

## 27. For the near sighted

January 20, 2008

In my almost 52 years of life, I've come across people who think that I am really weird. Don't say, "Amen," too loudly. You might hurt my feeling. After all I am a very sensitive guy.

To tell you the truth, I am weird. Not only the character – a four wheel drive truck driving, gun-totting, right wing redneck – and the look – a South Korean in a cowboy outfit, but also my eye sight – far sighted in the right eye and near sighted in the left. No, I don't have a split personality yet.

Speaking of near sighted, there are many people who are really near sighted when it comes to spirituality. They can not see anything further than their noses in the spiritual realm, rather should I say, they choose not to see the future. They are like an experimental monkey which is given three apples a day for its meal. He eats everything in the morning and starves for the rest of the day instead of eating one apple for each meal.

In chapter 16, Jesus uses one of the most difficult parables to explain His point to us. He teaches us that we sometimes have to learn from even shrewd non-believers how to be prepared for our eternal future, because the majority of people tend to put their emphasis on what they can have on earth more than what they can bring to the glory of God eternally.

Then He goes on to the parable of a near sighted rich man who died and ended up in the tormented place. Anyone who is only concerned about what he or she can have on this earth should take this study as a stern warning from the Lord.

### A. THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

*Luke 16:1-13 He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. 2 So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.' 3 Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. 4 I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.' 5 So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So 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?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' 8 So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. 9 And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. 10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the*

*other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."*

Someone defined money as "an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider for everything except happiness." Others say, "money talks." I think it is true, because mine always says to me, "Bye, bye."

Money is also a provoker of covetousness and competition. It can be a wonderful servant but a terrible master. The love of money is still a root of all kinds of evil as the Bible says and has helped fill our world with corruption, crimes and lust.

A steward is someone who manages another's wealth like a financial accountant. The most important duty about a steward is that he serve his master faithfully and brings profits to him. But this particular steward forgot that he was a steward and began to act as if he were the owner. He became a "prodigal steward" who wasted his master's wealth. He was about to get fired. Before that happened, he used his position to make allies of the people who owe his master.

Before we decide that he deserved to get fired and should be in a jail, we need to look closely in our own lives. Can we say we have been faithful with all the things our God has given to us? Whether we have much or little, are we good stewards of His riches that He allows to have on this earth? One day we must give an answer to Him for the way we handle them.

Christian stewardship is more than giving a tithe. What about the rest? Giving God 10 percent of our income is a good way to begin our faithful stewardship. Does it mean that we can waste away the 90% as we please? No, everything belongs to Him. We are supposed to be grateful for what He lets us have and use it as He directs.

By the way, if you are not tithing, you have an idol in your heart no matter how you want to justify it. That idol is your own selfishness and greed rolled in one. You have to answer for that one to the Lord when you get to heaven.

Instead of taking the crooked steward to jail, this master actually praised him. This parable could be very misleading, if it is misunderstood. How could Jesus use such an obviously dishonest man as an example for His disciples?

Let's see why the master praised him:

**1) The steward knew he would be called to account for his life and he took that seriously.**

Christians should take seriously the idea that they will be called to account, and that idea can be a joy if we are about our Master's business.

**2) He took advantage of his present position to arrange a comfortable future.**

Many Christians are not concerned about lost souls in the world. They don't get involved in the work for the Kingdom of God. In other words, they are flat out selfish Christians.

If we pursued the Kingdom of God with the same vigor and zeal that the people of this world pursue profits and pleasure, we would live in an entirely different world. A

good example is “Coca-Cola.” It is to the shame of the Church that Coca-Cola is more widely distributed and known around the world than the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

If we are faithful with His riches that He allows us to manage, we will receive His commendation as we enter into the heaven and be rewarded. But if we are not faithful, we will lose those blessings, even though we will be saved and enter heaven.

By the way, some think that just because they are not rich, they can't be a slave to money. But you don't have to be rich to be a slave to money, because the poor can be just as greedy and covetous as the rich person is.

## **B. THE NEAR SIGHTED PHARISEES**

*Luke 16:14-17 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. 15 And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. 16 The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. 17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.*

Of course, Jesus was talking about the Pharisees who were standing around and listening to Jesus' teaching and snorting and saying something nasty under their breath. After all, they were the lover of money. And Jesus' teaching had been hitting them right where they hurt the most – their money bags.

To make matters worse, the Pharisees justified their hypocrisy with Scripture. They bent God's Word to fit their proud lifestyles, adding their interpretations to what God had said and calling their opinions divine.

I've talked with someone who told me that tithing doesn't apply to her because that is not how she interprets it. Guess what, buckaroo, the Bible says what it means and it doesn't get changed depending on some lame interpretations. Often we reject the message of Jesus from the Bible because it hits too close to home.

## **C. A BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE THAT STILL STANDS**

*Luke 16:18 Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.*

It seems that this sentence is out of place from the contexts, but actually it was very relevant during Jesus' time on earth. During that time, some of the Jews were very lax in their views of divorce and remarriage, while others were very strict.

Before we move on to the next, we must apply this to ours. If a person goes through an unbiblical divorce and gets married to someone else before the spouse who gets divorced remarries, that person is committing adultery. Some of you may say, “That is harsh.” The Word of God still applies whether we like it or not.

## **D. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS**

*Luke 16:19-31 “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. 20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, 21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23*

*And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' 27 Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' 29 Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"*

Perhaps people don't want to take hell seriously because they view death as the ending, when it's really just the end of the beginning. To better grasp what's at stake in eternity, and to better appreciate Jesus' rescue of us, let's look at what the Bible reveals about death and what awaits us beyond the grave.

Jesus describes Hades – a.k.a. Sheol in the Old Testament, which was the common place of the dead. Some who were in Hades rest in comfort – known as the Abraham's bosom, but others are in fires of torment. However, Hades is not the Lake of Fire – what we usually think of as Hell, referred to in Revelation 20:15, and called Gehenna in the Old Testament. Instead, Hades is a "waiting place" until the day of final judgment.

Death's bitter root reaches through time, all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve first planted its seed in the soil of humanity when they sinned against God and ate the forbidden fruit. As a result of their disobedience, sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.

From the moment we're born, our biological clocks start ticking away toward death. Death steadily, inevitably approaches, and its sheer mystery terrifies many of us. Thankfully, what we just read shines a light into the afterlife, showing us what happens when we die.

When people die, only their bodies go into the grave. At a funeral it is merely the physical shell we see lying in the casket. The real person, the soul/spirit, has already departed to either a place of Hades or heaven, depending on the person's spiritual condition.

At Christ's ascension, Jesus brought the saints from "Abraham's bosom" to "the third heaven" to the realm where God lives according to Eph. 4:8-10. Since then, believers' souls/spirits go immediately to be with Christ, awaiting the resurrection of their bodies when He returns. Later, at the final judgment, the bodies of unbelievers will be resurrected and joined with their souls/spirits to face an eternity in hell.

Did God condemn the rich man to this horrible fate because he was wealthy? Did Lazarus receive bliss because he was poor? No, Scripture says that where we place our faith determines our destinies. The rich man trusted the things of this world and

cared nothing for the things of God's kingdom. Lazarus' faith in God is revealed in his name, which means "God is my help."

Here are four common rationalizations that try to discount the severity of hell:

**1) Hell will be a relief compared to the suffering we endure on earth.**

If all the diseases in the world, all wicked tortures that humans invented and if all the devils inflict punishments upon him, you would think this man to be in a miserable condition. But all this would be only a tip of Hell's punishment.

**2) All this stuff about hell is based on imaginative fears. When we die, we will feel and know nothing.**

Jesus' story, however, shows the opposite: the rich man sees, feels, talks with Abraham and even tastes.

**3) Hell won't be so bad. I'll be there with all my buddies!**

We don't see the rich man resting in the companionship of his friends like Lazarus rests in the bosom of Abraham. He suffers alone and the most of all, he is in utter isolation from God.

**4) After I'm in hell for awhile, somebody will pray me out.**

No bridge exists to the other side, no purgatory, no reincarnation, no chance for relief. Once you are in, you are in for eternity.

If we think lightly of hell, then we will think lightly of the cross. If we think little of the sufferings of lost souls, then we will soon think little of the Savior who delivers us from them.

## **E. APPLICATIONS**

**1) There is every temptation to emphasize externals, we need to pay more attention to what is not seen.**

With the Holy Spirit's help, we can focus more on the truly valuable and lasting things of life, like godly character and relationships.

**2) Serving two masters – God or money – is an impossibility, we need to return to our one and only Lord.**

We need the Cross, not hanging from our necks on gold-plated chains, but planted deeply in the hidden soil of our hearts.

**3) The person who ignores the Word of God in life will not be ignored by the God of the Word in eternity.**

Jesus' story flashes a somber warning: death is sure, hell is real, God will judge. Such a message refuses to leave us neutral toward the lost souls of our world. May we see them in the light of their eternal destiny. May we take the subject of hell as seriously as Jesus did. And may we always remember what drove Him to the Cross.