

Kingdom Economics

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we are being addressed by you today on an issue that touches so many aspects of our lives.

Amen. Money can so insidiously take us as its captive, wean us away from our affections for you. So please, as you speak to us from your word, change our hearts so that our affections are focused on you and reflect your purposes and priorities so that we might live with eternity in view in the way we steward the resources you entrust to us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Luke 16, verses 1 to 31. Let me read it out loud for us.

He also said to the disciples, there was a rich man who had a manager and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, what is this that I hear about you?

[1 : 24] Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager. And the manager said to himself, what shall I do since my master is taking the management away from me?

I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. I decided what to do so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.

So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, how much do you owe my master? He said, a hundred measures of oil. He said to him, take your bill, sit down quickly and write fifty.

Then he said to another, and how much do you owe? He said, a hundred measures of wheat. He said to him, take your bill and write eighty. The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.

For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

[2 : 34] One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much. And one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard of all these things and they ridiculed him. And he said to them, There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and who feasted sumptuously every day.

And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment. He lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

[4 : 21] And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, But Abraham said, Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things and Lazarus in like manner bad things.

But now he is comforted here and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.

And he said, Then I beg you, Father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

But Abraham said, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent. He said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. A 16th century Christian theologian, Martin Luther, once said this, That there are three conversions necessary.

[5 : 38] The conversion of the heart, the conversion of the mind, and the conversion of the purse, meaning the way we use our money. Similarly, in his sermon on 2 Corinthians 9, verse 7, The 19th century British preacher Charles Spurgeon noted that with some Christians, The last part of their nature that ever gets sanctified is their pockets.

So this is no small matter, and it's because we spend a considerable amount of time and energy thinking about and dealing with money. We spend many of our days working to earn money, and we spend much of our time buying stuff with money.

We budget, we buy, we sell, we lend, we borrow, we save, we invest, we donate. So it's no wonder then that a significant portion of what Jesus is teaching throughout his life is on the topic of money. Money is everywhere. It affects our lives in profound ways. And so he naturally has to deal with it because it affects how we relate to God and how we live for him as his followers.

And in Luke chapter 16, Jesus' message to us is that only those who use money to serve God on earth will be received into heaven. I will unpack that because it might be confusing for some of you.

[6 : 58] It's more specifically, he teaches us first that we are managers, not owners, of God's money. Secondly, that we are to be God lovers, not money lovers.

And lastly, that we are to focus on heavenly riches, not earthly riches. First is the illustration, in the illustration that Jesus uses in verses 1 to 13.

He teaches us that we're managers, not owners, of God's money. Having rebuked the Pharisees and the scribes for their callousness toward the sinners in chapter 15, Jesus now turns to his disciples in chapter 16 and begins to tell them about how they should behave in a way that's different from the Pharisees and the scribes.

And he begins this way in verse 1. There was a rich man who had a manager. The word manager or management occurs a total of seven times in this first section, and it's the main topic at hand. It's the same word that gets translated sometimes as steward or stewardship. And a steward was usually a slave entrusted with managing a household for his master.

[8 : 04] But he functions with delegated authority, so he has some authority in the household to manage the expenses, the finances of the master. But he was ultimately accountable to the master. And as we can see in this passage, this kind of household manager, even though he was a slave, is not the kind of slave that we would think of.

He was really more like a medieval indentured servant or modern-day contractual employees because he had considerable freedom with which he could even waste his master's money.

And not only that, after he wastes his master's money, the master's, master Dan doesn't begin to beat him senseless or sell him because he's not that kind of, he's not property Dan.

So this is not chattel slavery like that. But he's more like a contractual obligation. And so this is a servant, a household manager. And he worked for a rich man, which is an enviable thing if you are into that kind of work.

You get better benefits. You manage bigger sums of money. You make more money. And charges, however, were brought about this steward, this manager, that he was wasting his possessions.

[9 : 11] And verse 2 makes it clear that the master believes the charges that have been brought about this steward. So he calls the manager and says to him, what is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.

So we don't know exactly how this manager's been mishandling the funds of his master. It could be that he simply was investing in a bad way.

He was not making good use of the money. Or it could be that he was fraudulent and siphoning off his master's money into his own wallet. We don't know what he was doing. But he was mismanaging his master's money.

And so the master demands an accounting, a final accounting, before he is fired for good. And this puts the manager in a bind because you can hear his inner monologue in verse 3.

It says, So this manager has had white-collar work most of his life.

[10:17] And he recognizes that if he's dismissed from this job with this kind of, it looks bad on his resume, he's fired. And he's probably not going to get a job that's as good as the one that he had.

He's going to have to get blue-collar work, manual labor. But he recognizes he's not strong enough to dig. And that leaves him, the only option that leaves him is to beg for the charity of people.

And he's ashamed to beg. He's too prideful to beg. Too weak to dig. Too prideful to beg. But he has, comes up with a plan. He has an aha moment in verse 4.

I've decided what to do so that when I'm removed from management, people may receive me into their houses. He devises a plan to curry favor with the business associates of his master, current master, so that after he's fired, they may show him favor and receive him into their homes and be hospitable and generous toward him.

And his plan is a massive debt reduction plan. It says in verses 5 to 7, So summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, How much do you owe my master?

[11:23] He said, A hundred measures of oil, he said to him. And he said to him, Take your bill and sit down quickly and write 50. Then he said to another, And how much do you owe? He said, A hundred measures of wheat.

He said to him, Take your bill and write 80. Just to give you kind of the scale of the kind of loans that we're dealing with here. It's a hundred measures of oil.

The unit of measurement for liquid that's in view is the Hebrew bath. Which is, one bath is 8.75 gallons of something, 33 liters. So a hundred measures then is 875 gallons.

Remember, 875 gallon milk jugs. And this is not milk, which would be cheaper. This is olive oil. And olive oil, you know, to get that much olive oil, you would need 150 olive trees.

All the oil from 150 olive trees, The price for that kind of oil, That much oil would be around 1,000 denarii. A denarius is a day's wage for an average laborer.

[12:25] That's about three years' salary. In Cambridge, for an average sight, That's about \$242,000. Hopefully, that's a lot more than what anybody owed in debt.

And it's not a small debt. The rich man only dealt with people that have large wallets. But he takes this massive sum of debt and slashes it in half.

And the next case is even more severe. A man owes his master a hundred measures of wheat. And this here, the measurement for wheat is core. Hebrew core, which is one core, is 12 bushels of wheat.

And you multiply that by 100 and get 1,200 bushels of wheat. That's the amount of wheat you get from 100 acres of land. 100 acres of farmland.

So one acre is almost the size of a football field. So all the grain that comes from about 100 football fields, This guy owes this master. That's about 10 years' salary.

[13:29] 30 denarii. \$870,000 in Cambridge. So the manager, this man, and he takes a 20% discount on that. 20%. That's a large sum of money.

Can you imagine someone canceling your debt, Giving you that kind of debt reduction? That's amazing. The master's response after discovering this, But it's even more surprising than this steward's debt reduction program.

Because instead of getting even more angry at the steward, He says in verse 8, The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.

He just tried to fire him for mismanaging his money. So how come now he's happy he lost him more money? Right?

That's the surprising thing about this paragraph. And we have to be clear on what exactly it is that the master's commending him for. He's not commending him for his dishonesty.

[14:26] He cheats his master out of hundreds of thousands of dollars. And that's not commendable. The word dishonest is not used in a good way in this passage. It's the same word that is translated as unrighteous in the same passage.

But it's contrasted with being faithful. Being dishonest is not a good thing. So what is it exactly he is commending him for? He's commending the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.

Jesus explains in verse 8, For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. Notice that Jesus still categorizes this dishonest manager as

belonging to the sons of this world, not the sons of light.

He's not saying that this dishonest manager, his dishonesty is good, that Christians should, followers of Christ should emulate that. To follow that example, that's not what he's saying. Don't be dishonest like this man, but you should emulate his shrewdness.

It's the same word that occurs in Matthew 10, 16, when Jesus says, Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves.

[15 : 32] A son of light in this same situation could have gotten fired quietly, could have been more passive, entrusting him or herself to God's care.

The son of light in this situation could have, and I think it's natural actually that, that sons of this world are better in providing for themselves in this way, because Christians are called to look not only for our own interests, but also for the interests of others.

We're supposed to love our neighbors as ourselves, so it's natural that sons of light are less good, they're not as good at doing this as the sons of this world. That's natural.

But what is it then, what does shrewdness look like for the Christian? Jesus is not saying that we should be just as shrewd as non-Christians in the way we provide for ourselves in this world.

If what we take away from this parable is, oh man, I better re-examine my investment portfolio, and I better jockey more aggressively for my next promotion, and then increase my job security, and while I'm at it, enlarge my network in case I get fired, so that I have the next job to have that I can go to.

[16 : 44] If that's what we're taking away from this parable, we're missing the main point by a wide margin. Because look at verse 9, where Jesus applies this for us, and I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

The dishonest manager recognized that his time was coming to an end, that his time was coming when his money would be useless, his money would be gone.

And with that in mind, he provided for his future, and that's the shrewdness he had. Then the day is coming when for all of us, all of the money that we have, little or much, it will fail us.

The day we die, every single dollar we have will have exactly zero value. And when that time comes, Jesus is saying, emulate the steward, look out for, and prepare for that time that is coming, when your money will have no value, and provide for yourself for the life after death.

Provide for yourself for eternity, is what he's teaching us. Use your money to love God with your whole heart, and to love your neighbor as yourself, here on earth, so that you might be received by God, and by his people in heaven.

[18 : 11] In the same way that the people of this world are shrewd about providing for this life, Christians are supposed to be shrewd about preparing for the next life.

Money is called here unrighteous wealth, which does place a value judgment on money itself. Jesus is not saying thereby that money in and of itself is evil.

In that case, every Christian would have to take a vow of poverty, and we have to avert our eyes whenever we see, you know, bills or credit cards, right? That's not what Jesus is saying.

He's commenting on the enticing power of money. Its tendency to produce unrighteousness. So 1 Timothy 6, 9 to 10, it says, Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It's dangerous. That's what Jesus means when he says unrighteous wealth.

[19 : 29] Instead of being controlled by money, we are to use money for God's purposes and priorities because that's how we provide for ourselves in the life to come. That means the way we spend our money is not just a mundane activity.

It's a spiritual exercise. We should be as strategic and shrewd as the people of this world who are seeking to enrich themselves and provide for themselves are in thinking about providing for eternity. So let me ask you some questions. Do you know where your money is going each month? Do you think about your purchases in light of God's priorities and purposes?

Do you know the financial needs of the church? Are you aware of needy families in the church and what their situation looks like? Are you giving to various charities?

Do you know what percentage of their fundraising goes into actual programs to help people versus to overhead and to more fundraising?

[20 : 42] Are you spending your money on things that distract you from God or draw you closer to God? If you don't have answers to these questions, it may be that you're not being shrewd enough with the money God's entrusted to you.

If we're only shrewd with money in this life or this life, then we are behaving just like the sons of this world. We must be shrewd with our money with eternity in view.

Jesus continues this lesson in verse 10. One who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much. And one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

Jesus is here talking about the importance of character. It's the businessman that has integrity with small matters that will also have integrity in bigger matters.

It's the politician that speaks the truth in small matters that will also speak the truth in bigger matters. It's the researcher that performs minor tasks with attention to detail that will do the same and have the same care when it comes to tasks that require, that have bigger consequences.

[21 : 53] If you cheat and take shortcuts with insignificant matters, you will do the same when the stakes are higher. This is an important principle that adds significance to everything that we do no matter how small it might seem to us.

how we treat powerless people, how we treat children, how we spend our meager income, how we work at our small company, how we perform a small side job, attest to the character and therefore indicate how we'll do when God entrusts us with more significant things.

So don't despise small beginnings. Be faithful in the little things. But this general principle has a more particular application in this passage and Jesus continues in verses 11 to 12, If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? Here, unrighteous wealth is contrasted with true riches, the heavenly blessings, eternal riches.

It's in some way the riches we have here on earth is less true, less lasting than the true riches that await us in heaven. So this is, sometimes I play grocery store with my kids at home.

[23 : 22] They have these like fake toy registers, cash registers and you have these little coins and money and you put the price tags on these little household items and they come and they need some money and I give them the product and switch roles.

It's a good way to practice, to learn math, right? Learn how to add, subtract, but also it's a good way to teach them about the concept of commerce. This is why you work because you need to earn money and you need to buy things.

Yeah, you want a lot of things and the reason why I say no sometimes is because I don't have money, right? You have to explain to your kids sometimes. And so in the same way, and in a similar way, the kids are practicing and when they are good at using this fake money, I can entrust to them real money.

In a similar way, what we do with money here on earth is a rehearsal for the true riches that God will entrust to us in eternal life. It's much more real than what we have.

Even though money here on earth seems so real to us, but it's just like fake money that kids play with in light, in comparison with the true riches that will be given to us. So are you using it well?

[24 : 36] A financial advisor doesn't get to do whatever he wants with the money that is given to him. He has to look out for the interest of the owner. Likewise, we are managers, stewards, not owners of God's money.

Waldean Wall, who is a Christian author, puts it this way in his book, Gospel and Money. One of the great presumptuous sins of humanity is the thinking that we create success and influence and wealth.

This is completely false. The blessings we have, even if we work to acquire them, are all from God's hand. Have you ever wondered why you were born where you were born, or how you came to have the talent you have, or the intellect, or the opportunities, or the health, or the money?

Everything comes from the hand of God, even if we work hard. The money that you have worked hard to earn, earn is not your money.

The money that's in your wallet, the money that's in your bank account, it's not your money, it's God's money. We're managers. And if we start spending it like it's ours rather than God's, then we're buying into a worldly delusion.

[26 : 02] That brings us to the second point. We are to be God lovers, not money lovers. And Jesus sums it up in verse 13 this way, No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money. Jesus is not telling us to emotionally detest money. This is the same idea that we saw earlier in Luke 14, 26.

It's a love-hate duality. Jesus is saying that it's a Hebrew way of describing your choice over something, priority over something. So ancient Jews, instead of expressing an order of priority in terms of lesser and greater kind of degrees, different degrees, they would express it in terms of categorical contrast.

So an ancient Jew would say, I love God and I hate money, when what they mean is I choose God over money. He's saying you cannot love God more than money.

You cannot serve God and money at the same time. Notice how this verse personifies money like it's a God that we can worship and serve. We cannot pledge allegiance to money and at the same time pledge allegiance to Christ.

[27 : 22] We can only serve one master. If your overriding goal in life is to get rich, then you cannot be a Christian. It's that black and white.

if your greatest desire in life is for fame and fortune, then you cannot desire God by definition as your greatest treasure and that's what it means to be a Christian.

If that's what you trust most in life, money, it comes from the Hebrew word mammon, personification like it's an idol, mammon, worship of mammon. Mammon comes from the Hebrew word for trust, rely on.

if money becomes the thing that you rely on, trust in, that you put your hope in, that you bank on, more than God, then we are in the religion of money, of mammon, not Christianity, not the worship of the true God.

Sometimes obeying God will mean that you make less money than you otherwise can. Maybe you can make more money if you move out of state, leave your family, leave your church, but you decide to stay because you have a healthy local church family and you want to serve God with your family together.

[28 : 49] Maybe for the sake of your integrity, you refuse to partake in certain underhanded activities of your company and so you lose your promotion or you get fired. Maybe God will call you to give up a very lucrative career to serve in an orphanage or to be a wife and a mother or to be a missionary in a poor country or a pastor of a small village church.

In all of these examples, we don't know what God might call us to. You cannot follow God if you're a money lover, not a God lover.

But it says in verse 14, the Pharisees who are lovers of money heard all these things and they ridiculed him. The lovers of money in Greek literally is friends of money.

So it's a wordplay on verse 9. Jesus is teaching his disciples to make friends for themselves by means of unrighteous wealth. Use your earthly money to make heavenly friends is what Jesus is saying.

But instead of making heavenly friends, these Pharisees are friends of money. They'd rather have money for his friend and bad fellow than heavenly friends.

[30 : 10] And so Jesus rebukes them in verse 15. You are those who justify yourselves before men. But God knows your hearts for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The Pharisees wanted to justify themselves before men to show themselves to be righteous before other people.

And many Jews saw wealth and status as signs of divine favor. And we know from Luke 11, 43 that the Pharisees in fact sought exactly these things.

They sought status. They sought the best seats in the synagogues. They wanted to be recognized by men. They loved money because it conferred on them power and status and they used it to justify themselves before men.

It's not very different from our days, isn't it? Our society is fascinated with the rich and famous. And even though many people act like they're repulsed by tabloids or celebrity news, secretly they admire the rich and famous.

As this sarcastic, cynical, social commentator that I advise you never to read named Flan Leberwood writes this, says, Oh please, Americans do not hate the rich.

[31 : 28] They want to be them. Every American believes that they are the impending rich and that will never change. In a similar way, the Pharisees loved money.

They wanted status before men. They wanted to be admired. But even when they justified themselves before men, Jesus says, God knows your hearts.

For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Abomination is such a strong word. It's something that causes repulsion. Something that has this stench that will repel you.

It's odious to God. People, men and women, they might be infatuated with fame and fortune. These things might bring exaltation among men.

In God's sight, these things are an abomination. He could not care less. In fact, He is repulsed by it. Self-justifying hypocrisy, the prideful pretensions of fame and fortune, they're abhorrent to God.

[32 : 40] So why would we desire it? You can imagine the shock of the Pharisees. We're the exalted ones. We're the respected ones in the synagogues in the streets.

We're the pioneers of social reform. We're the paragons of virtue in this society. But you're saying that what is exalted among men is an abomination to God?

Are you implying something about us? Are you suggesting that these sinners and tax collectors that keep flocking to you and thronging to you, that they're better than we are?

That we're abominated by God, but that they are loved? Are you setting aside all the requirements of God's laws that we so, try so hard to keep?

Is that what you're doing, Jesus? Are you abolishing the scriptures? That's the objection that Jesus anticipates in verse 16.

[33 : 39] The law and the prophets were until John. Since then, the good news of the kingdom of God is preached and everyone forces his way into it. The law and the prophets are two of the longest sections of the Old Testament and it's together, it's shorthand for the entire Old Testament for scripture.

And the law and the prophets testify to the coming of Christ until John, the John the Baptist. John the Baptist is a transitional figure. He's the last in the line of all the prophets that prophesied about God's salvation plan and about the Messiah, about Jesus' coming.

And he's the last figure in that long line of prophets among the Old Testament prophets. And after him came Jesus and he now preaches the good news of the kingdom of God, Jesus has ushered in the era of fulfillment.

The era of promise is now, has come to an end and now the era of fulfillment has begun. Jesus knows that he will soon die on the cross for the sins of his people and that he'll be raised from the dead so that his perfect righteousness can be counted on behalf of his people so that we who repent of our sins can be saved.

And after his death and resurrection, Jesus says in Luke 24, 44, these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

[35 : 02] Because Jesus fulfills the law and preaches the good news of salvation for sinners, sinners are flocking to him, swarming to get in. That's what he's likely referring to when he says the good news of the kingdom of God is preached and everyone forces his way into it.

It's hyperbole. In the same way earlier in Luke 15, verse 1, he said, now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And that's what's causing the jealousy of the Pharisees. That's what's making them begrudge Jesus' welcoming of sinners. But the fact that Jesus fulfills the scriptures does not mean that Jesus is abolishing the scriptures and setting aside the requirements of the law, the righteous living.

So Jesus continues in verse 17, but it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the law to become void. It's a similar expression like when we say we gotta dot our I's and cross our T's.

You're paying attention to the details of the letter. That's what he's saying. Not even that minutest detail of the law will be abolished. The law is permanent in this sense.

[36 : 15] More permanent than the heavens and the earth are the visible creation, visible world. So even though the Pharisees are trying to charge Jesus with abolishing the law because he's welcoming the prophets, he's saying, no, I haven't come to abolish the law and the prophets.

I'm the one who fulfills it. And after this teaching, verse 18 seems to appear kind of out of the blue. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery and he who marries a

woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

This is not the place for me to preach a preach sermon on marriage and divorce because here it's just an illustration for Jesus to speak on the binding nature of God's law.

He's saying the law does not pass away. Why is when a man divorces his wife and marries another woman, why is that adultery? The implication, of course, is that before God's eyes, because he made the covenant, before God, the marriage is still valid.

And because your marriage is still valid and you marry another person, that's adultery, that's what he's saying. So he's using this as an illustration to prove that it's easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the law to become void.

[37 : 31] Now, I know there are some in our midst and people have come who are already divorced and this is no condemnation for you. There's repentance and forgiveness for every sin and I'm a sinner who sins every single day.

There's grace. Jesus welcomes the woman at the well who has had five husbands. It extends the grace of God for salvation.

So this is not intended to condemn you. It's to show here the fact that God's law is abiding. It does not pass away. And after that short aside, Jesus returns to his main teaching about financial stewardship in verses 19 to 31 where he tells a store of heavenly riches instead of earthly riches. It's really a negative illustration about someone who is a friend of money rather than someone who makes heavenly friends with money. It begins in verse 19 very similarly to the first verse of this chapter.

There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously. Every day. In stark contrast, verses 20 to 21 say that at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus covered with sores who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table.

[38 : 46] Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. Unlike the rich man who is reclining at table enjoying sumptuous feasts, this poor man is laid outside the gate waiting to be fed with leftovers that fall from the rich man's table.

And unlike the rich man that is clothed in purple and fine linen, purple is one of the most expensive colors in the ancient world because it comes from, they extract it from snails. Every purple color that's cooked to linen cloth.

So it's, this is, and instead of that, this poor man is covered with sores instead of with fine linen. And even the dogs came and licked his sores. The fact that this man was laid by somebody else at the gate, it's a passive verb, he was laid there by somebody else, meaning, and the fact that he can't repel the dogs that come to lick his wounds and try to eat his blood, it shows that he was either a cripple or so malnourished that he can't stand and walk.

He's immobilized. It's a picture really of humiliation, he's approaching death. All these descriptions seem to favor the rich man over Lazarus, but there is one crucial difference that is in the poor man's favor.

It says, unlike the rich man, the poor man here is named. Even though in their earthly life, the rich man was acclaimed by men and the poor man wasted away in obscurity, God knows the name of this poor man, and his name is Lazarus, which means God helps.

[40 : 30] On earth, no one helped this man, but God knows who this man is. It's a child of God, and God helps him. And that crucial difference is what matters more in eternity.

It says in verses 22 to 23, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment.

He lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. In the afterlife, there's this great reversal. The poor man is escorted like the VIP by the angels themselves to Abraham's side, the patriarch, the first one, father of the faith.

The rich man, on the other hand, instead of being escorted by the angels to heaven, simply buried in Hades, being in torment. Hades is a reference to the realm of the dead.

It could refer more generically to the realm of the dead for both the righteous and the unrighteous. Sometimes it's used that way in the Bible. Other times it's used more specifically to refer to the place of torment for the unrighteous dead, which is the way it's being used here.

[41 : 40] So in that sense, it's similar to our idea, more similar to the idea of hell than simply Hades. It has the realm of the dead in general. So the rich man's earthly wealth counts for nothing in the afterlife.

His status, his power, means nothing. God has helped, however, this poor man, Lazarus, who is enjoying eternal blessings in heaven, while this rich man is being tormented and held a great reverse.

And that continues in verse 24. The rich man calls out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.

During their earthly life, Lazarus sought to be nourished by the crumbs that fall from this man's table. But in the afterlife, the rich man who hopes for just the droplets of water that will fall from the ends of Lazarus' finger.

But Abraham responds this way, Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus and like men are bad things. But now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

[42 : 47] And besides all this, between us and you, a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us. Health and wealth in this life do not translate into health and wealth in the next life.

The rich man did not use his wealth on earth to care for poor Lazarus, and he will not be comforted by Lazarus in the afterlife. This rich man is an example of someone who did not make heavenly friends with money.

Instead, he made friends with money. And now, God himself has fixed a great chasm. It's been fixed. It's been determined, established, and you cannot cross between the two.

There is no such thing as a limbo between heaven and hell. There's no such thing as purgatory, where people are punished for sins and then purified so that they can spring up to heaven afterward.

There are only two eternal destinies after death. And after death, physical death, there is no opportunity to make amends or to cross over to the other side.

[44 : 00] That's why our call to share the gospel with those who do not know Jesus is so urgent. It's been fixed, the chasm. That's why we ought to be generous toward the poor with our money.

We have to steward our money for the glory of God. The rich man, however, is not done. He contradicts Abraham. In verse 30, no, Father Abraham, if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.

But Abraham corrects him. No, if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead. We often hear people say things like, I will believe God if he proves himself with some indubitable sign.

If he reveals himself in a definitive manner by doing such and such before my eyes. I will believe in God only if you answer this question that I have, this objection that I have, to my perfect satisfaction.

But God's word tells us that in fact, that's not true. God has already spoken to us from the scriptures. God has already revealed himself to us through his word and through his son.

[45 : 14] And if people don't believe God's truth from the testimony of his word, they will not believe him even if someone were to rise from the dead. The real reason for their unbelief is not a lack of evidence, but hardness of heart.

With that last statement about someone rising from the dead, Luke is foreshadowing Jesus' impending death and resurrection. And there's a great irony here. The people currently listening to Jesus' teaching, they're listening to someone who will in fact rise from the dead.

And we, as the listeners now, as the readers of the Gospel of Luke, we by extension have been warned by someone who has risen from the dead.

Luke 16 are the words of Jesus who was raised from the dead. So will you heed this warning? Will you use your earthly money for God's purposes and priorities so you might make heavenly friends? Or will we act like we're the owners of money and use them for our purposes and priorities and be rejected from heaven? Now let me be careful here in telling you that how we use our money is not what ultimately saves us.

[46 : 34] It's Jesus who saves us. But how we use our money does give evidence of our salvation.

So we can be used as a criterion for judging. The dialogue between Abraham and the rich man in verses 27 to 31 make clear that only those who have believed God's word and repented of their sins will be saved.

But it's those people precisely that give generously to serve God. That's why Jesus can say only those who use money to serve God on earth will be received into heaven. The bad news for all of us is that we have all been greedy for gain.

We've all been selfish in our use of money. All of us. We've all at some point turned our eyes away from the needy among us. We have failed on many occasions to use our unrighteous wealth to make friends in heaven.

And this dreadful fate of the rich man awaits all of us. And every single human being without exception. But there's good news as well.

[47 : 48] We have been unfaithful managers of God's wealth and ungenerous with the riches he has entrusted to us. But Jesus, on the other hand, was a faithful manager.

He was the generous rich man that we should have been. That's why it says in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 9, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Jesus, the Son of God, became a poor Son of Man. And Jesus became rejected on the cross because he was bearing our sins and the wrath of God the Father, so that we might become adopted as his children and enjoy the riches of heaven.

That's the good news of the kingdom of God that Jesus preached to us. That's the gospel that he fulfills, the law and the prophets that we have broken, so that we might be saved when we put our faith in him.

We have an amazing privilege before us. Father Abraham would not send Lazarus from the dead to the rich man's brothers to warn them, but God our Father has sent Jesus Christ from the dead to warn us, to save us.

[49 : 12] Acts 2, 24 to 28 says, God has raised Jesus up, losing the pangs of death, because he would not abandon his soul to Hades. Jesus was raised from the dead, and he declares to us from his word that only those who use money to serve God on earth will be received into heaven.

Please take a moment to reflect on that truth, and then we'll respond by praying together corporately as a church. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.