christian

This week we will look at a few of Jesus parables. The parables of Jesus always teach us something about the Kingdom of God. Sometimes these parables seem straightforward and easy to understand, other times they can be confusing and seem a bit strange. We will begin by looking at one of Jesus's parables that seems pretty strange to modern readers. It is sometimes known as the parable of the unjust steward. Let's read this story from Luke 16 together:

Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'

"The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

"So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

"'Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.'

"Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' " 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'

"The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight. (Luke 16:1-14, NIV).

What a strange story--In illustrating a truth about the Kingdom of God, Jesus tells a story about a bad employee who cheats his boss! Then Jesus says that the children of the light (that's us) ought to learn something from this cheating money manager. Does this story teach us to defraud our employers? Certainly not, but there is an important lesson in this story for how we think about our money and how we think about the future.

In this parable the man finds out that his current situation is going to change drastically. While he has enjoyed the comfort of his master's home and a steady source of provision, he is faced with the reality that he will be out on the streets with no way to provide for himself. This meant that faithfulness to his current master was no longer beneficial to him because he knew that his situation was about to change. This reflects Jesus's teaching about the coming of the Kingdom of God. Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God was coming and that this would mean that the current kingdoms of this world would pass away. As believers, this means that we must recognize that we are like the man in this story. We know that our situation will change. If we just keep living as if nothing will change, we will find that our efforts have not

helped us at all. The man in the story used the wealth that he had available in his current situation to benefit him in the situation that was coming. This is the point that Jesus is making. All of us have access to resources in our lives. Some more, and some less, but all of us have some resources that we control. Jesus is telling us that if we spend all of those resources to benefit us in this current life, we are failing to understand the Kingdom that will come. We must use our time, energy, and money to benefit us in the coming Kingdom of God. When we support the mission of God through spreading the Gospel and caring for the poor, this is like the man who used his position to benefit him in the new situation that he knew was coming.

Question: In what ways can we use the resources that are available to us now in ways that will benefit us in the coming Kingdom of God?

Hidden Treasure

In the Gospel of Matthew, we find two short parables of Jesus which describe a hidden treasure. Let's read these parables from Matthew chapter thirteen:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. (Matt 13:44-46, NIV).

Like the first parable that we looked at, this parable is about understanding the Kingdom of Heaven. The point of these stories is that when we discover the good news of the coming kingdom, we will realize that its value is greater than anything that we could possess. If you knew that a valuable treasure was hidden on a piece of property, and that the value of this treasure far exceeded the price of the land, it would be foolishness

not to buy it. Even if you had to use every penny that you had. In the same way, since Jesus has made the treasure of his kingdom known to us, we know that it will be worth any price to experience the joy of his coming reign. Of course this does not mean that we can somehow buy our way into the kingdom of heaven, but it does mean that we should understand our lives and our possession in light of this treasure.

QUESTION: How does our knowledge of the coming of the kingdom shape the way we understand our wealth and possession?

Prayer

Take the time to check on prayer requests from last week and pray for any new or continuing needs in the group. Give praise to God for answered prayer.