

Upside Down Kingdom (8)- He Acted Shrewdly

(Luke 16:1-9)

I. Introduction

- A. I went to Christian bookstore to buy a book I needed for last week's sermon
1. I didn't plan ahead, so I didn't have time to order it from CBD or Amazon
 - a. I was expecting to pay a lot—especially since all they had was hardback
 - b. Well, it was on sale for \$2! For once, my lack of planning paid off!
 2. I spent some time browsing... What do you think is most important topic?
 - a. These are books publishers think will sell; it's not commentaries on Amos
 - b. What you do see on best-seller rack are books about Christian *prosperity!*
- B. Prosperity Gospel... Health-n-Wealth... Name-n-Claim-It... Blab-n-Grab-It
1. No matter what you call it, the point is that God wants his people to be rich
 - a. That's not an exaggeration—it's the title of one of these bestsellers!
 - b. One of their writers says, "*Why not gain the whole world plus your soul?*"
 2. According to a *Time* poll in 2006, 17% of Christians believe this doctrine
 - a. 61% believe that God wants His people to be financially prosperous.
 - b. 31% believe if you give God money, God will give you more money.
 - c. 4 of the 5 largest churches in America are dedicated to this doctrine.
 - d. Great majority of the religious TV shows are by people who espouse this
 - 1) Why do you suppose that is? Because it is what people want to hear!
 - 2) Paul warns against teachers who scratch our itching ears (**1 Tim 4:3**)
 3. Rick Warren says there's a word for this health-n-wealth idea, "*Baloney.*"
 4. He also says, "*It's not a sin to be wealthy; it may be a sin to die wealthy*"
- C. The failure of Prosperity Gospel is seeing money through the lens of this world
1. Jesus does speak a lot on finances, but always thru lens of kingdom of God
 - a. We've been looking at Luke's parables— "*Upside Down Kingdom*"
 - b. When Jesus looked at finances, it's from an upside down perspective
 2. In **Luke 16**, Jesus tells a parable about prosperity... Shrewd Manager
 - a. This parable isn't about how faith can make is more prosperous
 - b. Parable is about the use of money in the upside-down kingdom of God

II. He Acted Shrewdly: What Parable Says (Reading: [Luke 16:1-8](#))

- A. Parable is about rich man and his “*manager*” (familiar KJV word is “*steward*”)
1. We’d probably call this guy a “*business manager*” or a “*business agent*”
 - a. He conducted business in the name of owner with full power of attorney
 - b. Same word as “*city treasurer*” or “*director of public works*” ([Rom 16:23](#))
 - c. So this manager or steward had a great deal of power and freedom
 2. He is accused of “*wasting*” (NIV) or “*squandering*” (NAS) master’s money.
 - a. Same word (“*wasting*”) is used of prodigal sin in far country ([Lk 15:13](#))
 - b. The manager will be fired, and there will be a full audit of the accounts
 - 1) Notice that the manger doesn’t proclaim his innocence. *Why?*
 - 2) What will he do now? He’s too old to dig and too proud to beg.
 3. So he hits on a scheme to ingratiate himself to people who owe his master
 - a. He reduces their bill— pay 400 (not 800) gallons of oil and even.
 - b. Just pay 800 bushels of wheat instead of 1000 and close the account.
 4. His plan was for former debtors to be so grateful they would give him a job
- B. Commentators have been pretty creative trying to explain exactly what he does.
1. Some suggest that the manager he is simply forgoing his commission.
 - a. As steward, he is an agent of the master and is also entitled to payment.
 - b. So maybe he just forgoes his commission and marks down the total bill.
 2. Leon Morris suggests the accounts were inflated because of illegal interest.
 - a. Usury was forbidden by Law; Jews could not charge interest to Jews
 - 1) But here the amounts owed were in goods (oil and wheat), not money
 - 2) Amounts and value of good could be easily inflated off the books
 - b. So the reason for the large debts was the owner was charging interest
 - c. So he can’t accuse the manager without admitting to his own usury.
- C. But Jesus doesn’t call him “*inept*” or “*lazy*,” but “*dishonest*” or “”([v. 8](#))
1. Why “*dishonest*?” (This is often called “*Parable of the Unjust Steward*”)
 - a. Was he “*dishonest*” because of his original wasteful spending in [verse 1](#)?
 - b. Or was “*dishonest*” because of his shrewd plan for future in [verses 5-7](#)?
 2. Both? He gets out of this jam the same way he got into it—dishonestly!

3. **Question:** “*Why would Jesus use evil behavior to make his point?*”
 - a. **Answer:** Jesus sometimes does that to make point stand out more clearly.
 - 1) *Persistent Widow* asks for help from judge called “*unjust.*” (**18:6**)
 - 2) And “*unjust*” judge is the same word for “*dishonest*” manager here.
 - b. The reason for negative example is the same—makes contrast stand out.
 - 1) If widow kept asking unjust judge, we must keep praying to just God.
 - 2) If bad people use money for bad things, how should we use money?
4. Jesus isn’t interested in how much money we have or if we enjoy it.
 - a. He is interested in how we use money to show God’s rule in our lives.
 - b. Notice how Jesus elaborates on the point of this parable

III.He Acted Shrewdly: Application for Us

- A. **First**, we must use our money to plan for our heavenly dwelling (**Luke 16:9**)
 1. Point of the parable is how we use our money now so it lasts for future.
 - a. Master commends the Shrewd Manager for using money for his future.
 - b. This is Jesus’ point in the Sermon on Mount (**Matt 6:19-21**)
 - c. Paul suggest this happens if we use money to do good (**1 Tim 6:18-19**)
 2. Let’s see, what example can I use of how hard it is to plan for retirement?
 - a. Take my IRA... please! How is your 401-K doing these days?
 - 1) I’ve gotten more letters from my investment guy since plunge
 - 2) What he says, “*Don’t panic!*” He says it so much, I begin to panic!
 - b. One of the things he asked me, “*How long do you plan to be retired?*”
 - 1) That not just when you retire but how long you live after you retire
 - 2) That’s the question! If I live 6 months after retiring, I’m good to do!
 3. Jesus wants us to take this same view of our spiritual financial planning.
 - a. How long do you expect to be in eternity? *We need to plan for that!*
 - 1) Money is a tool we are to use to prepare us for heavenly retirement!
 - 2) Use money to prepare for death in ways that last beyond death.
 - b. Jesus says people of world plan better retirements than people of kingdom
 - 1) Heaven is a great retirement plan, but we do have to save up for it!
 - 2) You make deposits in your heavenly IRA by using money for good.

- B. **Second**, using money wisely allows us to receive real blessings ([16:10-12](#))
1. Interestingly, prosperity teachers use [verse 10](#) as one of their proof texts
 - a. If you are faithful over a little (*i.e. give it to them*), God will give a lot!
 - b. But money here is little thing; the true blessing is worth much more
 - c. If we are faithful with money, God will give us true wealth—***Himself!***
 2. The point here isn't, "*If God makes me successful, then I'll tithe...*"
 - a. Point really is, "*What am I doing now with my material blessings?*"
 - b. Am I being a faithful manger over God's stuff (*if He called for audit?*)
 - c. If I am using my stuff only on myself, is that not being unfaithful
- C. **Third**, how we see money determine who we see as God ([Luke 16:13](#))
1. Money isn't God's ultimate blessing; it may be idol in competition w/ Him
 - a. Notice that Jesus doesn't say that we shouldn't serve God and money.
 - b. He says we cannot serve God and money; only one fits on the throne.
 2. But then how do we know whether we really serving God, not Money?
 - a. Money is pretty important to us, isn't it? *Anyone think it's not?*
 - 1) But no one here would say, "I think I will serve Money, not God!"
 - 2) Sure, unspiritual people out there might, not spiritual folks here!
 - b. ***Oh Really?*** Look at the reaction of some Pharisees ([Luke 16:14-15](#))
 3. How we use our money is a test of allegiance in how we feel about God

IV. Conclusion

- A. Someone on my blog sent me a link to the website of Justin Peters
1. He does a seminar called "[A Call to Discernment](#)" on Prosperity Gospel
 2. He uses clips from TV shows to show what Prosperity teaches believe
 3. It is a fair and powerful presentation that shows dangers of movement
- B. It may be even more powerful because Justin suffers from Cerebral Palsy
1. God doesn't promise health-n-wealth, but to use our weakness ([2 Cor 12:9](#))
 - a. God's never promises that if we are faithful, He'll bless us with wealth
 - b. He does promise us true blessings if we use worldly wealth shrewdly
 2. God wants to give us true wealth, but our hands are often too full of stuff!