

## Faithful manager of the kingdom of God (Luke 16:1-13)

We have been studying the gospel of Luke together. Today, we will study the theme “Faithful manager of the kingdom of God” from the first half of cp. 16, vv. 1 to 13.

### 1. The shrewdness of the dishonest manager

#### 1-8

<sup>1</sup> Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. <sup>2</sup> 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.' <sup>3</sup> "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— <sup>4</sup> I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' <sup>5</sup> "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' <sup>6</sup> " 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' <sup>7</sup> "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.' <sup>8</sup> "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.

This is the parable of the dishonest manager. In what kind of context does Luke put this scene?

#### Luke 15:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. <sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Then, Jesus tells them the story of the prodigal son, and then this scene in chapter 16 comes right after that. In this context, Jesus speaks to his disciples, “I understand the father’s heart and I am faithfully doing what my father entrusted me to do. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law don’t understand

it. But you must understand what God entrusted to you, and be faithful in your mission.

Now, let's look at the parable of the dishonest manager.

The story of the prodigal son which comes right before this gives us the hint for this parable. The prodigal son used up all the money he received from his father with wild living. During the famine, he was starving to death. The point is what he did about it. He came back to the father. Let's focus on it.

Now, in cp 16, the manager was wasting the master's possessions. And that was found out. It is the matter of time that he would be fired. The point is what he did about it.

He called in the master's debtors and reduced their debt. His intention was to make friends who would help him when his master took away his job. He prepared for the unemployment using his current position.

If you look at v 8, it is clear that what the manager did was dishonest. It is wrong for him to abuse his authority. It is wrong for him to privatize the money and things which is entrusted to him because of his work. It is wrong to do it, knowing the organization he works for will receive damage, and suffer losses if he does it.

Then, in what sense was he commended? He was commended for his shrewdness. What is his shrewdness?

What he has done was found out and judged. He cannot escape from being fired. But he didn't just panic, or grieve over his poor way of handling things, or try to please his master hoping he might overlook his offence. Instead, he did what he could do, preparing for the unemployment. That was his shrewdness. It is good that he noticed he must prepare for the unemployment and he did something he can do in that moment, but what he did was wrong.

9

<sup>9</sup> And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings. (NASB)

"The wealth of unrighteousness" is earthly wealth. One commentator explains that here it says "they will receive you", but it is a Jewish euphemistic way, or in direct way of saying "God will receive you".

We can understand this verse as follows: Whatever you are given and entrusted with by God on this earth, at this present time, use them as a friend of God who will be welcomed into God's kingdom in the last day.

Jesus is speaking to his disciples, "Be faithful in what you are entrusted with as God's fellow workers. Don't forget that you are citizens of the glorious eternal kingdom of God. I have received my Father's heart, and I am doing what my Father has entrusted me to do faithfully. You too must understand what you are entrusted with by the Father, and be faithful in your mission.

Now is the end of the age. The kingdom of God is drawing near. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you into the world. I have given you the key of the kingdom of God. I have entrusted you with the good news of the kingdom of God.

There will be those who attack you and hinder you. There will be challenges and hardships. But be faithful in your mission. There will be confusion that may cause you to deviate from what you are supposed to do. There may also be doubt about whether you are doing all right or not. There will be time you might feel whatever you do won't work, and you feel like giving up. But even then, be faithful in your call, for you are my friends, fellow workers of God, and citizens of God's kingdom."

Then, we can study three important things to remember as a manager of the kingdom of God.

2. Be faithful in whatever we do.

## 10

<sup>10</sup> 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.

Things to remember as a manager of the kingdom of God: First of all, we must be faithful in whatever we do.

There are many different kinds of works. There are some works which are easy, or which seem insignificant, or which are not seen by others. There are some kind of works which no matter how hard you do, you cannot see much result. But the Bible teaches us to be faithful in whatever we do.

If a person works hard for the works which are noticeable, but sloppy in small details, or unwilling to do small task, the person is essentially not faithful.

No matter what he does, a faithful person will do the job faithfully. Whether the work is noticeable or not, whether the task is important or simple and easy, a faithful person will do it faithfully.

The more important the task is, the more the master will use a faithful person to do it. It is quite natural. The important task cannot be entrusted to an unfaithful person, for it is risky.

If you feel your boss or God won't use you, you may want to ask yourself if you had been faithful even in a small matter, small details.

I read a story like this. A reporter interviewed people working at NASA. He took a tour of their facilities, interviewed people in different sections, in many departments. He marveled at their state-of-the-art machinery and the most advanced knowledge and technology. And he asked a person "What is your job?" And the person answered, "I am supporting the project of sending a man to the moon." Then, he asked "Which section are you working in? What is your position?" He replied "I'm a cleaner."

Each one of us is a manager of the kingdom of God. That is, no matter what our role is, we are taking part of an important work. If we understand this, we cannot help but be faithful in what we are in charge of, whether that is big or small.

#### Rom 12:4-6

<sup>4</sup> Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

One body has many members which has different functions. There is no superiority or inferiority. There is no part which is unnecessary. They function differently, but they are connected and forming one body. As they relate to one another, each of them fulfills its function and the life of the body is sustained.

In the same way, in the kingdom of God, each of us has a different role, different function. Though there are many different works, there is no one who is not needed. And there is no work which can be neglected.

By being faithful in a small matter, we will be able to fulfill greater, more difficult works in time.

### 3. Wealth is what God has entrusted to us

#### 11-12

<sup>11</sup> So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? <sup>12</sup> And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

Things to remember as a manager of the kingdom of God: Secondly, wealth is what God has entrusted to us.

We live in monetary economy society. We use money daily. We need money to live. We work, earn a living and live with the money.

The Bible gives us a different perspective.

#### Ps 24:1

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

Everything is the Lord's. All belong to Him. And God entrusted them to us so that we would use them as managers of the kingdom of God. We seek God's kingdom and His righteousness, and in order to realize them, we use what was entrusted to us, including money.

So how much is God's and how much is mine? As we offer our tithes, a tenth, is a tenth of what we have God's? No, all belong to Him. Everything is God's.

Here is a little reminder about "tithes." Tithing is the practice of returning one tenth of one's net income to God. It is the demonstration of our faith in God. It is the expression of our gratitude and love for God. It is the first step we take, as the stewards of what we are entrusted by God. Some people seem to believe that tithing is the Old Testament teaching. But Jesus clearly advocates tithing (Luke 11:42).

We usually tithe at the church where we currently worship and participate, and where we currently belong to.

NLIF is self-supporting. That is, all activities, any expenses; the rental of

this place, materials for Sunday school, salaries of the pastor and church staff, the cost of printing church bulletins, and even coffee and water are all covered by your tithe and offering. Besides our own expenses, we're supporting church planting ministries. As the pastor of this church, I appreciate your generous giving.

Now, does God need our money? Can he not do anything without our money? Is that why the Bible teaches us to give tithe and offering? No, everything is God's. All belong to Him. And God entrusted His to us. We are using them as stewards. The tithing and offering is the demonstration of our faith in God, and our faithfulness. And it reminds us that we are managers of the kingdom of God.

You don't have to feel guilty about using money for yourself and your family. That's what I think. God also entrusted us to protect our health and protect our family.

But, if we use our wealth, money and ability, just thinking how we can become richer, how we can get things more and more and more that is greed, which is idolatry. (Col. 3:5)

#### 1 Tim 6:5

....constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

Even "godliness" and "faith" can be a means for greed.

Wealth is entrusted by God. If we understand this, we don't have to worry. We should not waste or squander our wealth. It is important for us to manage our money wisely, purposefully and effectively. We shouldn't forget the heart of stewardship. But you don't have to worry.

#### 2 Cor 9:8

God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Wealth is entrusted by God. God entrusted it to us so that we would use it as managers of the kingdom of God. We seek God's kingdom and His

righteousness, and in order to realize them, we use what was entrusted to us, including money.

#### 4. We serve God.

##### 13

<sup>13</sup> No servant can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money.

Things to remember as a manager of the kingdom of God: Thirdly, we serve God.

Serving the Lord itself is a blessing, privilege, and honor. That is much more blessing, privilege and honor than serving any king on the earth.

The queen of Sheba came to Solomon's palace and saw many things and was overwhelmed and said:

##### 1 King 10:8

How happy your people must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! (NIV)

How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom. (NASB)

Your people have been blessed as a result of living under your reign. Those who serve you continually are richly blessed to hear your wisdom day in and day out. (Voice)

The queen of Sheba was overwhelmed by Solomon and exclaimed, "How happy your people must be!" But serving the Lord must be much more than that.

The queen of Sheba came to Solomon's palace and saw many things and was overwhelmed. One of the things that amazed her was the attitude of those who serve him.

### 1 King 10:4-5

<sup>4</sup> When the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom and skill, the house he had built, <sup>5</sup> The food of his table, the seating of his officials, the **standing at attention** of his servants, their apparel, his cupbearers, his ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord [or the burnt offerings he sacrificed], she was breathless and overcome. (AMP)

<sup>4</sup> When the queen recognized Solomon's wisdom and observed the palace he had envisioned and constructed, <sup>5</sup> the food on his table, the orderly arrangement of his servants, **the attentive service** and fine dress of his waiters, his wine servers, and the beautiful stairway that led up to the Eternal's temple, she was in complete awe. (Voice)

It is not just the attitude of some people in important office, but also the attitude of people who serve food and everyone serving there. They already knew how happy they were to serve Solomon before the queen of Sheba mentioned it, and their attitude showed it.

No matter what our role is, the more we understand how blessed, privileged and honored we are to serve the Lord, the more we will become faithful in what we are entrusted with.

We are living as a member of the society. We serve one another in various groups, organizations, such as families and so on. Church is one of them. As soon as we forget that we are serving God, we will lose motivation for serving others, and serving will become just a duty. There will be no joy, no peace to serve people. Our attitude become like this. "Why should I do such a thing?" We become judgmental. "He doesn't do anything?" We are tempted to cut corners. "I don't have to do that much." We feel empty to do what we are doing. "Even if I do this, it won't make any changes." We start to feel as if we were useless. "No one appreciate me. No one praise me."

Imagine a flower which blooms deep in the mountains without being known by anyone. Even though no one see it nor appreciate it, it still opens its petal with all its might, it colors the mountain without sparing its beauty, and it blooms beautifully today, tomorrow and as long as it lives. It praises God, the creator, and extols His wonder.

We were created in the image of God. (Gen 1:27) Wherever we are and whatever we are doing, we are showing God Himself, and His wonder. Whether people notice you or not, whether they praise you or not, it doesn't matter. It doesn't change the fact that you, and I were created in the image of God. It doesn't make what God has entrusted to you worthless.

We are being sent to the world, entrusted with the good news of the kingdom of God. When we live as disciples of Christ, we will face obstruction, opposition and hardship. But let us be faithful in our mission. Sometimes we may be perplexed, confused or we may have doubt whether we are on the right track or not. We may even be tempted to give up all together, feeling as if we couldn't make it, no matter what we try. In a moment like that, let's remember we are the citizen of the glorious, everlasting kingdom of God. Let us be faithful in what we are entrusted, as God's fellow workers.