

Following the King

Studies in Luke's Gospel

Luke 16:1-31

Discussion starter

1. Imagine we were to conduct a survey of local people at the Avalon shops one Saturday morning. Your question to people is: ***What is money, and other kinds of wealth, for?***¹ What kinds of answers do you think people would give? How would **you** answer the question?

The parable of the dishonest manager

Read Luke 16:1-13

2. What motivates the dishonest manager to do what he does in vv 3-7?
3. What does the master commend the manager for?
4. Is Jesus' justifying 'dodgy' business practices here?

In verses 8b-9 Jesus reveals the point of his parable about the dishonest manager. This is further spelled out in vv 10-13.

5. *In v 8b Jesus suggests that 'the people of this world' use their wealth 'shrewdly' to secure their **worldly future***². What are some of the ways we do this today?
6. *In v 9 Jesus suggests that his disciples ('the people of the light') should, likewise, use worldly wealth 'shrewdly'. However, they are not to use it selfishly, to secure their worldly future, but generously for the **eternal benefit** of others.* How can we use our wealth for the eternal benefit of others?
7. *This passage speaks of 'worldly wealth' as something that is entrusted to us; it is **not** something we own or possess for our exclusive use.* Are you comfortable with this understanding of wealth? How ought this understanding of worldly wealth impact **your** use of the wealth currently in your possession?
8. What do Jesus' words in v 13 mean? How are they relevant to us today?

The rich man and Lazarus

Read Luke 16:19-31.³

9. What connections can you see between this parable and Jesus' teaching in vv 1-13?
10. The reason the rich man finds himself in 'Hades'⁴ is not explicitly mentioned. How does the context help us pin-point the reason?

¹ ie. what is its purpose?

² This is what the dishonest manager does.

³ Theologians often refer to this story when speaking of 'the intermediate state' (what happens to us after we die). As interesting a topic as that might be, it's **not** the point of the story.

⁴ The Greek uses the word 'Hades' in v 23 ('Sheol' in the OT) and not the word for 'Hell' (Gehenna). In Jewish and early Christian thought the two were quite distinct. Hades refers to where the dead are, while Gehenna is the destination of the unrighteous after the final judgement has occurred.

11. What light does 1 Timothy 6:17-19 shed on the story of the rich man and Lazarus?
12. How does Jesus' teaching about worldly wealth relate to his earlier teaching in chapter 12?⁵

Conclusion

One Bible commentator has said that the two parables recorded in Luke 16 “*both concern the life of the world to come; but they both teach... that our destiny in that world depends on what we do with the 'here and now'. It is a challenge to the far-sighted use of the things of this world, the things we shall not be able to take with us...* ”.⁶

In light of this take a moment to quietly consider the following questions in prayer:

- How are you shrewdly using the wealth God has given you?
- Is there anything about your attitude to wealth, or the way you use it, that you need to repent of?

Pray it in

- Two or three people should pray out loud, asking God to help us all become the disciples He has called us to be.

If you have time you might like to consider Stuart's short article on Jesus' teaching about divorce in Luke 16:18.

⁵ See v 21 in particular.

⁶ Michael Wilcock, *Luke*, The Bible Speaks Today (edited by John Stott), 1979, p. 162.