What we can learn from the Unjust Steward – Luke 16:1-13

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I. Introduction
   a. One of the strangest of Jesus’ parables
      i. A wicked man does wickedly and is praised for it
      ii. No judgment
      iii. No separation of the righteous and the wicked
      iv. The parable itself ends with no word spoken against the villain of the story
      v. Even his victims praise him
   b. One of the most misunderstood parables
      i. Who is the unfaithful steward?
         1. Hebrew teachers?
         2. Paul the Apostle?
         3. Judas Iscariot? Jesus?
         4. All of these have been suggested - “Notes on the Parables of our Lord”, by Robert Trench
      ii. What is the lesson?
         1. Cheat others to gain earthly advantage?
         2. Seek influence with the high and mighty in the world?
         3. If you gain money through wickedness, use some of it to help others, and you can keep the rest?
         4. No application for us today?
            a. If you are like me, you have never heard a sermon on this parable
      iii. Who is the audience
         1. This we know – the disciples – v. 1

II. Key thought: This parable has several important lessons for all disciples of Jesus

III. What happened – (v. 1-8)
   a. The steward got caught wasting his masters goods
   b. He was fired, but had to give an account
      i. Turning over the books to his master
   c. His plans
      i. Prospects dim
      ii. One advantage, he still can act on his masters’ behalf
   d. His actions
      i. He conspired with the debtors of his master in order to cheat his master
      ii. They had received X amount of goods which they still owed payment on.
iii. The unjust steward rewrote the contracts or promissory notes to alter their obligation greatly in their favor

iv. It was pure dishonesty –
   1. The steward knew it
   2. The debtors knew it
   3. The master knew it

v. But the steward was counting on the fact that this dirty dealing would make these debtors indebted to him
   1. He was counting on being received kindly by them after he was terminated
   2. As long as the steward and the debtor spoke the same thing, is going to be hard to prove what had happened

The assessment of the master
   i. It was shrewd/prudent/wise
   ii. Apparently it was done in such a way that it could not easily be undone
   iii. You got me good!

IV. Five Lessons from the Unjust Steward
   a. Lesson 1: The sons of light should be as prudent as the sons of the world – v. 8
      i. In the parable who were the sons of the world?
         1. the unjust steward
         2. the debtors
         3. the master
      ii. They are more wiser in their generation than the sons are light are in their generation
         1. They are more prudent and diligent in seeking the things of the world
         2. Than Christians are in seeking heaven
         3. There is something wrong with that!
            a. The reward is infinitely greater
            b. The reward is eternal rather than temporary
               i. A perishable crown – 1 Cor. 9:24-27
            c. To seek these heavenly rewards is to please God
            d. Requires no dirty dealing
      iii. Why are the sons of the world more diligent servants of mammon than the sons of light are of God?
         1. Examples – Secular
            a. A soldier - 2 Tim. 2:3-4
               i. Where are the soldiers of the cross?
            b. Typical person spends at least 8 hours a day, 9 months a year for 12 years to educate themselves for a career that will last for 4 or 5 decades
            c. Where are the disciples of Christ who are willing to spend more than a few hours a week to educate
themselves in the ways of the Lord which will equip them for an eternity with Christ?

d. Typical person spends hundreds of thousands of dollars and thousands of hours of their free time over a lifetime on recreation, entertainment and luxuries

e. How many are willing to do the same for eternal riches?

2. Examples – Spiritual

   a. Satanist on airplane fasting and praying for the downfall of Christian leaders
      i. Where are the Christians fasting and praying for the spiritual wellbeing of the church and its leaders?

   b. Followers of the Muslim faith willing to kill to promote their beliefs
      i. Where are the Christians who willing to die to promote their beliefs?

   c. Followers of denominations exceeding all the bounds of scripture in their desire to serve God
      i. Where are the Christians who are doing everything in their power within the bounds of Scripture in their desire to serve God?

b. Lesson 2: Temporary riches should be invested to produce eternal benefits – v. 9

   i. The children of the world make friends of the world through the ungodly use of unrighteous mammon

   ii. The children of light make friends of God by doing good deeds with the things of this world that they possess – Matt. 25:40; Eph 4:28

   iii. Two kinds of riches

      1. True and false – v. 11

      2. Temporary and eternal

         a. An eternal weight of glory – 2 Cor 4:17-18

         b. Lay up treasures in heaven – Matt. 6:19-21

         c. Rich toward God

      3. 1 Tim 6:17-19

   c. Lesson 3: In no way should Jesus’ disciples engage in underhanded business practices – v. 10

      i. We must be faithful

         1. In the most

         2. In the least

         3. In everything!

      ii. Otherwise we will not receive our inheritance

         1. We will be giving up our birthright for a mess of pottage

         2. Will may gain the world but we will lose our soul
d. Lesson 4: Our handling of our finances reflects our general level of faithfulness, and will have eternal consequences – v. 11-12

e. Lesson 5: We must choose our master
   i. Two choices
      1. God
      2. Mammon
   ii. Both seek to claim us
   iii. We cannot serve one without offending the other
      1. Their goals and aims are contradictory
      2. Their commands are opposed to each other
      3. If we try to serve both we will only offend both
      4. To be a friend of the world is to be the enemy of God
      5. All who desire to live godly will suffer persecution
   iv. We WILL BE an unfaithful steward either to the world or to God
      1. If we act as God would have us act with respect to our money, the world will accuse us of wasting our goods and call us to account at every opportunity. Moreover, we eventually will be dismissed from this world and need to have a plan of how we will maintain ourselves when that happens.
      2. If we act as the world would have us with respect to our money, God will accuse us of wasting His goods and call us to account. We will be dismissed. Who will receive us then?

V. Conclusion
a. Choose this day whom you will serve
   i. If you serve the world
      1. You have to heap up the things the world values
      2. He who dies with the most toys wins
      3. But after death?
   ii. If you serve God
      1. You must use the world’s things to accomplish God’s purposes
      2. Facing the scorn and opposition of the world
      3. But being welcomed by divine friends into eternal joy
   iii. Choose your master, then please your master

b. INVITATION