

Message for Sunday, September 21, 2025

Scripture: Luke 16: 1-13

Title:

Welcome

Announcements: Giving Options, online, box in back, QR code, etc. Special Offering for September is Haven Food Pantry; Hospitality needs help on September 28th, see Diana Smith for information; Angels Attic needs help with set up, clean up, bagging, etc. AND they need baked goodies; Bible Study continues on Wednesdays.

Fellowship of Love

Song

Call to Worship

L: Search for the Lord each day.

P: God waits where we least expect it.

L: Search for the balm in Gilead.

P: God brings healers in our need.

L: Cry out to the Lord in times of distress.

P: God comes speedily to meet us.

L: Come! Worship the One who hears our pleas.

Unison Prayer

Great Healer, be our balm of Gilead, for we ache to be made whole.

Come to us in times of trial and heal our sin-sick souls.

Amid those who prey on your little ones, help us live faithfully as children of light.

May we be found faithful in a little, that you may entrust us with much. Amen.

Offering

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

Song

Scripture: Luke 16:1-13 NRSVue

16 Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property.

--

Message for Sunday, September 21, 2025

Scripture: Luke 16: 1-13

Title:

² So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management because you cannot be my manager any longer.'

--

³ Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg.'

--

⁴ I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.'

--

⁵ So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

--

⁶ He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.'

--

⁷ Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.'

--

⁸ And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly, for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.

--

⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone they may welcome you into the eternal homes.'

--

¹⁰ "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.

--

¹¹ If, then, you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

--

¹² And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?

--

¹³ No slave can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.'"

Message for Sunday, September 21, 2025

Scripture: Luke 16: 1-13

Title:

L: The word of God, for the people of God. **P:** Thanks be to God.

Sermon:

I don't know if I have ever walked you through how I begin to prepare for a sermon every week. This has changed very little over the years and I am only sharing the process up to a point. Usually Sunday afternoon/evening I read the scripture for the next week, you see Sunday is a workday for me; so while I participate in that most sacred of pastor duties on Sunday, the Sunday afternoon nap, I do continue working when I get up. I read the scripture, and I usually write a paragraph or two of initial thoughts and reflections. Then on Monday I begin to read different commentaries, taking notes as I go. I usually reserve one or two commentaries for Tuesday so that I read a few things to remind myself of what I might want to say before I write the message. Now obviously I'm leaving out praying and other avenues of reflection I usually engage in. So, if you were ever curious how I do it every week that's about the sum of it.

The reason I share this is because of this week's text. Not because of the topic of the text, which we will get to, but because of how this text engaged my process. You see last Sunday I read the text and in my initial reflection I wrote that I had no idea how to talk about this passage. It is a confusing text that seems to be about money, which it is, but it also seems to engage in questionable activities as well. When I reflected on it I knew I was probably going to read more commentaries than normal to make sense of the text in a way that I can relate it. What then happened on Monday is that I read commentary after commentary that all basically stated the same thing. This parable is confusing, and perhaps the hardest parable to interpret in Luke. Well, that's great.

In order to understand this parable, I think we need to walk through it a little bit and let me fill in some of the gaps.

16 Then Jesus^[a] said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ² So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management because you cannot be my manager any longer.'

This set of verses sets the stage. We are introduced to a rich man and his manager. The rich man accuses the manager of mismanaging his estate and decides he's going to deal with it. Right away we have missed something in this text. Several commentaries made a point of showing that the only way for someone to be considered rich in Jesus' time it would have been because he, in Jesus' view, stole it from others. Let me give you an example. Basically, in order to become extremely rich, you would have had to buy the

property of others or take it from them. And then in order to increase your wealth you would have loaned the workers the materials but charged them more for it, think of it like the company store idea. Or how the mines operated here in Arizona back in the day. You would give the farmers, who used to actually own the land that you now own, three sacks of seeds and expect back 6. While this made the individual wealthy it was not considered proper behavior religiously speaking.

In conjunction with this the manager would have added his cut to this amount. So, our scenario is 3 bags of grain but now six are owed. The manager would have charged an additional 3, so not 6 bags but 9. This was the manager's cut and the way the manager made money. We are not necessarily familiar with this type of money making. We see it in some industries, but by in large we are ignorant of this type of process. Enough so we would not suspect it in this passage. We would have expected the rich man to pay a wage- not that the manager would need to make up their own wage from the process of managing.

On to the next part of the story,

³Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.'

The manager now decides to change teams. Now he's not working for his boss the rich man, instead he is going to try and buy his way into people's hearts by flipping the script. You kind of have to admire him at this point. He knows he can't do manual labor and that he doesn't want to beg, so he hatches a plan instead.

The next section the manager puts his plan in motion,

⁵So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' ⁷Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.'

Now this is a part that we are more likely to miss. You see if I hadn't told you how the manager makes his money-the next section does not make much sense. So, when he asks what is owed he doesn't talk about what do they owe him and what they owe the rich man. No, he asks for the amount all together. So, there is a good chance what we are seeing is

Message for Sunday, September 21, 2025

Scripture: Luke 16: 1-13

Title:

not that he is cancelling the debt of the rich man, but that he is cancelling his part of the debt. Basically, endearing himself to the people around him by wiping out his portion of the debt. The result of that is also that the rich man would still get paid what is his, increasing the managers utility all around.

And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly, for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth^[b] so that when it is gone they may welcome you into the eternal homes.^[c]

The master praises the manager because he is clever in how he handles his finances. Then comes the really confusing part. Jesus seems to be praising the misuse of money by the manager as what we need to do. And if we do that, then we will be welcomed into “eternal homes.” Now that phrase is a pretty deceptive. The word that is translated here as homes doesn’t mean homes as we think of them, it means tents. You don’t keep wealth in tents, tents are mobile, and you travel light. So, Jesus is saying if you act cleverly then you are welcomed into Gods kingdom, a kingdom that doesn’t value wealth like the rest of the world.

I am not going to quote the last few verses directly, because essentially they are a commendation on how to treat our money and how to be trusted with money. It includes one of the most famous lines in scripture “you cannot serve two masters; you cannot serve God and wealth (or money)” For some of us we learned it as “mammon”. I’d like to suggest that this is the better interpretation. The reason being is mammon is a term for a personification, or a deification of wealth. It is a warning against worshiping wealth. This text for all its confusion is really about stewardship. Jesus is encouraging us to use the systems of the world around us to make people’s lives better. Why do you suppose that is so? Because ultimately for us wealth means nothing. We are only holding onto it temporarily for God. We celebrate and worship wealth and serve God so we should focus on what is more important.

Remember, scripture says the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil, not that it is evil in and of itself. This is true in this passage as well. If you utilize your wealth properly, to help people, to make the world a more hospitable place for others then you are doing the right thing. Yes it may mean you are “playing the stock market,” but that is acceptable to advance the kingdom of God.

Like all parables this one turns our world on end. Oddly enough it does it by subverting our idea of what is proper with money. The consistency is the same, we are not

Message for Sunday, September 21, 2025

Scripture: Luke 16: 1-13

Title:

to worship wealth, but there is nothing wrong with using that wealth to support the church and to support others. Today I'd like you to consider if you are supporting the church like you should? Are you supporting others like you should? I know I could do better at that, and I am trying to. The final thing I want to leave you with is the question: What is your priority? Is your priority wealth for comfort or to use it properly as God would want you to? Your motivation matters to God. I encourage you to examine it in relation to money and wealth this week. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer/ The Lord's Prayer

Song

Benediction

Song

Goodbye