



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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September 26, 2010
18th Sunday after Pentecost
Sermon Text: : [Luke 16:1-13](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 14:8-24](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 38](#)
Second Lesson: [1 Timothy 6:6-16](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 16:1-13](#)

Be Shrewd Manager's of God's Possessions

Use Them Wisely
Use Them Faithfully

Knowledge and wisdom...intelligence and wisdom...knowledge and wisdom are two separate things. In the Greek it even has two completely different words that sometimes are both translated as knowing or wisdom, but they mean a different thing. People can know a lot about something but it doesn't exactly make them wise in how to put that knowledge to use. They put it to use in foolish or useless ways or in ways that diminish the knowledge they have.

An example I would give is this. As I went through school, I had one guy as a teacher, and I had his father, and I had his brother, and the three of them were three of the probably 10 smartest people that I've ever met in my life. But the one man that I had as a teacher, even though he was incredibly intelligent, had more knowledge than I'll ever have, he couldn't communicate it to get himself out of a wet paper bag. He was not good at imparting that knowledge to others, although that was his work at that time. He had no wisdom in how to communicate what he knew. He just talked so far above us, we just kind of sat there and looked at each other and shook our heads. We had no clue.

His father and his brother, they were some of the best teachers I ever had. They were able to communicate in a way that was easy to understand the knowledge that they had. They had a wisdom and ability in a practical sense to make use of that knowledge in their role as a teacher and communicate it to someone else.

In this parable that Jesus tells and in this discourse about God and money that we read from Luke 16, he takes it a step farther than just the words for wisdom and knowledge. He takes it to this word that is translated "shrewd" here in what I read to you. If you go the steps from knowledge to wisdom, shrewdness is way above it. This is wisdom on steroids. This is wisdom in a way that drops your jaw and makes you think "Wow! I never would have thought of that!" Afterwards you can look at it and think it was obvious, but he applied knowledge and wisdom in a way that is jaw-dropping.

What our God is telling us is that we need to strive, as we are managers of the possessions he has given us, to manage them in such a way that is jaw-dropping, that is shrewd, that is wise². That's what he is telling us. He really rebukes us. He says we aren't as good at this as the people of this world, the children of the light. Jesus said, "I

am the light of the world.” So the children of the light are the believers. The believers he says just aren’t as wise when it comes to handling worldly wealth as the people of this world are. He tells that first parable to illustrate that we aren’t as good at using it in jaw-dropping wisdom.

In this parable that Jesus tells, there is this guy that is the one that was in complete control over everything that his master owned. He managed it in such a way, even more than wasted it...he was dishonest in how he managed it. That’s what lies behind the word there. Not just that he was careless...he was criminal. When these accusations came and the master calls the guy that was the manager of his household to account, you don’t see him putting up a defense, do you? He was caught red-handed, so now he’s thinking about it and has to deal with it. He has to bring up his last profit and loss statement, so to speak, and give it to the master before he is booted out the door and has no income. He thinks to himself, “I don’t have a back that’s built for digging ditches. I’m not going to do manual labor. I’m too ashamed to go sit at the entrance to the temple and beg with the rest of the people. I’m not going to do that, so I’m stuck.” He has a problem. And his shrewdness that is commended, his wisdom on steroids that is commended is that he sees a problem and he acts decisively to handle that problem. He also acts dishonestly to handle that problem. That’s not Jesus’ point of this parable. The point of Jesus’ parable is that in this parable this guy acts decisively when he sees a problem and is shrewd in how he does it. He reduces the debt before he hands in the final profit and loss statement so that these guys will take care of him and help him out after he has lost his job. The master commends him for that. He still says he’s as dishonest as the day is long and what he did is wrong, but he commends his shrewdness, his wisdom².

Then Jesus makes the application. When it comes to using worldly wealth, as Christians we just are not as shrewd or as wise as the people of this world. We might throw up pious sounding things like our hearts aren’t set on wealth, but we’d just be kidding ourselves because quite often our hearts are set on our own wealth. Think about it. What do you think about planning more...your time with God, or your retirement? That’s just how we are. We give lip service to it, but we set our hearts on worldly wealth, and some of us might even be really good at managing it and investing it and making it compound. That could be. We might be as good as some of the people of this world in doing that. But what Jesus is saying is that we aren’t as good at seeing the problem that we can address with worldly wealth.

He tells us the problem we should be addressing with worldly wealth. Did you catch it in there? Did you catch where he told us what we should be doing with our worldly wealth? Look at it. “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” He isn’t saying, “Use worldly wealth to get earthly friends like that guy did.” He’s saying, “When it is gone.” Well, when does all earthly wealth disappear? Judgment Day, right? When this world is destroyed, right? That’s when all worldly wealth disappears. Use it in such a way so that when it is gone, you will have gained friends that will welcome you in heaven. He’s talking about believers, right? Isn’t he telling us right here the purpose he gives us

worldly wealth is so that we can share the Gospel so that people come to faith or strengthen in faith and grow in faith? That's what he is saying.

Now ask yourself...do we spend as much time planning how we can do that as faithfully, as shrewdly, as wisely², as wisely on steroids as we do planning our own individual retirement? No.

This guy acted decisively because he saw the problem. We see the problem at times, give it lip service and say, "I don't want those people to go to hell," but we don't act in such a way so that we use our resources to share the Gospel with them. So in essence, if they are standing on the cliff, we aren't attaching a safety line. We are pushing them over the edge, aren't we, if we don't act in such a way to share the Gospel with them and use our worldly wealth to do so?

It's clear that is what Jesus is saying we are supposed to be doing. Use it wisely. See that it's there only for a time and then it is going to be destroyed...that it's here and then it's gone. But while it's here he says, "It's mine, and I'm giving it to you. You use it the way that I want you to." And one of the ways he wants us to use it is so that the Gospel is proclaimed and shared and people come to know Jesus, and they'll be there to welcome us in heaven along with our heavenly Father, who will say "Well done, good and faithful servant."

The truth of the matter is that we aren't all that shrewd and that we have failed our God. We have sinned against our God because at times we only see the here and now and we don't see the hereafter. We are creatures that are obsessed with the present, right?

An example of being obsessed with the present...it's the first time since I've been here that I've preached to a whole church of Lions' fans, right? Today the Lions are playing the Vikings, so you are all Lions' fans. You are creatures of the present.

We do the same thing in our religious life, don't we? We are creatures of the present. We are confronted with the stresses and the issues of day-to-day life and we forget at times about eternal life. We are confronted with the challenges that come in family and relationships and all the things that we struggle with because we live in a sinful world, and we forget that God has put us here so we can manage what he gives us, and one of the things we can do is share the Gospel with our offerings and with our mouths and with our time. But we forget about that because we are creatures of the imminent, the present.

Our God is saying, "Get some wisdom," not just some knowledge, knowing that those who don't believe in Jesus are going to hell, because we all know that. Get some wisdom that says, "How can I be a part of giving them the lifesaver of the Gospel? How can I be a part of sharing with them the joy I have in knowing that my God has taken away all of my sins, all of the times in the past that I have failed him and not been shrewd in managing these possessions and I've become focused on them? All the times that I've done that, my God has forgiven me in Christ. And if the devil wants to

whisper in my ears, 'no he hasn't,' today I can come and he gives me his very body and blood that he says took away those very sins." That brings us joy. That brings us happiness. That brings us a peace that we often say passes all understanding. But don't let it pass the understanding of how to share it with someone else, because that's what we are here for. Use it wisely, but also use it faithfully as God tells us in those last two paragraphs that I read to you.

It might sound a little confusing. He talks about who can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with very much. When he is talking about "trusted with," he's talking about faithfulness. If you've been faithful with a little, you'll be faithful with a lot. If you haven't been faithful with a little, the Lord isn't going to trust you with a lot because you haven't demonstrated faithfulness. And this isn't saying if you're faithful in managing worldly wealth that he is going to give you an abundance of worldly wealth, or if you've been faithful with a little that means he's going to give you a lot of money. He might, but that's not what this passage is exactly promising. The true riches he is talking about, the someone else's property and property of our own that he is talking about is our eternal home in heaven. If we are faithful in worldly wealth and we view it as a tool, something God has entrusted us with to manage faithfully, not as something we are to worship or set our hearts upon or view as "anything that I give to the Lord is less for me." That's not being faithful. That's misunderstanding whose it is to begin with. So he says, "If you aren't going to be faithful with that, you are going to lose true riches."

It's like our Second Lesson said this morning. "Many people," it says, "who have wanted to get rich have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" because they didn't understand the role of money. They made it their god. Jesus quite clearly says that you can't love God and money at the same time. It just isn't going to work.

So faithfulness requires that we understand that God is God and money is simply a tool that God entrusts to us that we are to use to show our love for God. We manage it in the way he wants us to, to his glory, but never letting it become more important than God himself. Otherwise we haven't handled the lesser thing properly and will be in danger of losing the true riches...which is our eternal life in heaven with God. What he says there is pretty straight forward. Use it faithfully.

Use this shrewdness to faithfully see that it isn't the be all and end all to everything we have. It just can't be because it's going to be destroyed and it's going to be gone some day. Whereas the love God has shown us in Christ, that will never disappear. That is there with us at all times, and that's what sustains us through all things.

Somehow, some way, I think our Lord wants us to grow beyond the attitude that says, "If only I had more money, my life would be better," to get to that point where we say, "If only I was closer to God, my life would be a lot better," because he guarantees us that is true.