Use worldly wealth to gain friends

Luke 16:1-12

Key Verse 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.”**

Today’s passage is Jesus’ teaching about money. It was given to his disciples. Come to think of it, it is very interesting to know that Jesus never taught his disciples about how to make money. But he taught them many times about how to use money. It sounds like his disciples would not have any problem to have money. Why do you think Jesus only taught them about how to use money instead of how to make money? We know that the whole world is focusing on how to make money. But Jesus’ focus is not how to make money but how to use money. Why is it so? The answer is ‘God will give them money if we use it according to his will.” It makes sense because God is the Great Provider. So today we want to learn how to use money. My message has two parts. Part I. Shrewd manager (v.1-9) Part II. Who will trust you with true riches? (v.10-12)

**Part I. Shrewd manager (v.1-9)**

Look at verses 1-8.

“**Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. 2So 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— 4I 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“‘Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied. “The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.’ 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.”**

The audience of today’s passage is mainly Jesus’ disciples. Other audience would be the Pharisees and teachers of the law, and the tax collectors and sinners, because Jesus’ teaching is the continuation of his parable of the prodigal son.

Now in today’s passage, you may be confused when you look at ‘the master commended the dishonest manager because of his shrewd act’. It is because the Bible never promotes dishonesty. But rather it teaches us complete honesty, complete one, I say. Because only complete honesty brings true healing and restoration of our relationship with God and our brothers and sisters. If we are not complete honest with ourselves, with God, and with our neighbors, something is wrong inside of us. Something is still being rotten inside of us. And eventually it will be shown with its ugly head with terrible smell.

So why does the master commend the dishonest manger? It is because of his preparation for his future. Jesus did not honor dishonesty. But he wanted to point out that the shrewd manager prepared his future using his master’s money. Preparation for the future with the money is Jesus’ point of teaching.

Why does Jesus have to teach the importance of preparation through money so much to the point of using such an example of ‘dishonest’ manager?

It is because people, especially believers, do not use money to prepare for their future as much as unbelievers do. Unbelievers use their money to prepare their future but their future is not eternal one. They invest in savings, stocks, retirement funds, and properties. But believers do not prepare themselves for their true future as much as unbelievers prepare their future on earth. That is what Jesus wanted to teach.

Unbelievers prepare for their future a lot. Once one of wise men said, “People cannot live 100 years. But they want to pile up 1,000 years portion of food.” Unbelievers’ preparation lasts 100 years maximum. They always worry about money but they do not worry about their eternal dwelling because they do not know it. But believers know it. Therefore believers should use their money to prepare for their eternal dwelling.

So Jesus said in verse 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.”**

Here, ‘worldly wealth’ means ‘money’. The phrase ‘when it is gone’ ultimately refers to the time ‘when we die’. Money will be gone anyhow no matter how much we have. When we die we cannot take any money. So it will be wise to use money for something eternal. It is the best investment because we gain something eternal from what is temporary. To use our money to gain friends is the way to carry out money into our eternal dwellings.

You can use your money to prepare for eternal dwelling. You can purchase your eternal property with your money which will be gone sooner of later. So Jesus said, “**use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”**

People are crazy to make money. Missionary John Choi’s boss asked him to make false financial statement in order to make more money. So msn John Choi had to quit his job. People in the world are crazy in order to make money. Some people are ready to do anything including lies as long as they can make money. But ironically, believers are not as crazy as the unbelievers to prepare for their eternal dwellings. So Jesus said in verse 8. “**For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.”** The people of the world are shrewd in preparing for their future. They even cheat other people for their own benefit and preparation for their future. The dishonest manager in the parable is one good example. They prepare their future very shrewdly. They prepare their future even with other’s money if possible.

But the people of the light, believers, may not be shrewd as much as unbelievers in terms of preparing their future with their money. They know they need eternal dwelling. That does not mean they will actually use their money to prepare for their eternal dwelling. There is a huge gap between ‘knowledge’ and ‘doing’. Indeed there is usually a huge difference between ‘knowledge’ and ‘doing’. So we see what others are doing rather than what they say.

Believers know that they needed to use their money for their eternal dwellings. But they do not do. Or at least not as much as unbelievers do for their future. That is why Jesus has to teach his people about ‘how to use money’ again and again. Believers are even worse than unbelievers in terms of the gap between their ‘knowledge’ and their ‘doing’.

So Jesus said in verse 8 and 9. “**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.”**

Here ‘gain friends’ means to ‘use money for people’ according to God’s will. Missionary Philip is a good example about how to use money to gain friends. He has friends in Boston like Jeremiah Yang, and New York like Jing and Ryan. So he planned out spending two weeks in Boston in order to visit them. He purposely extended his business trip to have fellowship with them and encourage them spiritually. Now for his friends in Brazil UBF in San Paulo, he spent 10 days there. He spent time with missionary Nathan and his wife and Brazillian coworkers who are his friends. In order to do so, he had to use his vacation time for 10 days. He had to leave his four beautiful daughters at home with the care of his wife who works on full time too. He has to pay for his airplane tickets. He had bought gifts for them. He even purchased gift for some of us even when we did not give him any gift or support. He did all by himself with his own money. Missionary Paul Lim also did the same when he attended African directors’ conference for me. He used his own money for the trip. In this way, msn Philip and Paul gained many friends.

Money goes away. We cannot keep our money although we may want. Jesus’ advice is to use our money to gain friends. Missionary Mari uses her money to gain friends, visiting UCLA in order to invite students to bible study and have 1:1 bible study. It takes a long time to go to UCLA especially when there is traffic. I specifically remember that it took 2.5 hours from UCLA to Downey taking freeways around evening traffic hour. Now parking in UCLA is not easy. The parking fee is expensive. It was like $8.00 a day and it keeps increasing whereas it is $2.00 in LBCC. Also to walk from parking lot to the building for the bible study is far away in UCLA compared to LBCC. But she does all this to use her wealth to gain friends.

Sh. Terry opens his house every Sunday evening for dinner for all our coworkers and he invites us. It is another wonderful way to use his money to gain friends. Is he rich? You can ask him. But I don’t think so. He is not rich. But he still uses his money to gain friends. So lot of us became his friends. According to Jesus sh. Terry secured his eternal dwelling with many friends who will welcome him after his life here on earth. For him to live in eternal dwelling will be a sweet experience.

**Part II. who will trust you with true riches? (v.10-12)**

Jesus was teaching one more point about how to use our money in verses 10 through 12.

**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. 11So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?”**

Here, ‘little’ or ‘worldly wealth’ or ‘someone else’ property’ refers to money. ‘Much’ or ‘true riches’ or ‘property of your own’ probably refers to ‘the kingdom of God’.

And the issue here is the issue of ‘trustworthiness’. Jesus teaches us the importance of being trustworthy of money. If anyone can be trusted with little money he can be trusted with much money. The opposite is true. If anyone is dishonest with little money he will be dishonest with much money. The fundamental truth about Jesus’ teaching here is ‘money’ belongs to God. It is not our money. Although we earn money by our labor it is God’s money because God gives us life and strength and wisdom and everything that can be used to make money.

Jesus wants us to be people whom God can trust with his true riches. And the testing ground would be to see how we use our money. How can we present ourselves to God that we are worthy to take care of his true riches which is God’s wealth? By being trustworthy of our worldly wealth, our money, which is described as ‘little’. If we prove ourselves that we are trustworthy in our handling of our money, God will bless us with true riches, his own kingdom. He will bless us with our own property which is our own place in his kingdom.

Jesus said in John 14:1-4. **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”**

‘Our place’ refers our own property in the kingdom of God. If we are trustworthy of our money God can bless us with true riches of his kingdom. So how to use our money is so important that Jesus had to teach us about it many times. People focus on how to make money. But Jesus focuses on how to use money.

Why did Jesus suddenly teach his disciples about how to use their money as if they will have no problem to have money? It is because they will have times in the future when they have money and possibly even a lot. Jesus knew his own disciples would be tempted at that time like the Pharisees and teachers of the law who loved money and become hypocrite. He knew that his disciples were not exempt from such temptation which is ‘deceitfulness of wealth’. Indeed Jesus’ disciples will have money and they can be tempted. It was seen even in the life of apostle Paul.

**Philippians 4:10-13**

**“I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”**

Even apostle Paul had a time to be well fed and had a plenty. Since he had been so hungry and poor most of the times he could be tempted even more to be greedy and stingy. He might not want to lose his wealth and keep it for himself when he had it. But he learned how to be content in every situation. He learned that he could do all this through Jesus who gives him strength. And that is how he could use his money to gain friends continually. He has many friends, world mission coworkers, throughout the whole world because he used his money to gain friends.

Financially we are not so bad either although some of us were once very poor in our pioneering stage. About 30 years ago I went to Chicago. I found that Chicago elders at that time had their houses and I could not believe it. It was because at that time missionary Isaac was working as apartment manager and LA Times delivery man. And I was working at Taco bell and I was ready to work at gas station at night. I remember my first interview for an accounting job in Century city. I prayed, “Lord, if you give me this job I will offer you $500.00 for my monthly offering’. The job was only $7.00 an hour and my monthly salary would be little over $1,000.00. God was pleased to hear my prayer and I got that job. I believe by God’s grace alone I kept my promise to God. Time passed by and I found that many of our coworkers have houses and reliable cars including myself. We may not be rich like Bill Gates, but we are rich enough to take care of ourselves. Now do we use our money to gain friends? Or do we use it for ourselves alone?

In our society ‘money’ means ‘freedom’ and ‘convenience.’ Money is so good that it competes with God in many people’s lives. Money talks and it shows a lot of things about us if we look at how we use our money. It shows who we are and what kind of attitude we have for money, how we view our money and how we use it. Do we see our money as our money or God’s money entrusted to us for a while? Do we use it for God or us? Do we believe God will provide with money as long as we use it for his purpose? Or do we worry about how to make money? As today’s passage teaches Jesus never taught about how to make money but only how to use money. It is because God will give us money as we use it for his purpose. Jesus wants us to be trustworthy in the use of our money so that we can be trustworthy of true riches from God.

One word: use worldly wealth to gain friends