



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

October 9, 2022

Pastor James Enderle

18th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Genesis 14:8-24](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 38

Second Lesson: [1 Timothy 6:6-16](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 16:1-13](#)

The Believer Grows in Christian Character Temporary to Timeless

1. Take Inventory – time and treasures
2. Don't be mastered
3. God has given all
4. See the eternal end

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

Who would you say is a good role model today? Perhaps the better question is, is it hard to find a good role model? I think about athletes. There are a lot of athletes that people want to be like. Maybe they are really good at sports but a lot of the things that they say or do, I don't know if you want your kids to be following along or trying to emulate them.

Another example I heard recently was a musician. Liking someone's music—can you like someone's music without really liking everything they stand for or who they are or the way that they act? I think there are a lot of things out there where we can appreciate one thing about someone, but we maybe don't have to appreciate everything about who they are or what they do.

That's kind of what Jesus is doing here with this shrewd manager. This is quite a different parable that Jesus tells than normal. You think about the Good Samaritan and here is this really good person who we want to copy in so many different ways, but this shrewd manager here is dishonest. He is kind of conniving and now he is caught. What does he do? He is commended for this one thing. So even though we're going to look at this shrewd manager, we're not saying EVERYTHING about him is good.

Then as we talk about money today, one thing we want to focus on is we don't often talk about money here at church. Would you say that's true? We had a sermon about a month ago or two where we talked some about the dangers of money, but other than that, we don't really bring out money much at church. But money is important. It's hard to do pretty much anything in life without it. If you don't have a good grasp on money and its value and how to use it, it can cause a lot of problems—between friends, between family, and between spouses. So it's good from time to time to look at money and how God wants us to use it.

They say that there are about a thousand or more passages that talk about money. Jesus Himself spoke about money more than just about anyone. As we look at that, we are going to want to see how we can change our views of money from something that is **temporary** to something that is **timeless**. We want to look at what Jesus teaches us and see that even though money is this temporary thing that we know doesn't last forever; it does have some timeless capabilities or timeless characteristics for us as Christians. How does that happen?

As we look at this shrewd manager, we aren't going to take everything that he does and say this is something we should copy. But as we see what happens to him, we can kind of summarize. We see that he was dishonest and probably stealing from his master, making the bills of people a little too much, embezzling or however he was doing it, he was taking money in ways he shouldn't. His master finds out and he calls him in and says, "You're going to be done. Finish up your work and be done." So what does he want to do? He wants to use his time and use it for his good. He is shrewd in this way.

The first thing he does (I would say) is he takes inventory. What does that mean? He saw what he had left and he saw what he was going to have left in two different ways. He looked at his time and his treasures. He knew that he had some treasures, but soon he wasn't going to be making much money anymore. What about his time? His time as a manager was running short. He took inventory and he said, "I don't have a lot of time. I have to use this time wisely. If my money is short..." What's it say? He is too proud to dig and he is too proud to beg. I think there is a song that talks about that too, how sometimes people are too proud to do certain things and he is not going to do it. So he takes inventory of his time and his treasures and then he uses his time well to gain friends. He brings in some of the clients and he takes one of their bills and chops it in half and another one and lowers it. He knows "These people are going to look upon me kindly in the future." He has taken his time and used it well to gain friends for when he doesn't have many treasures anymore. He gains another sort of treasure—some friends who will help him out when he needs them.

So how can you take inventory and look at your time and treasures? I think for each of us, that's a hard thing to do and it's different for each person. Each person is in a different situation when it comes to money. Some have a lot and have gained a lot but

often when you have a lot, it's easy to want more and to get more things and maybe not be as wise or to be more greedy in that sense. Or maybe if you don't have enough, there is always this desire to have more and not be satisfied (what Paul talked about—to be content). It's so hard for us to be content with our treasure, but what about our time?

How we use our time is so important because it's (some say) our most valuable resource. You can't get it back and people pay a lot of money for a few hours of work. Your time is so valuable. How are you spending your time and treasures?

It's something for each of us to look at. I can't be the judge of that. That's something between you and God and maybe for you to talk with family and friends and examine that from time to time and say "Am I being a good steward of my time and my treasures?" Knowing that God has blessed us with these things, we have to be careful because He tells us that these things are for our good. In this section of Scripture, He is actually saying "Money is a good thing. Use it to gain friends."

It's kind of a rare situation where God is pointing to this shrewd manager and saying we should learn from people who aren't Christian or don't always do things in the right way because they know how to handle money a little bit better. Why is that? Maybe they know that time is short and they are building up for now. They are really good at storing up money or using their money to gain more money and to gain friends. So God says to do the same thing. Use your money wisely and use it to gain friends.

But be careful. Even though it's good, we need to be careful. He says, "**No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.**" While He says that money is good and earlier talked about how He wants to trust us with these things, there is a warning. Don't be mastered by it. What does that mean to be mastered by something? It's to only be able to follow these things or to have this be your only desire or to make it your god. What does that mean? It's the most important thing to you. When you are thinking about what is important in that week, is it gaining more money? Or are your thoughts owned by your budget, by how much you don't have? Or can you think about other things and be content?

When we let thoughts of money and our budget take over our minds and occupy our week and affect our emotions, maybe we are being mastered by money. It's easy for us in this world where so much deals with money for us to struggle with it and to make money and to make gaining more, to having certain things or having certain appearances become more of a god to us than God Himself. Money can give so much, so we look to it to give us more and more and more and we forget who really gives it to us, don't we? We forget that God is the one who has given us all of these blessings.

God as given all—God has given us so many blessings that when we see this, then we can see it's not by our own doing. When we have jobs and He gives us the ability to work and earn a living, we know that's not just on our own but God has blessed us with His gifts. With so many blessings that He gives us, God loves us and shares so much with us. When we see that in the proper way, we can use His gifts in a better way as well.

But more than just the blessings that He has given us, He has given more. We know that as Abram looked as He was fighting the kings and was given victory, He gave that offering to Melchizedek and thanks to God. He didn't want anyone else to be able to say that they had given him his treasure. Do you know something that Abram got later? Something that money couldn't buy? It was that son, the son Isaac that was in the line of the Savior. This Savior that was so precious, that God gave His one and only Son to die for you, to die for Abram, to die for all of us, to come and give up the riches of heaven, to come to live among us, not in a palace but to be born in a manger, to not have a home, to be mocked by people, to be deserted by people, and then to be thrown upon a cross, to be ridiculed—why? So that God could give you all—to forgive us for all our sins. From the times that we struggle with money, from the times that we are greedy or have been lazy with our time or treasures—Jesus stretched out His arms for that sin. For all those times that we have fallen short to use His gifts for His glory, to use them selfishly—what does He do? He says Jesus was selfless in every way for you, to redeem you.

God has given you all, not just your blessings but forgiveness. Forgiveness for the struggles we have with money and possessions. But remember it's not just about how we use those things for this time. There is a little bit more.

While this parable is somewhat hard to understand at times or we wonder why Jesus would use someone we would say isn't an upstanding person, we can look and He tells us exactly why. In Verse 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. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."*** You can use your money wisely to gain friends that aren't just temporary friends but eternal friends. God is telling us to see the eternal end.

What does that mean for us? I mentioned before that people who are a little bit more worldly are not focused on God and might use their money a little bit better or be good at gaining money because what? Everything they get is for now! That's all that really matters for them. When you don't believe that there is an afterlife in heaven, what do you do? "I need to get as much stuff now as I can. I need to get a name for myself now. Any legacy I have I can leave for my kids. As long as people remember me, that's what

will bring me to an eternal standing. People will remember my name." So they work hard because they think it's all about this life and then it's done.

But what do we know? This life isn't the end. We have eternal dwellings. So Jesus tells us to use our money to gain friends; to gain friends and to share the Gospel. It says **"...so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."** There is some question that the original language actually says "they will welcome you into eternal dwellings."

Think about that. The people that you share your gifts with are maybe there, waiting in heaven for you. Welcoming you home and thanking you for the way that you shared your time and your treasures with them. You can maybe think about some of the people in your life that shared the Gospel or shared their gifts with you. Maybe a pastor in the past, or a teacher, maybe a grandparent, a parent, an aunt or uncle who shared with you the Gospel and shared with you their gifts. Maybe they helped you go to school so that you could get a Christian education. Maybe they picked you up when you were down and encouraged you in the Gospel. You can imagine those people. You can picture those people that were an important part of your faith life that will help you enter into eternal life.

Now imagine some of the people that will welcome you home and say "Thank you." Maybe it's someone who doesn't even look anything like you. What do I mean by that? Our church supports missions all over the world. In India, in China, in South America and Africa, so your offerings have gone to support mission work all around the world. Maybe someone from one of those places will welcome you home to heaven and say "Thank you for the gifts that you gave, because through your gifts, I got to hear about Jesus. I am here now because of that."

Or maybe you shared a Soup for Souls meal with someone who is not a part of our congregation and was hurting and that picked them up to remember to think about Jesus and His love for them even in the most difficult times. Maybe you shared the Gospel with a friend, a family member, a co-worker, and maybe you didn't see the fruit come to harvest yourself. Maybe you planted a seed and years down the road that seed was harvested—maybe even by another church, another pastor, another place, but they remember you and those words that you shared that welcomed them and helped them go into heaven.

The encouragement is for us to think about how now our church can use our time and our treasures. How can we go out into the world and use our time and money to God's glory, to be faithful, to use it wisely, and to help share the Gospel so that more and more people will know Jesus? More Jesus to more people with our words, with our money and knowing that nothing we do is in vain and to know that our money is something that fades away. It could be gone in an instant. But because of the Gospel and the way

that we can encourage the Gospel and share the Gospel, God shows that our time and our talents, all these things are changed from temporary to a timeless thing where we can share a Gospel message that is one not with money but with the innocent blood of Christ—a treasure far greater than anything we can buy; a treasure that means heaven and life eternal. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7.\)](#) Amen.