**Luke 16:1-15**

He 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. **2** 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.’ **3** And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management 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 removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’ **5** So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ **6** He said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ **7** 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 eighty.’ **8** The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. **9** And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. **10**  “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. **11** If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? **12** And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? **13**  No servant can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.” **14**  The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. **15** And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

**“Slashing Prices”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. You have to admire those who can act quick on their feet. The Great Depression demanded such a response in the 1930’s. While many businesses closed, the newly arising movie industry had to get creative. They offered the typical reduction in prices and two for one deals. However, it did not stop there. “During the Depression it was fairly common for theaters to use giveaways to fill their seats. Promotions like ‘Dish Night’ in which any woman who attended got a free dinner plate, cash door prizes, and silverware giveaways where each trip to see a flick got you closer to having a complete set of flatware helped buoy up attendance.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

This need for a quick response to salvage what would be lost never lets up in life. Jesus said at the end of his parable about the dishonest manager, “For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.” Certainly, the shrewd and clever ways of man are before God who knows the hearts of sinners. These lines of unrighteousness follow corruption, deceitfulness, and know how to bend the rules. More than evil means also is how short-lived the end goal truly is for this present age. Jesus reveals how the sons of light are to be wiser stewards for God’s mercy has no end. Since money is a false god that will fail, we can bank on the generosity of the Lord with all shrewdness that trusts in Him.

1. **To rely on money brings a world of hurt.**
2. In the parable today, we have a man who had his world come crashing down.

* Here was a person whose security and future came at the expense of cheating his master.
* The charge against him of wastefulness actually uncovered what he truly trusted.
* Of course, idols of any kind never amount to what they offer and money was not going to save this man.
* He heard the verdict, “Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.”

1. When God removes idols, our world comes crashing down.

* It hurts because as sinners we must face the truth of what fails us.
* Whether a loss of a job, unforeseen medical expenses, or overspending money has no mercy and it always seeks to call the shots.
* Careful planning, cutting corners, and even evil acts like cheating changes nothing for money can be gone in an instant.
* If you have never felt that kind of desperation as the man in our parable, you might face that pinch some day or we could all be in that sinking ship as during the Great Depression.

Just as families are to have an emergency plan, what way do we jump when false idols like money fail?

1. **To rely shrewdly on a generous master makes all the difference.**
2. Unlike other employers, this master does not give his steward the boot outright.

* He had some time and it was just enough for him to put his master’s generosity to good use.
* With money no longer being Lord, the man could rightly see what to truly trust, which was his generous master. (No less than the prodigal son relying on His father!!!)
* The tactic of slashing prices owed by debtors put the weight of trust back on the master for everyone, including the man soon to be fired.
* As an extension of the master, the steward benefited from generosity that was not his own allowing him to make friends to welcome him.

1. Unlike other employers, this master was everything that his steward looked to for mercy.

* Instead of punishing him for even more illegal transactions, which is the normal procedure for fraud but would also hurt others in the process.
* The master saw his generosity being more important than lost money.
* What is shocking about this parable are those final words, “The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.”
* The steward was still wicked and underhanded, but smart enough to know the one thing still going for him was the master’s generosity and it saved him.

1. **To rely on the Lord turns even a false god like money into fruitful service.**
2. There is now a higher purpose for money that those baptized into Christ cannot overlook.

* The sons of this present age shrewdly apply their efforts and money for managing a way in this life, which is both unrighteousness and brief in the hands of sinners.
* The sons of light, Christ’s disciples, hear something else, “And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.”
* Offerings, charity and other gifts go beyond being a bill, tax, or wager. God will use our money so the Gospel at last brings people into eternal dwellings.
* This investment is not fully visible to those living for this world, but the promise is that there will be a “Thank you” in heaven.
* Rather than get rid of money, God turns it to benefit his plan of salvation. It starts with support for the local church, but expands to countless other mission organizations that share the Gospel in some small way. (Rally Sunday!)

1. This fruitful service of giving comes from the fact that we have a master who is beyond generous.

* Whether you are faithful or faithless with unrighteous wealth, money does not do the saving only God who remains good for sinners.
* Jesus has opened heaven with a far greater treasure as St. Paul says, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all…”
* Salvation is a gift won for you, you do have friends looking to greet you in heaven, and it rests not on you but purely with the generosity of Jesus.
* He is faithful more than giving you unrighteous things of this world, but true riches granted in His Word and Sacraments.
* He forgives every bit of your sins, so you have no debt to Him. He promises eternal life for you, so death is short-lived before this greater glory. When idols turns against you, no need to despair or defend yourself God’s will is to grab hold of you in Christ.

The 2008 recession was only a 1% worldwide loss of GDP compared to the Great Depression that fell 15%.[[2]](#footnote-2) Diversifying has helped for stability proving that greed in one spot often hurts. However, when it comes to God you can put all chips down, all eggs in one basket, and 100% investment on Him for His mercy is good. No giving away dish plates or door prizes, Jesus makes the better guarantee by is death and resurrection is for you. Since money is a false god that will fail, bank on the generosity of the Lord as shrewd stewards who trust in Him. Amen. The peace of Christ, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. http://mentalfloss.com/article/20837/5-great-depression-success-stories [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\_Depression [↑](#footnote-ref-2)