

## I. Introduction

Good morning! This morning I would like to begin with a few questions. First, do you like money? Do you like to feel it in your hands? Do you like to look at it? Do you like to count it? For many people, money is almost like a drug. That should be a warning to us. If we are not careful, money can become our master. People who want to become rich often fall into the trap of centering their lives on getting and keeping money.



I grew up on a farm in Missouri, so once in a while you have to put up with my farm stories. One year, when I was about eight years old, Dad gave me a little calf of my own. It was a Black Angus calf, a lot like the one in this photo. So every day I had to feed it and take care of it. When I got the calf, I was bigger than it was. But they grow pretty fast. When I sold the calf a year later it was a lot bigger than I was.



I read in the news that on March 1<sup>st</sup> a man in Pennsylvania was killed by his pet bull. Apparently he had gotten the bull when it was a calf and raised it as a pet. But it got big. And it got mean. And one day the bull attacked the man and killed him. The news said the bull weighed one ton - that's big. This is not the same bull, but you get the idea, it was a big bull. People warned the man that the bull was dangerous, but the man loved the bull and continued to treat it as a pet. But farmers should know that their animals are not pets. Farmers raise cattle for a purpose, usually for beef or milk, and they know they have to keep perspective concerning the purpose of their animals.



I think liking money is a little bit like having a pet calf. At first it seems fun and not dangerous at all. But liking money can soon cause you to lose perspective, and if liking money grows into a love for money, then it is as dangerous as a big bull. We have to keep perspective. We have to think about the purpose and proper uses of money.



This morning we are going to take a look at a parable that can teach us a lot about how to handle money. Let's read Luke 16:1-15.

## II. Scripture Luke 16:1-15 (NIV)

[1] Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. [2] So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' [3] "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— [4] I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' [5] "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' [6] " 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' [7] "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' " 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' [8] "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. [9] I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. [10] "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. [11] So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? [12] And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? [13] "No servant can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money." [14] The Pharisees, who loved

money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. [15] He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.

### III. Teaching

The Pharisees sneered at Jesus when He told this parable. Why did they do that? They did it because they loved money, and because they believed that being rich was a sign that God approved of a person. But Jesus rebuked them, saying, **"What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."** This statement should make us stop and think. For the Pharisees, love of money was a big problem, but we need to stop once in a while and ask ourselves, what are the things that we value that God detests? Love of money is still a big problem in society today, but we have lots of other problems as well. We need to examine our hearts daily and let the Holy Spirit reveal our wrong attitudes and then we need to repent.

At the beginning of this passage it says Jesus was speaking to His disciples, but at the end we see that the Pharisees were also listening. So we can probably imagine that Jesus was teaching in front of a crowd with all kinds of people present. As He was teaching, Jesus told the parable. There was a rich man who had put a manager in charge of his property. But after some time had passed, the rich man heard rumors that the manager was wasting his possessions. So the rich man called the manager in and demanded that he give a full report of the books.



The manager knew he was being fired, so he was distressed and worried. He probably lived in the master's house, so getting fired would make him homeless as well as unemployed. He knew he needed a plan, and this is where things begin to get interesting. **Luke 16:3-4, "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'"** Here we see the manager making a realistic assessment of the situation and then coming up with a plan of what to do to make sure he did not have to sleep in the street.

Next we see him taking action. **Luke 16:5-6, "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. 'The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.'"** One by one, he called in all of the people who owed his master money and he reduced the amount they owed. How do you think these people felt when their debts were dramatically reduced? They were probably all very happy and grateful! Now they would consider the manager a friend. But this is even more interesting than that. You see, the people whose debts were reduced would not have known that the manager was being fired. They probably assumed that the master had decided to be merciful to them and that the manager had orders from the master to reduce their debts.

So what would all of these people do next? Well, I don't know, but I imagine that they all began to send messages of thanksgiving and gifts to the master. The master was rich, but he probably still lived in the same town with these people; he probably knew them all. The manager was accused of wasting the master's possessions, and now he is basically giving away the master's money. But the dishonest manager's actions probably made both the manager and the master very popular. With everyone thanking him, I think the master would have hesitated to expose what the manager had done. The master had less money than before, but he had more social status and a better reputation. The master, in a way, benefited from what had been done. Jesus finished the parable saying in Luke 16:8, **"The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light."**

Sometimes people are disturbed that the master commended the dishonest manager. But the master did not commend the manager for his dishonesty, I am pretty sure that the manager was still fired for that. But what the manager did was very clever, and the master recognized that. And the master does not really represent God in the parable, as some people think. As Jesus makes clear, the master and manager in the parable are both, **"people of this world."** Jesus is basically saying, *"Look, the people of the world are very clever in accomplishing their goals. You disciples, you are supposed to be the people of the light, so you*

*should be clever in serving God.”*

Pardon me for being rude, but too often, people sort of leave their brains behind when they come to church. Around the world, church congregations are full of smart people, including doctors, lawyers, engineers, corporate managers, and university professors. All week long, these people use their education and wisdom to accomplish the goals of their profession. But all too often, the same people do not use their abilities and resources to accomplish the goals of the Kingdom of God. Of course, not everyone has a lot of education and a high-powered job, but the issue is the same. Whatever abilities and resources we have, we should be using them for God’s glory and His kingdom. If we aren’t doing this, then we may be embarrassed when Jesus tells us that the people of the world are more clever than us.

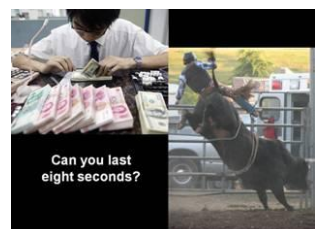
**Luke 16:9, “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”** This verse isn’t talking about getting into heaven. The only friend who can get us into heaven is Jesus Himself, and He is not impressed with money. You become a friend of Jesus by faith, by believing in Him and trusting Him for your eternal salvation. You can’t buy your way into heaven. But generous giving can help you to make friends in this world. When we give to help the poor, when we give to support missions and evangelism, when we tithe to the church, and even when we take a friend out to dinner, our generosity can help to accomplish the work of God’s Kingdom. Notice that, **dwellings,”** is plural in this verse. Keep that in mind for a moment and then look at **John 14:2 (NAS), “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.”** When I put these ideas together, I imagine each of us having our own place in heaven, but of course, we will want to go around and visit our friends. And if we have used our worldly wealth, not just money, but all of our abilities and resources, to being lots of friends to heaven with us, then we will have lots of friends who will welcome us into their places in heaven. It will be fun! And it will be forever! Jesus is preparing a place for each person who believes in Him, and we will get to enjoy a wonderful community in heaven forever.

Having money is not a bad thing. Money itself is neither good nor bad. But we need to be wise masters of our money. All that we have came from God. God is the ultimate owner of all things; it all belongs to Him. But He has made us managers and stewards of the things He has entrusted to us. Those who use their money and resources for personal comfort may enjoy life for a few short years. But those who use their resources and money for His eternal purposes will enjoy eternal blessings. In **Luke 16:13**, Jesus warns us, **“No servant can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money.”**

If money becomes your master, then you will find life very difficult. By the way, in professional bull riding competitions, the cowboy strives to stay on the bull for at least eight seconds. If he makes it eight seconds before being bucked off, it is considered to be a successful ride. Some bulls are so powerful that it is very rare for anyone to stay on for eight full seconds. Often, in only 3-4 seconds, the bull proves that he is boss.



Eight seconds. If you lose perspective and fall in love with money, then eight seconds might be about how long you will last before money becomes your boss. Now, I come from a farm background; we had cows and horses, but I am not a cowboy. From a farmer’s perspective, I would say that it is pretty crazy to try to ride a bull that weighs a full ton. Farmers don’t ride big bulls and we don’t try to make them into pets either. Farmers maintain perspective, cattle are good animals. They produce milk and they make great steaks and hamburgers. But you don’t want to fall in love with them.



As Christians, we are working to produce fruit for the Kingdom of God. In order to be effective, we need to keep things in perspective. God is big. Money is a very little thing. We are in the middle somewhere. We should avoid falling in love with money. Instead we should make money our servant. We want our money to serve us, so that we can use it for God’s Kingdom and His glory. And we want to do it with wisdom, using our brains to think carefully and invest wisely so that we will have many, many friends with us in heaven when we go home to be with the Lord.





If we focus on loving God and serving Him, then we will not fall into the trap of loving and serving money. If we remember that He is the source of all good things and that it all belongs to Him, then we will not fall in love with money or the things of this world.

Have you ever played Monopoly? It can be fun, but it can also turn nice people into greedy monsters, at least for the duration of the game. This photo shows the special Transformers edition of the Monopoly game. A lot of people approach life like they play the game of Monopoly. They try to get more and more money and property. They soon forget that the game will end and that then everything will go back in the box.



The Lord has given us temporary authority to manage a certain amount of money and resources in this world. But He still owns the game. God is the Creator and Sustainer of all, and one day He will sound the signal that time is up and everything will go back in the box. When we die, we don't get to keep anything from this world. All of the things we gain in this world just go back in the box. In this sense, life is like a test of our character. What will we do with the things the Lord has placed in our hands? Will we squander the gifts He has given us? Will we spend it all on our personal pleasure? Or will we hoard it and hide it, hoping to find a way to keep it at the end of the game?

Instead of being foolish, we should invest our resources wisely for our Master in heaven and use money and all other things that we have to grow the Kingdom of God. That is the way to pass the test. **Luke 16:10-11, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"** Worldly wealth is a small thing, a very little thing. It is like Monopoly money that will someday all go back into the box. But God will reward those who pass the test by wisely using their worldly wealth. God will give those who have been trustworthy managers something better than Monopoly money. He will give His faithful servants true riches - heavenly, eternal riches.

#### IV. Conclusion

When we leave this world, we won't get to pack a suitcase or carry a backpack. We can't take anything from this world to heaven with us. But if we use our abilities, our time, our resources, and our money in this world for God's glory, then we are sending the riches on ahead. As **Matthew 6:20**, tell us, **"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."** And if we are generous with all things, then we will have some of the best treasures of all waiting for us in heaven - people who came to know Jesus through us. They will truly be friends who will welcome us into their dwellings in heavens and thank us. And we also will, I am sure, be looking for some people that we want to say thank you to. If we know Jesus, it is because someone told us about Him. If we trust Jesus, it is probably because of someone's example and encouragement. If we are saved, then we can be sure that many people prayed for us.

Ray Boltz wrote a song about these things. On another day, perhaps we can have someone sing it for us. But for today, I just want to share the words with you. It is really a beautiful poem to just read.

**Artist: Ray Boltz, Album: Concert of a Lifetime, Title: Thank You**

I dreamed I went to heaven  
And you were there with me;  
We walked upon the streets of gold  
Beside the crystal sea.  
We heard the angels singing  
Then someone called your name.  
We turned and saw a young man running  
And he was smiling as he came.

And he said, "Friend you may not know me now."  
And then he said, "But wait,

You used to teach my Sunday School  
When I was only eight.  
And every week you would say a prayer  
Before the class would start.  
And one day when you said that prayer,  
I asked Jesus in my heart."

Thank you for giving to the Lord.  
I am a life that was changed.  
Thank you for giving to the Lord.  
I am so glad you gave.

Then another man stood before you  
And said, "Remember the time  
A missionary came to your church  
And his pictures made you cry.  
You didn't have much money,  
But you gave it anyway.  
Jesus took the gift you gave  
And that's why I'm here today."

Thank you for giving to the Lord.  
I am a life that was changed.  
Thank you for giving to the Lord.  
I am so glad you gave.

One by one they came  
Far as the eye could see.  
Each life somehow touched  
By your generosity.  
Little things that you had done,  
Sacrifices made,  
Unnoticed on the earth  
In heaven, now proclaimed.

And I know up in heaven  
You're not supposed to cry  
But I am almost sure  
There were tears in your eyes.  
As Jesus took your hand  
And you stood before the Lord.  
He said, "My child, look around you.  
Great is your reward."

Thank you for giving to the Lord.  
I am a life that was changed.  
Thank you for giving to the Lord.  
I am so glad you gave.

Thank you for giving to the Lord.  
I am a life that was changed.  
Thank you for giving to the Lord.  
I am so glad you gave.

## **V. Closing Prayer**