

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

**Luke 16: 13-18**

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 are going to read Luke Chapter 16 and today we will read verses 13 to 18.

Jesus taught His disciples how to serve, and He used the parable of the unjust steward to tell them that they should learn the shrewdness of the sons of this world. They were to use unrighteous wealth to make friends, so that when money fails, the relationships established through these temporary riches would become a help to them in the eternal dwellings—welcoming and receiving them. In the end, Jesus drew a conclusion.

**Verse 13: “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”**

Jesus was teaching His disciples about serving, and they needed to understand that their identity is that of servants. A servant must have a master, but he must also be certain of this: he cannot serve two masters. Once there are two masters, he will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. When a person has two masters, every decision and every action involves comparison, and from that comparison comes preference—one is valued more, the other less. Therefore, Jesus concluded: “You cannot serve God and mammon.” Mammon refers to money or wealth.

When Jesus spoke of two masters, it means that in the path of our service, there are two possible masters: one is the Lord whom we serve, and the other is money. Money in our hands should be a tool, not a master. Once it becomes a master, it becomes a very harsh one.

What Jesus taught His disciples then still applies today to everyone who desires to serve Him. The one thing that competes with the Lord for the ruling place in our hearts is money. If our hearts love money, we will quickly be controlled by it. As it says in 1 Timothy 6:10: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” Money itself is, in essence, unrighteous and morally neutral; but the love of money becomes the source of all kinds of evil. Therefore, to be a faithful servant of God, one must not be greedy for money.

The church is a place of life, a place where eternal relationships are built. Money must never occupy a ruling position in church life. When deciding what kind of ministry to pursue or how to lead the church, we must always remember that money is only a tool. The church should not accumulate wealth. When God blesses the church with material abundance, it should be used where it is needed—helping the saints, preaching the gospel, and doing evangelistic work. Ideally, what comes in each year should be used within that year. The church should not store up financial reserves; once significant wealth is accumulated, it can become a snare, leading those who serve into the temptation of loving money. May God grant us wisdom: a servant cannot serve two masters—we cannot serve both God and mammon.

**Verse 14: “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. “**

Jesus spoke this teaching about service to His disciples, but there were some Pharisees nearby. After hearing the parable, they ridiculed Him. These Pharisees were quite rude—they interrupted Jesus and mocked Him, showing an attitude of contempt, disdain, and disagreement.

In fact, Jesus was not even speaking to them. However, the parable He told was so vivid—especially the part about the steward altering the accounts for wealthy debtors: changing one hundred measures of oil to fifty, and one hundred measures of wheat to eighty. These were situations very familiar in their daily lives. As the elite and upper class of Jewish society, they were accustomed to large-scale

transactions. So although Jesus was not addressing them, they saw themselves in the story. Moreover, they completely disagreed with Jesus' attitude toward money, because they themselves loved money.

**Verse 15: "And He said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.'"**

Do not think that because each of you stands with honor and status—respected in society—you are therefore acceptable. Not only are you respected by others, but you also feel quite good about yourselves, justifying yourselves before men.

But Jesus told them that God knows your hearts. God does not look at outward appearance; He looks at the inner being. Though outwardly you appear polished and impressive, inwardly you are full of corruption. God examines the heart, for what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. What man sees is the outward appearance, but God sees the true condition within your heart.

**Verse 16: "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it."**

In other words, the entire Old Testament came to an end with John. In the Old Testament era, Israel was God's chosen people. God entrusted to them His promises, His covenant, His law, and His word. These Pharisees considered themselves the possessors, guardians, and protectors of God's law, believing that they had inherited the responsibility God gave to Israel in the Old Testament.

But Jesus made it very clear to them that "the law and the prophets" summarize the whole Old Testament, and it came to its conclusion with John. For John was the forerunner of Jesus. When Jesus came, the New Testament began—a completely new covenant relationship between God and man.

And Jesus continued, saying: “Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.” In the Old Testament, God specially preserved His people Israel in order to bring forth the Messiah—Jesus Christ. Once Jesus came, He brought the gospel of the kingdom of God. When this gospel was proclaimed, it ushered in an entirely new situation. In the Old Testament, one had to be an Israelite to be called God’s people; but in the New Testament, anyone who is willing to receive the gospel can enter the kingdom of God.

However, Jesus spoke even more practically here: the gospel of the kingdom has now been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. The word “pressing” in the original sense carries the idea of forcefully advancing or paying a great price. In other words, Jesus was telling these Pharisees that the age has changed—it is now the New Testament era. Though Israel was God’s chosen people in the Old Testament, now the gospel of the kingdom of heaven has been proclaimed. The gospel itself is entirely based on grace—you do not need to do anything to receive it. But after receiving the gospel, to enter into the kingdom of God, you must pay a price, you must press in, you must strive. Only in this way can you enter into the kingdom.

The kingdom of God is the realm where God reigns. Every citizen of the kingdom must have a life, conduct, and work that align with the principles of the kingdom. Yet these principles are not outward regulations imposed on you; they are the natural result of the life within you growing. When that life matures and is expressed in your living according to the reality of the kingdom, then you are truly a person in the kingdom of God. Therefore, now that the gospel of the kingdom has been proclaimed, everyone must press in—willingly paying the price—to enter into the kingdom of God.

**Verse 17: “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.”**

He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. In the Old Testament, the law merely exposed the true condition of man, making people aware that they needed

the gospel in order to be saved. But in the New Testament, after the gospel of the kingdom of God has been proclaimed, one must live out a life that conforms to the law of the kingdom—both inwardly and outwardly—through the life of God within. Therefore, not one jot or one tittle of the law will pass away; even until heaven and earth pass away, the law remains.

**Verse 18: “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.”**

This verse is quite striking—why does Jesus place it here? It seems to appear suddenly. I believe that when Jesus spoke about not one jot or one tittle of the law passing away, the Pharisees must have felt pleased, because they regarded themselves as the guardians of the law.

But in order to expose their true condition, Jesus added this statement: “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.” Jesus was bringing the law back to God’s original intention as given through Moses in the Ten Commandments, rather than the many additional regulations later derived from it—especially regarding divorce.

According to Deuteronomy 24:1: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce...” The teachers of the law began to interpret what “uncleanness” meant and what it meant for her to “find no favor,” and from this they established many rules that allowed divorce. They thought this was keeping the law, but it was not God’s original intention.

In Matthew 19:3, the Pharisees tested Jesus, asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” Although Moses had spoken clearly in Deuteronomy, Jesus’ response revealed God’s original purpose in creation. In Matthew 19:4–6: “He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be

joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'... Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

The Pharisees then asked in verse 7 why Moses commanded giving a certificate of divorce. Jesus answered in verse 8: "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." The conclusion of that passage is exactly the same as here: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." Jesus was not intending here to discuss marriage itself; rather, He was correcting the Pharisees' incomplete and distorted understanding of the law.

Luke chapter 16, in essence, deals with money. Money often competes with God for the ruling place in our hearts. Jesus directly corrected the Pharisees' wrong concepts and also told us that when the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed, each of us must pay a price to enter into the kingdom of God.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for Your reminder that we cannot serve both God and mammon. Grant us wisdom and right discernment, so that our hearts will not be occupied by money, but that we may serve You alone. In every matter of our daily lives, may You be the One who rules. Help us today to live in a way that glorifies Your name. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ.