

Sermon for Pentecost 18 (Series C) / Stewardship / Money

Text: Luke 16:1-13

Preached on 09-23-2007

Introduction:

I'm going to tell all of you, right up front, that today's sermon is about money. I'll bet that if you had known that I was going to talk about money today, at least some of you would have maybe stayed at home. Why is that? Why are people so uncomfortable hearing a sermon on money? Could it be that little voice inside each of us that says, "Here we go again, the church needs more money!" That voice is not our New Man talking. Rather, it is our Old Man rearing his ugly head once again. I mean, how would our New Man react to God talking about a blessing He has placed into all of our hands? Wouldn't our New Man, having been *Transformed in Christ*, say, "Please Lord, tell me more"?

That's the assumption I'm going to work with today, namely that as redeemed children of God, each one of us wants to know what God has to say about managing the financial gifts He has entrusted to our care. There is no better way to do that than to listen to what Jesus has to say about the subject of money. Today Jesus talks about...

Theme: Using Money in Building God's Kingdom!

Part I: Requires Shrewdness (vv. 1-8)

Part II: Requires Faithfulness (vv. 9-13)

Part I: Requires Shrewdness

The picture presented by Jesus is clear. A rich man had entrusted his large estate and its possessions to a manager (or steward). This manager, however, was dishonest. His dishonesty was brought to the rich man's attention. So he called the manager in and asked him, "**What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer**" (v. 2). In other words, "Hey buddy, you're going to be fired, because you've been cheating me!" Notice that the dishonest manager doesn't deny the charge. He knows he's guilty. He immediately begins worrying about what's going to happen to him once he loses his job. He's too much of a wuss to work any kind of manual labor job. So he called in people who owed his master money and slashed their bills by 20 or 50%, anticipating that they would welcome him into their homes after he had lost his job.

Now, when the rich man heard what the manager had done, what was his reaction? Did he condemn the manager? Surprisingly, no! Instead, he

commended him. Why? Because he had acted, **“Shrewdly” (v. 8)!** That’s an important word. The original Greek conveys the idea of using one’s head. So the master did not praise his manager for being dishonest, but for being a man of decision. Knowing he was in a mess, the manager knew what to do to get out of it. He acted decisively, quickly putting his plan into action. He made a calculated decision to use what was at his disposal to benefit himself and secure his future. That required shrewdness!

Application:

Could it be said that you and I have been put in charge of someone else’s wealth? Absolutely! The Bible says, **“The earth is the LORD’S, and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1).** There is not a single thing in this world that belongs to anybody but God Alone. God created it all. Therefore, God owns it all: Including our money! Nonetheless, God has entrusted each one of us with various amounts of money. Some have lots of it. Others have enough to get by. Still others have very little. Whatever amount of money God has put us in charge of, we are to use it in a way that ultimately builds His kingdom.

The question is: “How have we done?” If God were to demand an accounting of you and me, how would we fare? If God were to say, “Okay, you’re being audited. I want to see where you’ve been spending My money”, would we maybe get a sinking feeling in the pit of our stomach, similar to when a parent, spouse, or boss asks, “Okay, where did the money go?” The truth is we are all guilty of mismanaging God’s money. All we deserve to hear from God is, “You’re Fired!” BUT that’s not what we hear from Him. Already in today’s service, we have laid our bankrupt hearts before the Lord. We’ve confessed the deficit that we’ve rung up with our wasteful and unnecessary use of money. We’ve acknowledged how this mismanagement has cheated God. We’ve admitted that there is no way that we can balance the books, no way that we can repay the debt we owe Him. How did God respond? He took the auditor’s stamp, dipped it into the blood of His own Son, and stamped each of our hearts with it, revealing the words, “You’re Forgiven!”

Transition:

Yes, it is important to know what the Bible has to say about *Using Money in Building God’s Kingdom!* In addition to requiring shrewdness, it also...

Part II: Requires Faithfulness

My friends, do you believe that the words “You’re Forgiven” are stamped on your heart? Do you trust those words to be your personal ledger? The truth is that we stand here today as Redeemed children of God, bought back not with money, but with the holy, precious blood of God’s only Son. And to prove it, God has reinstated us. Instead of taking away the wealth that we all have mismanaged, He allows us to keep it. He asks us to continue managing it. The only difference is that now we ARE forgiven and Heaven IS ours!

Do you think that will change how we use God’s money? You better believe it does! But here’s the thing: We are only allowed to continue managing God’s money until the day we die. That means the clock is ticking. Neither we nor our money will last forever. That means we are to use our money now faithfully. Jesus tells us how. He says, **“I tell you, use worldly wealth (or money) to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings” (v. 9)**. Use money to gain friends for ourselves? What in the world does that mean? Is Jesus saying that we should throw our money around, trying to make friends by buying them gifts, inviting them over for parties? Of course not! Jesus is not talking about people welcoming us into their homes here on earth. Rather, He is talking about people welcoming us into Heaven. Now, how exactly can we use our money to make friends here on earth so that when we get to Heaven those people will be there to welcome us? By using our money to build God’s kingdom! That requires faithfulness!

Application:

Seeing to it that there are people in Heaven to welcome us means making sure that they hear the Gospel (The Good News about Jesus) here on earth! That oftentimes takes a certain amount of money. So Jesus tells us to use our money in such a way that it pays dividends in terms of souls for eternity. There are a number of ways for us to do that. They all require faithful use (or management) of God’s money. For example, we can faithfully support Christian Education (such as Trinity School on Stewart or Wisconsin Valley Lutheran High School), Home and World Missions (such as any one of the opportunities on the LCMS website), Media Ministries (such as The Lutheran Hour or Time of Grace), and Youth Ministry right here in our own congregations – just to name a few.

Jesus tells us, **“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be**

also” (Luke 12:34). In other words, how we use the money He has entrusted to our care reveals a lot about where we are at as a church. For example, how much more do we invest in our buildings than in actually doing and supporting Gospel ministry? If we’re honest with ourselves, the percentage of money we either “waste” by being a dual parish or spend “unnecessarily” on building beautification should shame us all. That doesn’t mean that we need to go out, sell all of our possessions, and give the money to the church. It does mean, however, that we need to seriously consider some of the options that are available to us for supporting Gospel Ministry, not only now but also after we’re gone. Following today’s service, Deacon Metter will explain how setting up a simple Trust can do exactly that. It’s not enough that we get to Heaven. Knowing full well what Hell is, we must be about the business of saving souls. Setting up a Charitable Trust is just one more way of faithfully using God’s money in building up His kingdom.

Conclusion:

The dishonest manager knew that his Last Day of accounting was at hand. He considered his future in the light of his Last Day (of work) and took action accordingly. In the same way, our Last Day is at hand. Jesus Himself closes His Word by saying, **“Yes, I am coming soon” (Revelation 22:20).** Our time on this earth is limited. A day of accounting will surely come. That means that now is the time to be shrewd, to act decisively and quickly!

That’s especially true when it comes to how we use God’s money. God wants us to recognize it as a gift of His grace, not wasting it or using it unnecessarily. Here, at St. Peter’s and Trinity especially, we need to be using our money to establish and extend God’s kingdom of grace. Last Sunday’s Joint Youth Service and Fundraiser was a fine example of that. It’s vitally important that we keep investing in our Youth so that, one Day, they will be in Heaven to welcome us there. That will require shrewdness on our part. It will also require faithfulness on our part. That’s *Using Money in Building God’s Kingdom!* Amen!