

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 16:1-9

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Luke chapter 16. Today, we will read verses 1-9.

Chapter 15 records three very well-known parables concerning salvation. They clearly tell us that a person's salvation involves God and the Lord Jesus Christ paying a great price, and then the Holy Spirit searching and enlightening within each of our hearts, so that we may come to our senses—just like the prodigal son—and ultimately be willing to return to the Father's house. Once we return, we receive the Father's complete forgiveness and full acceptance, and our status as God's children is restored.

After speaking about salvation, at the beginning of chapter 16, Jesus changes His audience and speaks to the disciples. After a person is saved, what the Lord entrusts is this: how will you serve after being saved? Therefore, in Luke 16:1–13, Jesus teaches His disciples—that is, how every born-again believer should serve in the church.

However, the difficulty is that He uses the example of an “unjust steward.” Therefore, when we read this parable, we must be very careful, otherwise we may misunderstand the Lord's meaning. At the same time, the entire chapter 16 speaks about money, showing that a person's service is largely determined by how he handles money and what his attitude toward it is.

Verse 1: “He also said to His disciples: ‘There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods.’”

At the very beginning, Jesus speaks of a rich man who had a steward—an unjust and unfaithful steward. Others reported to the master that this steward was wasting his goods. What he managed did not belong to him; the ownership was not his. Therefore, he did not value it and squandered his master’s possessions.

Verse 2: “So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’”

He was an unfaithful steward. What did not belong to him but to his master, he wasted. In a sense, today we are also God’s stewards. Everything we have is actually managed on God’s behalf. Our lives have been redeemed by Him, and we ourselves belong to Him; therefore, all that we possess ultimately belongs to the Lord. Thus, when we serve as stewards for the Lord and handle matters, we must not waste. If we do, we are like this unjust steward—unfaithful.

Verse 3: “Then the steward said within himself, ‘What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg.’”

After wasting his master’s goods and being accused, the steward was about to lose his position. Now he became anxious: if he could no longer be a steward, what would he do? To dig? He had no strength. To beg? He was ashamed. He was unable to support himself by labor, for he lacked strength to dig, and he was too proud to beg. It seemed that once he lost his stewardship, he would have no way to sustain himself.

Verse 4: “I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.”

Although this man was unjust and unfaithful, he was very shrewd. While he still held the position of steward, he decided to use this temporary position to prepare

for his future. How? By ensuring that when he was no longer a steward, others would receive him into their homes.

Verse 5: “So he called every one of his master’s debtors to him, and said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’”

Since he was a steward of a rich man, many people rented his master’s land and worked for him, and all accounts were under his management. He called them one by one—not publicly, but individually. In other words, the alteration of the accounts was known only between him and each debtor.

Verses 6–7: “And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ So he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’”

The oil was likely olive oil, produced from rented olive groves. Originally owing one hundred measures, it was immediately reduced to fifty—cut in half.

Before continuing, it is helpful to understand these quantities. According to Brother Chen Xizeng, one measure of oil was about 34 liters, and one measure of wheat about 340 liters. One hundred measures of oil would be about 3,400 liters—roughly 1,000 gallons, equivalent to about 1,000 one-gallon containers of milk, an enormous quantity. One hundred measures of wheat would be about 34,000 liters, which, according to his calculation, would require about 200 acres of land to produce—twenty times the land typically rented by an ordinary farmer.

In other words, the steward called people one by one. We do not know whether he altered every account or by how much. Clearly, the large landholder renting olive groves had his debt reduced by 50%, and another even larger landholder renting wheat fields had his reduced by 20%. Because the amounts were so large, smaller accounts are not mentioned in Scripture—either they were not changed or reduced

by a smaller margin. His purpose was not to do good deeds, but to secure his future. He wanted influential people to receive him after he lost his position. Understanding this background also helps explain the reaction of the Pharisees in verses 14–18.

Thus, this unjust steward was unjust in two ways: first, he wasted his master's goods; second, he altered the accounts for his own benefit, so that others would feel grateful and later receive him into their homes.

Verse 8: “So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.”

First, we must note that it was the master—not Jesus—who commended him. Jesus begins His teaching in verse 9. The master in the parable commended the steward, but not his injustice—rather, his shrewdness. “Injustice” refers to his moral character, which is unacceptable. “Shrewdness” refers to his method—his skill and strategy in handling matters.

The conclusion of this story is: “For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.” After telling this parable, the conclusion Jesus brings out is this: the “sons of this world”—that is, those who are not saved—are more shrewd than the “sons of light,” that is, the saved ones, the Lord's disciples, in matters of this world. It is important to note this phrase “in matters of this world”—it does not apply to all things, but only to worldly affairs. Therefore, in this world, the sons of this world are more shrewd than the sons of light in dealing with worldly matters.

The phrase “**在世事上**” is translated in English as “in their generation”; therefore, a better translation would be: the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. Today, we are still living in this generation. Within this age, those who are not saved may, in many things, appear more shrewd than those who are saved. This does not mean they are more moral, but that they are

more clever. It also indicates that one day, when this generation passes away, the shrewdness of the sons of this world will no longer be of any use.

Verse 9: “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.”

This is Jesus’ own teaching to His disciples. He instructs them to learn from the steward’s shrewdness. In this present age, money is unrighteous in nature and existence, yet it can still be used. We are to use unrighteous mammon to make friends—in other words, to lead people to salvation and to expand God’s kingdom. One day, when money is no longer of use, those friends will receive us into the everlasting dwellings. The purpose of money is to help us accomplish eternal things—to gain friends who will enter eternity and welcome us into everlasting habitations.

Let us pray together: Lord, grant us wisdom and understanding. As the sons of this world are shrewd in this age, help us also to learn how to handle the riches You have entrusted to us today. Teach us how to use what we have to preach the gospel, to help others know You, and to build up the saints. Use the temporary things of this world to store up eternal treasure in heaven. Give me wisdom not to waste anything You have entrusted to me today. Help me to be a faithful, wise, and prudent steward. Thank You, and bless my daily life. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.