**Faithfulness**

**Luke 16:1-13**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

This sermon has some points used and edited from a sermon by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther

I am not sure how many times you have heard this text, or read it, but I know it is one which causes some consternation in the hearts and minds of people. This happens partly because we do not like Jesus commending the dishonesty of what appears to be the scoundrel in His parable.

Maybe we ought to define a few things before we get too far. In our text Jesus talks about unrighteous wealth, what is that? You may remember the *King James Version* better, unrighteous mammon. Unrighteous wealth is nothing more than the things of this world, wealth and possessions. They are unrighteous because they are those things that often lead to sinfulness. You remember the phrase, "the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil."

It is very true! How often have wealth, money, riches, or earthly possessions led to covetousness in the heart? Covetousness leads to stealing, and even murder by people who are consumed with greed to obtain these things.

Do you notice that Jesus talks about faithfulness with a very little, and then that very little is called unrighteous wealth? Furthermore, it is called that which is not your own. Nothing that you have is yours, and in the grand scheme of things, it is a very little. Anything you think belongs to you, is not your own. In fact, when this life ends, your wealth and possessions stay here, you do not take them with you.

True riches, may also be entrusted to you, and Jesus proclaims that these are your own. True riches are the things of God. What are the precious things of God? What are the true riches of which you can partake today? The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the truest wealth which has eternal glory. That Gospel is given in the richest of gifts: the Word of Christ proclaimed; the Lord's Supper; and sacrament of Holy Baptism. They are given to you, and they are yours – for all eternity1

Earlier in Luke's Gospel, we are told of the things that are the true treasures of heaven. Now we see them referred to again as true riches. They are eternal riches.

Look at it from a personal point of view. How often do your possessions get in the way of your faith? Seriously! Do you trust God to provide you with all the things you need, the possessions, money, and such things necessary to sustain you in this life? Do your tithes and offerings reflect that all you have are God’s gifts to use for the good of your neighbor and to the glory of His name? Or do you believe that you cannot afford to tithe, because you might not have enough for you?

Do you see how easily the things of this world – possessions, money, wealth, become unrighteous?

We are given this unrighteous wealth, we are to use it to help those in need. In the parable, it was the manager who knew of the forgiving nature of his master. This seemingly dishonest man reduced the debts of those who owed the master. While it is indeed stealing, he acted according to what he knew to be true about his master.

Jesus makes the point of faithfulness. "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. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? 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."

Are you faithful in a very little? Are you faithful in that which is another's? Are you faithful with God's possessions which God has entrusted into your care? Are you faithful with the possessions and wealth that He has entrusted to you that you might care for others?

Jesus' lesson to us is that we should not be greedy. We are to use our wealth in a God-pleasing manner. In fact, we are to make friends for ourselves with the wealth God has given into our individual stewardship. We do this because we do not love it.

Then, when we die and are in want, that is, when we have to leave everything behind, we may find friends there who will take us into eternal habitations. Whatever good we do here for needy people, showing them friendship and kindness, these very deeds will on Judgment Day not merely bear witness to the fact that we have conducted ourselves in a brotherly and Christian fashion, but will also have their reward.

Do you remember what Jesus proclaimed will happen on the last day? “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me." (Mt. 25:34-36)

Of course, these things did not earn them a place in God's kingdom. In fact, they did not even know they had done these things. But yes, One will come forward with praise, saying, "Lord, he gave me a coat, a dollar, a piece of bread, a drink of water in my need; I bear witness that he gave solid evidence of his faith."

On Judgment Day Christ will come forward and before His heavenly Father, and all the angels and saints, and will speak highly of what we have done to one of the least of His brethren. He will explain it as having done good unto Him personally. These friends will testify in our behalf, hailing us into heaven in our hour of need when we must leave everything behind on earth.

Your wealth will not help you gain a place in heaven! But when you make proper use of unrighteous wealth, the possessions of which God has made you stewards, by assisting the poor or contributing the spread of the Gospel, by so doing you give evidence of your faith. This is a living testimony that Christ indwells you and you are indeed heirs of His kingdom.

There is no way that true Christians will use their money and possessions solely for themselves. It is true that both rich and poor will use wealth and God's first article gifts in selfish manners. Christians will however, by God's work in them, use their possession for good purpose in glory to God, by serving their neighbor.

What kind of witness will be made to those who have had to endure the injustice of those who loved unrighteous wealth? How many have had to endure the selfishness and greed of those who loved unrighteous wealth more than God? To eek out another few cents, to get ahead, how many have defrauded and deceived others? How many of those treated poorly remained silent?

While in this mortal flesh, many have had to endure the impact of such greed, being despised and walked over. On the last day things will go differently. Then will One testify against them, "Lord, the times were difficult, and this man had much land sown with grain, and cellars full of wine, but he did not have one little kernel, not one drop to give away, even though one would have paid him cash for whatever he wanted." On that day the Lord Jesus Himself will testify in behalf of those abused. How will miserable worshipers of idols, the lovers of wealth, escape that day?

Whoever wants to be a Christian cannot only open his hand to take and then close it so tightly when it's time to give, that not even a penny falls through. Instead, as Christ has loved and given all, so the Christians should willingly and gladly help and serve the one who is in need, giving wherever he can. This is serving God.

While those who only serve themselves, greedily gathering more unto themselves and only grudgingly and sparingly share with those in need, serve the accursed devil. They will find their own reward on that last day.

On that day, those who have used what God entrusted to them to help others will discover many friends (and, above all, the Lord Christ) who will praise their kindness. As we consider this text, we should learn to be kind, friendly, and charitable, thereby giving evidence of our faith. And those to whom we have shown kindness, will on that day bear witness before Christ.

The Lord says, "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. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

So, are you faithful in a very little? Are you faithful with the possessions of this life which God has given you? Have you, with your possessions, loved God with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength? Have you, with your possessions, loved your neighbor as yourself?

You and I have not always been faithful, we have been sinfully, and selfishly, greedy. With all that God has given to us, is there anything of which we have ever been completely faithful? Nothing!

And yet, God is faithful to us. Was Jesus faithful in a very little? Was Jesus faithful with unrighteous wealth? Was Jesus faithful with what is another’s? In other words, was Jesus faithful in regard to worldly wealth? Was Jesus faithful in regard to His possessions and income?

***YOU*** are the wealth to which Jesus was faithful, faithful even unto death. You are the possession of the Father which He entrusted to the care of His only begotten Son, and the Son was faithful to redeem you. The Father gives you to His Son – as His most prized possession – as His very own. And the Son gave Himself to purchase you, with His very own precious blood as the price.

Jesus came into the world, for it was the world which ensnares you. He endured temptation, the very luring seductions of the things of this world. The Son set His eyes only upon righteousness, the true wealth of eternal life – not for Himself, but for you. He did this in order that He might free you from that which ensnared you, and to give to you the true riches – eternal riches – the wealth of a heavenly kingdom.

Today, you are entrusted with true riches.

You are entrusted with true riches, the Word of forgiveness proclaimed into your ears – the gift which gives you the wealth of the kingdom of heaven. Be faithful in your stewardship of it! Hear it! And in hearing, you are forgiven for you selfish preoccupation with a very little.

You are entrusted with true riches, you are given the very body of your Lord to eat, and the very blood He shed to drink, for the forgiveness of your sins. In eating and drinking you are granted eternal life and salvation. Be a faithful steward of these gifts! Eat and drink!

You, dear friends, are entrusted with true riches. These are the wealthiest gifts ever purchased, paid for with the very life of the Son of God. Be faithful in your stewardship of these gifts entrusted to you by God. Receive them, hear them, eat and drink them, that is the purpose for which they are given to you. They are yours, now and forevermore. In the name of Jesus. Amen.