

## Use Your Filthy Lucre

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, money is “an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and a universal provider for everything except happiness” (quoted from Warren Wiersbe’s *The Bible Exposition Commentary*). It is amazing that a publication like the *Wall Street Journal* could give insight that Jesus Himself would agree with completely! Jesus spoke and warned about the dangers of money more than any other topic. Money wields great power and control over our lives. The King James Version uses the loaded term “filthy lucre” to describe its earthly character and its corruptive potential on the lives of those in leadership (Titus 1:11; 1 Tim 3:3). Most often, however, Jesus spoke of money in relationship to stewardship and so it is in Luke 16.

But what is *stewardship*, and how does it impact our daily perspective, priorities, and planning for the future? Maybe it would be helpful to define stewardship before moving into the content of the text. **Christian stewardship goes beyond putting money in the offering and using the remainder for ourselves.** It is thankfully living with God as the owner of everything we have and using it as He directs. As stewards we don’t own, we manage! With that as a foundation, let’s move on to the text recorded in Luke 16.

In the chapter, Jesus shares three traits of a good steward, who manages well. First, a good steward **invests cleverly** (Lk 16:1-13). Second, the good steward **keeps his devotion singular and undivided** (Lk 16:14-18). Third, the good steward **understands what is at stake** (Lk 16:19-31). Each of the traits corresponds with a parable, a brief interaction with the Pharisees, and another parable respectively. They form a gospel-centered perspective on a disciple’s handling of money and resources.

As a matter of fact, as followers of Jesus, our life-priority goes beyond presently managing money and resources, but leveraging them for eternal purposes! In connection to the story often referred to as “The Parable of the Dishonest Manager”, **Jesus points out that His followers should be equally concerned about preparing for the next life as unbelievers are in preparing for the needs of the present life.** A good steward uses his earthly resources to build relationships, so that when the earthly wealth is gone, the souls of those impacted might await him or her in eternity (v. 9). Now that’s a great return on an investment! George Müller, the director of Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, known for his evangelistic fervor and extraordinary commitment to prayer understood the importance of trusting

God and functioning as a prayerful steward who manages God's resources for His purposes and glory:

Let us walk as stewards and not act as owners, keeping for ourselves the means with which the Lord has entrusted us. He has not blessed us that we may gratify our own carnal mind but for the sake of using our money in His service and to His praise.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, God rewards faithful clever investment (Lk 16:10-13). Yet the siren call of money and what it can afford is tempting. It pulls the heart away from the true Treasure toward cheap, but shiny, imitations. Even the religious leaders turned up their noses at Jesus' warnings, because they "were lovers of money" posing as lovers of God and His Word (v. 14-18). The truth is that we love what we trust and trust what we love. Money merely reveals our idols. Consequently, **the good steward must be wary of a divided allegiance**. "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matt 6:24).

Jesus' teaching on the rich man and Lazarus adds one more important component to good stewardship. Since money and possessions are not inherently sinful or destructive, it is easy to get caught up in the stuff of earth rather than the things of heaven. It is easy to forget that God's perspective is generally less focused on the here and now and more on the world to come. Yet, **the good steward recognizes the significance of the wager**. Our attitude toward riches - good or bad - has eternal consequences (1 Tim 6:10). The rich man did not experience torment because he had been rich, and Lazarus did not end up receiving comfort because he had been poor. No. Their eternal reward was a product of where they placed their trust. The rich man placed his trust in money and a flamboyant life, while Lazarus placed his trust in the Lord. So, know the source of true riches: Jesus, the Great Treasure. It is He who said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt 6:19-21).

Use your filthy lucre for God's glory. Live generously. Give joyfully. And trust God fully.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Autobiography of George Muller, 1984, p. 195

**2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (ESV)** - "... whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. **Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, 'He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God."