

THE SHREWD MANAGER LUKE 16:1-13

That is the story Jesus told. Colourful story. Bothered people because Jesus seems to commend someone who is dishonest.

We'll get to the point of the story in a minute.

Some say everyone in the story are ratbags. The manager is a rat bag. Those owing money are ratbags. They knew what was going on and went along with it. They actually in their own handwriting altered the invoice. The rich man was a rat bag for liking the actions of the shrewd manager.

Others say the shrewd manager was actually just waiving his commission. He was paid on a commission basis and he is waiving that in order to gain favor for the future.

It does not really alter what Jesus says is the point of the parable. Parables have a key point.

Jesus actually uses the parable to make three points about how we handle the money and resources we have been given.

And it is true that the children of this world are more shrewd in dealing with the world around them than are the children of the light. Here's the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.

Firstly, Jesus is using contrast. Actually, people are smart at using their resources for their own ends. People put a lot of effort into making money and looking after their assets. Do it for their own benefit. People use energy, ingenuity to get ahead in life. In addition, they are being consistent with their beliefs. If this world is all there is, of course you want to maximize your time here on earth.

There are two dominions. This age. The kingdom. Sons of this age, sons of light. He is drawing contrast between the kingdom of this world and God's kingdom. Those in the kingdom of this world are more consistent and smarter at using their resources in a way that line up with their beliefs.

But if you believe that this world i.e. The systems, structures of this world are temporary, Christ will one day return to establish his kingdom,, then it would make more sense to invest in God's kingdom.

The picture is that one day you will die and you cannot take your possessions. You will arrive in heaven and the new world order where God rules. His kingdom. People you do not know will welcome you.

If you have invested in church here, young people will welcome you because you enabled us to employ a children's pastor, youth pastor. On one of those camps that Jeremy

runs, that young person has given their life to the Lord. They are going to welcome you.

Someone who is Nepalese will welcome you. Never met before. However, they came to faith because of people like Glenys and Andrew who are investing into that country, and we are supporting them.

You will be welcomed by a woman from India who has been rescued from prostitution because of the support we have been giving to Kennedy's

You will be welcomed by someone who says. Thank you for supporting your church. Someone in your church shared about Jesus with me, because of a sermon the pastor gave. I am here because of that.

Someone who you have never seen before will welcome you. They say. I was a mum who came to busy bees and was made to feel so at home that I decided to check out Christianity and I became a believer.

You are going to be welcomed by someone who this church dropped off a load of firewood to, when they were struggling. You invested your time into that ministry.

So why was the shrewd manager commended?

His actions reflected the future reality. Before he was caught out, he used money for the present. For now. For whatever he wanted to. For what gave him pleasure. He didn't think about the future. He was focussed on now.

Then he was about to get the sack. With absolute certainty, he knew what his future would be. He was too old to dig ditches. He didn't want to be a beggar. Because he was convinced about his future, he acted in such a way, as to improve it.

We are appointed once for us to die. Hebrews 3:11 Again we would prefer to ignore this fact. It happens to other people, but not to us. It will happen at some future date when we are 99, but it will not happen to us any earlier. We tend to live in this constant denial of our fragility, of that fact that we do not know if today will be the last day of our lives.

Our future is blatantly clear. We will die. For some sooner, some later. However, as sure as anything, as believers we know what our future reality will be. Therefore, do our actions reflect this reality?

Jesus then makes a second point. Not directly related to the parable, but is on the same theme.

"If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other



people's things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?

Contrast

This age.	Kingdom of God
Little things	Greater responsibility
Worldly wealth	True riches of heaven
Other peoples things	Things of your own

We understand this principle. We trust people with more if they have shown themselves to be trustworthy. If you borrow my handsaw and bring it back all rusty, then I am not going to let you use my chainsaw. If you did not look after my \$ 50 saw why I should trust you with my \$2000 chainsaw. We do it with our kids. We give them a small responsibility but as they get older, more responsible we give them more responsibility...

Jesus considers money a little thing. Useful in this world. However, not of real value. However, He says. If you handle money well, God will give you greater responsibility, true riches of heaven.

Therefore, our use of resources is a test as it were. How are you handling what God has given you? You might think. Well, I do not have much so it is not really an issue. We have more than most people on the planet we have more than any preceding generation. However, the point is not how much we have been given the question is what we do with it. How we handle it. You might live in minimum wages. Another person might earn \$100,000. However, if you use your minimum wage well God will reward you.

Third point Jesus makes.

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money."

Money here is used in a wide sense. Money by itself is not evil and cannot dominate someone. It is an innate object. You are serving either the kingdom of this age, or the kingdom of God. You cannot do both. They are mutually exclusive. You cannot be devoted to both things. Not possible.

As we get to the end of Luke, Jesus focus is very different. He repeatedly in story after story makes this point.

We will have to give an account for our lives. This life on earth is a tiny party of eternity. Very hard to get our heads around. We are so present orientated, now focussed. What we do know of the life to come very vague. Life better. In the presence of God. No pain. Stuff to do. Other than that, all very vague.

There are rewards. Somehow, our actions now will be rewarded. Again not clear. But the Bible is very clear that we will be given future responsibility, rewards based on what we have done here with what we have been given. This life and our actions have an impact in the life to come.

But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. 1 Corinthians 3:13-14

This is our future reality. The question is. Are we convinced of this future reality? I think this is difficult for us. We are so orientated to the present, it is very hard for us to act on what we cannot see. This is where our faith comes in

Heb 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

This man was commended because he acted now to influence what he knew was his future reality. He so believed in what was to come, he was willing to sacrifice the present to make things better in the long term. Jesus says that is smart. That is showing faith.

What do your present actions say about your expected future reality?

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

What is your first reaction to this parable?

Discuss the idea of using our possessions now to influence our future. This is a radical thought.

What do you think of the idea that there are rewards in heaven? Does this seem fair?

What kind of things do you think will be burnt up? One Corinthians 3:13-14

What responsibilities do you think we might be given in the future? What might true riches of heaven actually be?

How can we live in the present but be thinking of the future at the same time? What other areas of life do we use this principle?

How does money enslave us? How can we free ourselves from its grip?

What do your present actions say about your expected future reality?



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