

# Making the Most of It

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[ 0 : 00 ] Of all the parables that I preached of Jesus, this is not one of them. And I was tempted to skip it. I read what a lot of people had to say about it.

A lot of them skipped it. And so let's try it together. Because you seem to be a forgiving folk. I know it's early, but you seem to be.

And it's different. And it's a little bit difficult, at least until you get your mouth right. And I want you to see it, though, because it's told by the master teacher.

It's worth our time. And I believe if you get the message, it can be life-changing. It's in Luke chapter 16, beginning in verse 1.

Jesus also said to the disciples, there was a rich man who had a manager and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.

[ 1 : 13 ] And he called him and said to him, what is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager. And the manager said to himself, what shall I do?

Since my master is taking the management away from me, I'm not strong enough to dig. I'm ashamed to beg. I've decided what to do so that when I'm removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.

So summoning his master's debtors, one by one, he said to the first, how much do you owe my master?

He said, a hundred measures of oil. He said to him, take your bill and sit down quickly and write 50. Then he said to another, and how much do you owe?

He said, a hundred measures of wheat. He said to him, take your bill and write 80. The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.

[ 2 : 23 ] For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth so that when it fails, they may receive you into eternal dwellings.

See what I mean? It is often misunderstood or just passed by. And I had misunderstood it in the past.

And so I want to first share with you some mistakes that people often make when they read this parable. You got to get this now. The first mistake they make is this.

Jesus is not the owner of the estate in this story. He is not. The mistake that a lot of people make is to read this parable like an allegory and believe that everything in the story stands for something.

And therefore there are many messages here. There is one message here. And that's often the case in parables. It's not always the case, but it's often the case. There's one message here. And it is not that God appreciates our seemingly successful deception.

[ 3 : 41 ] That's not the message. The second mistake people make is they don't understand that Jesus does not condone the manager's actions here.

He states what he did clearly. He states what the master's response was clearly. He said we ought to learn from it.

But he does not condone it. The master condoned it. But Jesus is not the master in this story. And he was still speaking.

It says that he, in verse 1 he says he also said this to the disciples. He's still speaking to the Pharisees and the scribes and they heard him say it.

Third thing is this. We are not sure what the manager did here. There's some options as to how he was trying to win some friends for upcoming hard times.

[ 4 : 46 ] He could have forgiven some of their debt and paid it himself. That's what some folks said. That's not what he did. He could have given them credit for some of the debt and then gave the master less than expected.

That's possible. But most likely he knocked off what he was going to charge them for handling the debt. And what I mean by that was a common trait in that culture was that if somebody owed 50 measures of oil on credit, the manager who's responsible for billing that and collecting that under the authority of the owner of the estate would add his little surcharge on there.

And so he may only owe 50 measures of oil on credit, but instead he'd write the ticket for 80. Not call it interest because interest was considered usury and it was highly frowned upon. And the Old Testament speaks of it often. That was not looked upon good well.

So instead they'd just make the ticket out for a different amount than what he had previously borrowed. He'd just put 80. And the manager would keep the 30 on the authority of the owner.

[ 6 : 15 ] Owner didn't care. He just wanted his 50 back. Now that was common in that day. So it could be that the manager is cutting out his portion or at least some of his portion and looking like he's doing his friend a favor.

And so he can have a friend because he's about to be terminated. And he didn't have the back to dig or do heavy physical labor.

And unlike the temptations, he was too proud to beg. He had been in management. He was no beggar.

Just ask him. It reminds me of a lady that due to health concerns fell into hard times. And I knew she had worked hard before that time.

And the church I was pastoring at the time wanted to help her, offered to help her. She wouldn't take it. She said, I don't stoop.

[ 7 : 20 ] I didn't know what she meant and I thought about it. This man ain't gonna stoop. So when the owner and his boss finds out about his parting gift, he admires him for making the most of a bad situation.

So why did Jesus share that story? Well, anytime you read a miracle in scripture, read the context of what's happening around it.

Because there's always a message in a miracle. It's powerful to see. Once you get that concept. There's always something there. Of all the people Jesus healed, he didn't heal them all.

So why did he heal the ones that he did? There's always a point there that shows that. And if you look at the context of this parable, you'll understand more so why he shared what he did.

It's in the verses that follow. It says in verse 10, One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much.

[ 8 : 40 ] And one who's dishonest in very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth who will entrust you with the true riches.

And if you've not been faithful in that which is another's, who would give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters. For either he'll hate the one and love the other.

Or he'll devote to the one and despise the other. You can't serve both God and money. Now the point is that the manager had very little time to use the resources that he was in charge of.

And so he made the most of it. He did not freeze up. He made use of the authority that had been given to him while he had that authority because he was about to lose it.

And for that he's called dishonest, but he's called shrewd. And we ought to learn from it. Now, if the wicked of the world can make the most of opportunities, shouldn't the people of God make the most of opportunities too?

[ 9 : 51 ] Not in the same way. But Jesus is saying we need to make the most of the opportunities. Not with dishonesty, but with shrewd decisions. So I believe the message here is a threefold one.

The first one is this. Make the most of what you have. Make the most of what you have. And you have two things.

You have your treasures. And you have your time. The moment you die, you can no longer sign a check.

And if one's been endorsed to you and somebody else signs their name on it, that's illegal. Once you die, it's worth nothing to you. You have to leave it behind.

You can't take it with you. And so you use it now for purposes that last. I would encourage you to use it for purposes that will even outlast you.

[ 10 : 59 ] Use it for eternal purposes. And back to the context of the parable. And may you be welcomed into heaven by the lives that you've impacted due to your generosity.

When he says here what you do with unrighteous wealth in verse 11, he's not saying this is dirty money. He's not saying this money is evil.

Because money's not evil. He's really saying it's neutral. It's not righteous. It's unrighteous. It's just wealth.

It's just money. Money's not evil no matter where it comes from. I'll tell you what's evil. The love of money's evil. I'll tell you what's evil. The improper use of money.

That's evil. The lure of money is evil. But money that sometimes is used for wrong purposes can then again be used for right purposes afterwards.

[ 12 : 01 ] And God has entrusted you with whatever you have, little or much. So how you doing? With what God has given to you.

A man heard a message something like this and took it to heart years and years ago. And he made a commitment to his pastor. He said, I'm going to tithe my money.

And the man at the time made \$40 a week. And so he began writing a check for \$4 and putting it on the plate every week. And God blessed him.

Many times over. Over the years, God blessed him a hundredfold. True story. And the man was tithing \$500 a week to his church.

He came back to his pastor, who was W.A. Criswell, who pastored First Baptist Dallas for 50 years, who told the story. The man came back to W.A. Criswell and said, I need to back off my tithing commitment.

[ 13 : 16 ] He said, it's a little too costly now. Don't you think I could back off that some? And Criswell said, no. But we can ask the Lord to take you back to \$40 a week.

So you won't have to give so much money. Friend, it's all in perspective. Make the most of what you have.

Second thing is this. Be a blessing. Be a blessing. Listen, the manager blessed those in debt with giving them a way to get out from under the debt.

Did he do it right? No, he did not. But I believe you can learn truth from other people's examples.

Truth is always the truth, even if it is spoken of by untrue people.

And the truth here is that we can be a blessing to those who are overwhelmed by a debt that they cannot pay. Because we are surrounded by people in spiritual debt.

[ 14 : 29 ] Debt they cannot pay. People who are heavy in sin, separated from God, struggling in the midst of that.

And I want you to know, if you're a born-again believer today, we have been authorized, we have been instructed, we have been empowered and able to tell them how they can have their debt removed from their life.

Jesus said, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. And when he says that, he's talking about the keys of the kingdom. I'll tell you what that means. He's talking about the power of the gospel.

The debt of others that we need to be concerned about is the spiritual debt that they carry. And today, I'm under the authority of the owner of heaven as just a measly manager to offer you spiritual debt forgiveness.

Thank God, regardless of what you owe God, he'll forgive you today. I do not do it dishonestly. And I probably don't do it very shrewdly.

[ 15 : 43 ] But I offer it all the more. And I want you to know, if you're a child of God today, you can offer it too. And when you do, you'll be a blessing.

Take advantage of the time that we have and be a blessing. And the third thing I learned from the story is this.

Serve the right one. Put your resources in the right place. It is amazing what we get enthusiastic about.

I will not tell you who. But I cheered hard for a team yesterday that I normally don't care if they win or not. But yesterday, I was charged.

If we get as excited about Jesus as we are of the matters that we put our heart into, that we put our money into, what a world of difference we could make.

[ 16 : 52 ] And that's what Jesus is saying. Jesus is saying, make a world of difference. Because if we're not careful, we won't until it's forever too late.

And so I'm going to ask you, are you faithful with what you have? You're not responsible for anything that you don't.

But you are responsible for what you have. Malachi chapter 3, verse 7 and 8 and 10 says this. From the days of your fathers, you've turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them.

Return to me and I'll return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, how shall we return? Will man rob God? Yet you're robbing me. But he says, how have we robbed you?

God says, in your tithes and contributions. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. And therefore put me to the test, says the Lord. If I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down to you a blessing until there is no more need.

[ 18 : 06 ] How much blessings are we missing? How much ministry are we missing out on? How many opportunities are we meandering by because we're robbing God and missing the blessings of heaven?

May the Lord let us hold on. May the Lord not let us hold on to things on this earth so tight that we miss the blessings of God that would fall into our open hands if we just open them before the Lord. G. Campbell Morgan tells the story of being in a home of a wealthy man for dinner. As they sat down to dinner, the man prayed over the meal and he prayed an elegant and tender prayer for the salvation of the lost and for missionaries serving the world.

And when his prayer was over, he was startled by his son who said, Dad, I love to hear you pray for missionaries. He said, well, I'm glad, son. And the little boy said, but you know what I was thinking was when you were praying, if I had your money, I'd answer half your prayers.

Those who rob God by withholding their tithes will never be all that they should be for the Lord.

[ 19 : 20 ] It stunts your growth. Not only financially. Not only in faith, but it stunts your spiritual growth. Now, I want to be clear.

One salvation is not based upon their giving, but giving is an evidence of one salvation. May the Lord not allow us to settle for showing religious concern for matters that we could make an eternal difference in for simply just by being faithful.

Enough with tokens. Let's just be faithful. And if we gave God our all, a tenth of our income is a gesture. It's a gesture.

A gesture that's obedient and faithful, that is coming to the storehouse. That's the place you're fed. But it's more than a gesture.

For me, it is an acknowledgement that all that I truly have is his. And gladly, cheerfully give that portion that he's shown us that we're to give.

[ 20 : 23 ] You say, well, I don't know that I can. Well, I promise you, if you'll obey God in any area of your life, God will fill your void.

God will provide your need. You be a blessing and God will bless you. And the good news is, folks, we have all we need to fulfill our budget goals.

We have all we need to fulfill our building plans. We have all we need to fulfill our mission efforts.

We have all we need. The bad news is too much of it's still in our pockets.

It's time to be spiritually and financially shrewd and watch God bless beyond what we can ask, beyond what we can think.

I want you to listen to how Jesus describes. He says in Luke chapter 6, verse 38, he says, Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, we'll put it into your lap.

[ 21 : 36 ] For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. Do you ever buy one of those big bags of chips? Or like a big old box of cereal?

And you open up that box. And you pull out that bag. Now, I'm going to warn you, if you pull out that bag, don't go home and do this. Because you'll never get that bag back in the way it came out.

Okay? It just don't want to happen. I'm just going to go ahead and tell you, that bag ain't but half full. And them chips full of air, it ain't but half full.

But I'm going to tell you something. That's not the way God gives to us. He don't leave us half full.

Notice what it says. It says, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, it'll pour out into your lap.

You know how God gives? God gives like a kid fills up a cup at a fountain drink machine. You know? Never backing up. Letting it flow all over the floor and then putting a lid on it.

[ 22 : 50 ] That's how God blesses. So let's be a blessing. And let's be blessed. John Wesley had three rules for managing money.

I thought it was pretty good. Maybe all I need to say, but I wouldn't dare let you go that early. Make all you can. Save all you can.

Give all you can. Jesus is telling us, folks, make the most of the opportunity that you have.

Be spiritually shrewd. See lives change with our opportunities. Those who serve the world get good at it.

They become shrewd at it. Those who serve the Lord ought to do it as well. May all we do with whatever God gifts us with bring honor and glory to him.

[ 23 : 56 ] And I want to be clear. When you obey God by his formula, that does not mean the rest of it's yours.

It's all still his. He just allowed you to be a steward of it. So don't be dishonest with it. Now, if that makes you mad or you don't like that, I'm going to tell you, you can't serve both God and money. You'll hate the one and you'll love the other and you'll serve the other. Who are we going to serve? Let's make the most of our opportunity.

With every head bowed and every eye closed, let me tell you what your greatest opportunity is. And that is to surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't ever want you to misunderstand me this morning or what the focus of what we do and who we are. Most important to us. Is that folks come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and then grow in him.

[ 25 : 17 ] And if today you're here and you don't know the Lord Jesus, I want you to know he'll save you today. I'd love to guide you in that. Love to help you in that.

We're going to stand and we're going to sing in just a moment. I encourage you to sing. But more important than that, I want you to do exactly what God tells you to do. And if you don't know the Lord, just come down and tell me, Pastor, I need to be saved.

I need to know the Lord. Now maybe you do and maybe you need to put your wallet or your pocketbook on this altar. You can do that where you are or you can do it at this altar.

I just want you to obey God. Just do what he tells you to do. Maybe God's drawing you to be a part of this fellowship, this church. You know this is where God would have you to be. No need to put that off any longer.

You come and we'll guide you through that process. I don't know what God's telling you to do. I just know you're responsible for whatever he's leading us to do. So I encourage you to simply be obedient.

[ 26 : 14 ] Let's honor him today by making the most of this opportunity by simply being obedient. Lord Jesus, I love you. And I thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

Thank you for the opportunity to worship with these dear folks. God, guide us right now to be obedient to everything that you tell us. In Jesus' precious name, amen. Stand together.

We're going to sing.