

**September 21, 2025**

**Sermon (Luke 16: 1-13)**

**God or Money: What Is Our Choice?**

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## **Introduction**

Last Thursday, I attended the new pastor's orientation, and the topic was on stewardship. The resource person was Rev. David Abbot, and during the course of his lecture, he was referring to John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who often preached about the danger of money becoming our master. Wesley told his followers: *"Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can."*

For Wesley, money was not evil in itself, but dishonesty and greed corrupted the heart. His own life reflected this: when his income rose from the sale of his writings, he still lived on a modest amount, giving the rest to the poor. His integrity showed that serving God meant living simply and honestly, not being enslaved by wealth. Like Wesley, Jesus reminds us in this parable that integrity matters more than financial gain. Money should be a servant for God's work, never our master.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus tells the parable of the dishonest manager. At first glance, this story can seem confusing—why would Jesus praise a dishonest manager? However, upon closer examination, we see that Jesus is not endorsing dishonesty; instead, Jesus teaches us how the lust for money can lead one to be

dishonest and disloyal to a trusted person who sustains one's life. He is teaching us about the choices we make in life and where our ultimate loyalty lies.

Jesus ends the parable with a powerful reminder: *“No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”*

This is where our focus rests today: God calls us to serve Him with honesty, integrity, and devotion—not with divided hearts, not chasing after money, but living faithfully for His kingdom.

### **1. Why Does Money Become a Trap for Dishonesty?**

The manager in the story was caught squandering his master's property. In desperation, he tried to protect himself by cutting deals with others, reducing their debts so that they would later welcome him. His cleverness may seem admirable, but his dishonesty reveals a deeper problem: his life was ruled by fear and self-preservation instead of trust in God.

Why does the desire for money lead one to be dishonest?

Making money as the prime goal is not only a personal pursuit but also the goal of an institution called the economy, especially the capitalistic economy. In both realms, a worldview is shaped by profound forces that influence our lives. To help

us understand this better, I would like to contrast the spirit behind the world's economic principle and the Gospel's economic principle.

In today's financial capitalism, we are told that our whole existence should be devoted to endless growth, productivity, and self-investment. Every aspect of life, whether it is education, relationships, status, or even leisure, is evaluated in terms of return on investment. The economy is no longer just about markets, which are out there; it demands that we constantly remake ourselves as if we were little corporations, always working, continually optimizing, always chasing more. An invisible force compels us to work harder, produce more, achieve more, and meet ever-growing targets. Money becomes more than a tool. It becomes a master. Here, we follow money and surrender ourselves to its dictates. Whether it is a corporate body or an individual, we want to be perceived as successful in wealth accumulation and competing with others, ultimately accumulating wealth so that one can boast of being the wealthiest person. The desire for wealth leads one to hoard money. There is a subtle difference between saving money, hoarding money, spending money, and wasting money. The scope for dishonesty is greater when it involves hoarding money, and that is what the manager did when he squandered the rich man's money.

However, here is the good news of the Gospel's counter spirit that guides human lives. It offers a radically different spirit that helps us to understand what God's economy is. God's economy is not like the world's economy. His economy is not

measured in terms of individualistic success-oriented pursuits and chasing the never-ending demands of meeting profit targets. In God's economy, His grace is not earned—it is a *gift*. We need not go behind it. It comes to us. Here, there is no need for hoarding anything. On the other hand, it is expected that the recipient will share it. God's economy is not defined in terms of success or making a profit. It is measured in terms of love. God's love is not limited—it is *abundant*. In God's economy, there is no scarcity, no competition, no winners and losers. Everyone is welcome, everyone is fed, and everyone is valued.

When money or possessions become our masters, dishonesty often follows. One starts compromising little by little, until they realize that their integrity has been compromised. Scripture reminds us: “*Whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.*” (Luke 16:10) God is asking us to be faithful even in small things.

## **2. God Values Integrity Above Wealth**

Money itself is not evil, but the love of money—the desire to serve it, cling to it, and let it rule our decisions—becomes idolatry. When we serve money, it shapes our values. We then value greed over generosity, self-interest over compassion, and dishonesty over truth.

But God desires honesty in His servants. To serve Him is to live with integrity, even when no one is watching, even when it costs us something. Our choices in handling money reveal where our heart truly is.

Jesus teaches us that worldly wealth is temporary, but honesty and faithfulness are eternal. He asks: *“If then you have not been faithful with dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?”* (Luke 16:11).

The true riches are not dollars and possessions; they are grace, mercy, love, and eternal life in Christ.

Jesus presses us with a decision: *God or money? What is our choice?*

This is not just about balancing our checkbooks. It is about whom we trust to give our lives meaning.

Do we trust in the promises of the market or individual economic success—that if we work harder, climb higher, hoard better, invest better, we’ll finally be secure or be commended like the dishonest manager? Or do we trust in God’s promise—that our lives are held in love, that daily bread is given, that we do not need to prove our worth? Choosing God over money means living in a different rhythm:

Instead of endless work, we embrace Sabbath rest.

Instead of hoarding, we practice generosity.

Instead of self-investment, we invest in our neighbors.

## **2. Therefore, we can only serve one master.**

At the heart of this parable is a decision: Who is our master—God or money?

If we try to serve both, we end up divided, dishonest, and restless. But when we choose God, we are freed from money's grip. We can use money responsibly, generously, and honestly, but it no longer controls us.

Jesus calls us to wholehearted devotion: to trust Him, to live with integrity, to give generously, and to serve faithfully. When God is our Master, honesty becomes natural because His Spirit shapes our hearts to reflect His truth.

### **Conclusion**

The dishonest manager thought money would secure his future. But Jesus teaches us that only God can secure our future. We are called to serve with honesty, not because honesty is easy, but because it is the way of Christ. We are called to reject money as our master, not because money is worthless, but because it is temporary. Only God can give us the true riches of eternal life. So today, let us ask ourselves: Who is our master? Are we serving God with honest hearts, or are we letting money rule our lives? Let us remember the words of Jesus: *"You cannot serve God and wealth."* Let us choose to serve God alone, with integrity, honesty, and devotion. Amen.