

Sermon Notes on Luke 16:1-9, Trinity IX

1. This text has been called the most difficult of Jesus' parables. But it is not so difficult if a person carefully studies the words. Vss. 1-13 are addressed to Christians, the disciples, vs. 1. These vss. tell Christians to use their earthly possessions wisely, always with the thought that all things belong to God and that they will live forever, vs. 9. Vss. 10-13 keep us from interpreting wrongly. Then vss. 14-18 describe the money-loving, Christ-hating Pharisees who refused to listen to God's Word and who wanted to be considered righteous without changing their hearts. Then another parable, vss. 19-31, tells us how not to use our earthly possessions.
2. This is our parable: A wealthy landlord hired a manager who managed the laborers on his land. The manager was accused of mismanagement and was fired immediately and told to turn in the record books. Before the manager turned in the books, without the consent of the landlord, he shrewdly but crookedly called in several laborers and made settlement of debts which favored the laborers. In this way the crooked manager made friends with the laborers so that he could live with them after he had turned in his books. Vs. 8 must be handled very carefully. The first half of this verse tells us that the landlord congratulated the wicked manager for shrewdly, though wickedly, looking out for himself. The second half of this verse tells us that the children of this world, unbelievers, are wiser in worldly matters than Christians are. Then, vs. 9 tells us that we should use the money which is usually used for unrighteous purposes to make friends for ourselves so that when we die we may be received into heaven.
3. This parable does not say that people earn heaven by their works. It is talking about the proper use of earthly goods (money, house, wife, family, car, work) in the interest of other people and the kingdom of God.
4. Luther often said: "Faith alone justifies but faith is never alone." Works never save us but where there is saving faith there are always works. James said: "Faith without works is dead." Jesus said: "Every branch in Me which does not bear fruit He cuts it off." "If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown out as the branch and withered and people gather them and throw them into the fire and burn them." Jn. 15:2.6. The parable of the talents at Mt. 25:14-30 tells us that God expects us to use everything which He has given us to His glory and the benefit of our neighbor.
5. Our text, Lk. 16:1-9, is a parable of opposites. Just as the wicked manager shrewdly used everything in his own interest for this life only, so the believing child of God should shrewdly use everything as God wants him to use it in his own interest for the life to come. In vs. 9 "they will receive you" means "the Triune God will receive you."
6. Vss. 10-12 keep us from wrong interpretations. A person's use of his temporal things is a clear indication of his use and view of spiritual things. Then vs. 13 warns us to serve the Lord wholeheartedly because no person can serve two masters at the same time.
7. How does a Christian pursue stewardship correctly? By simply doing his God-given duty faithfully at all times. Col. 3:2 says: "Seek the things which are above, not the things on the earth." One theologian has commented: "In the right use of earthly things given to us, we really mind and seek heavenly things."
8. Both believers and unbelievers live for the future. The unbelievers live only for this life. The believer always keeps his attention on eternal life. Jesus has already given the believer eternal life. But now the believer must live wisely and faithfully, always remembering that at the end, will welcome him with the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter the joy of your Lord." Mt. 25:21.

the Lord

Sermon Outline on Luke 16:1-9, Trinity IX

Theme: WHAT A PERSON'S USE OF TEMPORAL THINGS REVEALS ABOUT HIM

Introduction: People cannot look into our hearts. But they can see our life and works. That's why Jesus said: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and thus glorify your Father in heaven." Our life should show people that we are heaven-bound.

I-THE USE OF TEMPORAL THINGS REVEALS GOALS

A-The goal of the worldling. He is like the unjust manager of our text. He was thinking only of the joy and security of this life. He cheated his master. He cheated the laborers. He was very dishonest. His only goal was the joy and security of this life. Jesus says in our text that the people of this world are shrewd in these things.

B-The goal of the Christian. He is the opposite of the unjust manager. His primary thought is the joy and security of eternal life. Ps. 16:11; Php. 1:21-23; Jn. 14:1-3; Heb. 11:13-16. He longs to be welcomed into the mansions of his Lord.

II-THE USE OF TEMPORAL THINGS REVEALS WISDOM

A-The wisdom of the worldling. Even the master of the manager admired the selfish wisdom of the manager. Even Jesus admits the shrewdness of the worldling, vs. 9. But it is a selfish shrewdness which does not care about other people. See I Tim. 6:9-10. Also Lk. 12:16-21.

B-The wisdom of the Christian. He is wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. II Tim. 3:15. Christ Jesus became for us wisdom from God. I Cor. 1:30. He seeks the things which are above, not the things on earth. Col. 3:2. He knows that he cannot serve two masters at the same time. Lk. 16:13. He is faithful. Rev. 2:10.

III-THE USE OF TEMPORAL THINGS REVEALS VALUES

A-The values of the worldling. The unjust manager had only one value, himself. He cheated everyone to get everything for himself. He cares nothing about the Gospel, forgiveness of sins and everlasting life.

B-The values of the Christian. He knows that if you can trust someone with unimportant things, you can trust him with valuable things, vs. 10. He knows that if you cannot manage your money (which belongs to God), how can you responsibly handle the Gospel and its forgiveness? Vss. 11-12. For the Christian nothing is secular or worldly. It is all spiritual, gifts from God for time and eternity.

IV-THE USE OF TEMPORAL THINGS REVEALS WHO YOUR MASTER IS

→ A-The master of the worldling. In vs. 13 Jesus says: "No man can serve two masters." That is an axiom which everyone understands. Who was the master of the unjust manager? Not the landowner. Not God. Only himself and his earthly desires. He wanted earthly security after he lost his position. He found that in a wicked way.

B-The master of the Christian. Like Paul, when he was converted Acts 22:10, the Christian asks: "What shall I do, Lord?" When the Baptist baptized people they asked: "What shall we do?" Lk. 3:10-14. Jesus said that the whole Bible can be summarized in two commandments: "Love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind." "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." Mt. 22:34-40. The Christian has faith in God and love for his neighbor. Thus he serves only one Master.

Conclusion: You are like Paul, like Zacchaeus, like those ^{who} asked the Baptist what to do. You are sinners. You did not come to church to tell God how good you are. You came to confess your sins. And I Jn. 1:9 says: "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And Jesus says: "The Son of man came to seek and save that which is lost." Lk. 19:10. You are forgiven. Turn now from your selfishness and serve God by loving your neighbor. Your Father in heaven is waiting for you at the door of everlasting life.

1. Lk. 14-19 gives us a number of Jesus' parables: 14:7-24 is a trilogy for the Pharisees. Their themes are: Humility (repentance), Charity (giving to the poor), Heeding Jesus' Invitation. In 14:28-33 Jesus says that unless we have the proper resources (of grace through faith) we cannot bear our crosses and be His disciples. In the 15th chapter we see Jesus seeking the lost. In 16:1-9 we see how we should use our earthly goods properly. In 16:19-31 we see how we should not use our earthly goods. In 18:1-8 concerning persistence in prayer. In 18:9-14, the Pharisee and the Publican. And in 19:11-27, the parable of the mnas (pounds). A number of these parables are found only in Luke.
2. Today's text is found between the parables of the Unjust Steward (16:1-9) and that of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31). The first parable tells us how to use our earthly goods and the second tells us how not to use our earthly goods. The first stresses faithful stewardship and the second warns against a selfish, faithless life which leads to destruction.
3. In the first parable (vss. 1-9) Jesus says that just as the unrighteous steward selfishly but wisely provided for his own future after he lost his job, so the Christian steward should selflessly and wisely live this life with the constant thought that his use of his earthly goods should correspond to his eternal home in heaven. Handle your earthly goods wisely to the glory of God and the benefit of mankind. In the second parable (vss. 19-31) the rich man represents the selfish person who has no time to listen to the Word of God.
4. Our text (vss. 10-15) falls between these parables. In vs. 14 we are told that the money-loving Pharisees despised Jesus for what He said to them. Jesus tells them: "You try to make yourselves look good. But God knows your hearts. What you consider great is utterly rejected by God. Both parables are summarized in vss. 10-13.
5. In vss. 10-12 Jesus states a simple truth and then applies it to Christians: "The man who is faithful in a little is also faithful in much. The man who is unjust in a little is also unjust in much. THEREFORE, if you have not proved to be faithful in your use of earthly goods (mammon), who will entrust heavenly things (the genuine) to you? And if you have not proved faithful in your use of what is given to you, who will give you what is yours?" He is comparing your use of earthly things with your use of eternal, heavenly things. The earthly things are the necessities of this life: money, clothing, wife, family, car, house etc. The heavenly things are forgiveness of sins, everlasting life etc., all the gifts which God gives us in the Gospel. They are ours.
6. Then in vs. 13 Jesus states an axiom, a truth which all people understand immediately: "No man can serve two masters." He explains: "Either he will hate the one and love the other or he will cling to the one and despise the other." Now the application: "You cannot serve God and Mammon (earthly goods)."
7. Again and again our Lutheran Confessions say: "The Law always accuses us" (Lex semper accusat). The Catechism calls this use of the Law the mirror. It shows us our sin. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3:20. "I would not recognize lust unless the Law would tell me: 'You shall not covet'." Rom. 7:7. See Russian Catechism, question and answer 131 on page 115-6. The Formula of Concord calls the law as a mirror the second use of the law. Lk. 16 is a good example of the second use of the law. It shows us our sin, our faithlessness, our selfishness. The Law is our schoolmaster to Christ. Gal. 3:24. Once we see and confess our sins we should turn to the Gospel. God yearns to forgive us in Christ, but we must first confess our sins. When we've received forgiveness in the Gospel we should resolve and promise God to improve our sinful lives by being faithful unto death.
8. Look carefully at vs. 10: We should teach ourselves and our children to be faithful and just in small things. That leads to being faithful and just in big things. We should likewise be faithful and just in all things of this life. That leads to faithfulness in heavenly things.

Theme: NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS

Introduction: The Pharisees were deceiving themselves. They were arrogant (Lk. 14). They despised Jesus for eating with sinners (Lk.15). They loved money. What they thought was great was an abomination to God. (Lk. 16:14.15). They were trying to serve two masters at the same time.

I-DO NOT BE A SLAVE TO MAMMON. Mammon means the things of this life: family, wife, money, property, reputation, job. If you are a slave to these things, you cannot be God's servant.

A-An example of the slave to Mammon. The parable in Lk. 16:19-31 pictures the man who is a slave to Mammon. The rich man dressed in fine clothing and lived a good life every day. He had no time for the beggar who lay at his door. But his worst fault was that he had no time for the Word of God. He lost his soul in hell. Mercy had absolutely ceased for him. He had had his good things in this life without attending to the good things of everlasting life. He did not use his earthly goods to the glory of God and the benefit of other people. He was a foolish steward. And so he lost his soul.

B-How that is applied in our text. The man who is a slave to mammon is faithless in what is small. The things of this life are small compared to the great things of the life to come. The man who is a slave to mammon proves faithless to what is loaned to him. The things of this life are loaned to us only for a few years. Our money, job, family, wife, house etc. do not actually belong to us. God's loans them to us for a few years. If we use them selfishly we are despising God and eternal life. In that case we will end up in hell, suffering with the rich man.

II-SO BE A SLAVE TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The kingdom of God is called that which is much in vs. 10. The kingdom of God is called that which is yours in vs. 12. Lk. 12:32 tells us: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Rom. 6:32 tells us: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." At Jn. 20:22 Jesus said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whosoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven." In Christ God graciously and daily gives us the gifts of heaven. But these gifts must always be the most important things in our life.

A-An example of the slave to the Kingdom of God. This person is pictured in the parable of Lk. 16:1-9. It is not an easy parable. It must be treated very carefully. The point of comparison between the unjust steward and the faithful Christian is shrewd wisdom. That's all. When the unjust steward learned that he was about to lose his position, he shrewdly and wickedly favored his master's creditors so that they would provide him with a home after he lost his position. His master acknowledged the unjust steward's cleverness in providing himself with a home after he lost his position. Likewise, a Christian constantly thinks of his eternal home. He lives this life and uses the things of this life as a citizen of heaven. He enjoys his wife, his family, his home, his money, etc. as gifts of God but always wisely using them to God's glory and the benefit of mankind. He loves his wife by living for her. He loves his neighbor by doing for him what he does for himself. He even loves his enemy by returning good for evil. He regards Christ as his highest good now and forever.

B-How this ^{is} applied in our text. By being faith^{ful} in what is least (the things of this life) he shows his faithfulness in what is much (the spiritual gifts). By being faithful to what is loaned to him in this life he shows his faithfulness in what God has already given him (eternal life and salvation).

Conclusion: Very likely all of us have much to confess about our failure to be good stewards in the things of this life. We confess our sins of selfishness and flee to Christ for forgiveness.