

Luke 16:1-9

There are two themes that are very strong in Luke that we need to be reminded of so that we can hear Jesus' parable this morning.

The first is concern for the poor. We have met this many times already. It is impossible to think of Luke's gospel without being reminded of the needs of the poor.

The second is resurrection and judgment. There are 36 references in Luke-Acts to judges, judging and judgment. All Christians and their leaders will rise to stand before God and give an account. Listen to how these themes come together.

Luke 14:13-14 "When you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled and the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Acts 17:31 God has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom he has appointed...

Acts 24:25 As Paul was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Festus became afraid....

Jesus has a parable for us today.

So there was this rich guy who had a manager who looked after his business for him. He was a long time employee and well-trusted. He had served the rich guy's father

before rich guy took over. One day at his club someone tipped off the rich guy about the reason his manager could drive **such a nice car** on the salary he was being paid.

So he called his manager in and said, "What is this I hear about you?"

"I want a full account on my desk by Monday morning. That will be the last thing I need you to do for me."

Doesn't seem like a good move on the rich guy's part, maybe he's in denial and thinking, "I'll give him the weekend to straighten out what he can." "After all, he's been with us a long time". The manager saw the situation a bit differently.

"If I lose my job, I am toast". "I'm too old to do physical work, no one will hire me once this news gets around, and there is no way in the world that I am going to beg!"

And he came up with an idea. He would have to hurry, but there was just enough time. So he went around to all his master's debtors with new, back dated bills and a nice little proposition.

One hundred measures of oil, becomes fifty. One hundred measures of wheat becomes eighty. And so on, and so on. By late Sunday night he had all the accounts in order and all the old paperwork destroyed. Ready by Monday morning and feeling better about his future.

Word got back to the master on this too. Of course.

He said, "I've got to hand it to you Fred, you really pulled a fast one on me."
"Very shrewd!"

“You took care of yourself. Now you can call in favours till the day you die”.

Jesus says, “I tell you, the sons of this age are more sensible, more prudent, more shrewd, more consistent in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.”

Here is my advice to you: “Make friends for yourselves by means of filthy old money so that when it runs out, they may receive you into eternal dwellings”.

So what is Jesus saying to us this morning in this shocking story?

Some of us hear Jesus saying, “when you fire somebody, have security escort them directly to the parking lot.”

But in Jesus’ story that lazy, embezzling, fraudulent manager is congratulated. ‘Use grubby money, plain old ordinary money to make friends so that one day they will welcome you into eternal dwellings.

Let’s think about this together. What is Jesus saying to **us** with this story?

First off, Jesus is inviting us to notice the **consistency** of life style of the people who think that this world is all there is.

I know someone who has spent the last few years upgrading all his toys so that he can retire in his mid-forties and go play for the rest of his life. He’s living a life that is totally consistent with the belief that **this age** is all there is. “Look after yourself, pamper yourself, take care of yourself any way you can”.

Second, there is a question: ‘How consistently do you live your belief?’

We believe that there is a life to come. Jesus has been raised from the dead and we believe that we will be too. We believe that there will be a day of accounting before God. It is important for us not to cancel out or smooth over any thought of appearing before God to have our books opened. The catechism reminds us that the judge is the one who has died for us, but by Jesus' words and the testimony of the apostles and our creeds and confessions there is a day to come. The judge is Jesus, in him we do not need to be afraid, **and yet**, this needs to get our attention.

So here is the question, "are we consistent, as sons and daughters of light, in the way we manage **our** master's money?" Are we prudent, and shrewd?

It is a question we each need to ask ourselves. You need to do that. If your books were opened, would it be obvious that you are not living for this age only?

Ever been contacted by Revenue Canada after you have filed your taxes because your charitable receipts were so high? Audits of any kind are a nuisance, but it's a good thing if that happens every so often.

How are we doing together **as a congregation**?

We were talking about that with the church visitors when they came a couple of weeks ago. We raised it with them. You see, we are awesome at special project giving. When we did the renovation work we raised \$50,000 dollars without much effort at all. When three of us went to Nicaragua a year and a half ago, we raised close to three times what was needed. Last year's SERVE team only needed one fundraiser and everything for the trip to Regina was covered. After the Haiti earthquake, we

had one special offering and raised \$15,000 dollars which was matched by the government to become \$30,000.

Jesus throws this story out to us. Imagine the poor or those who have been blessed by our financial support, welcoming us into eternal dwellings on that great day to come. Wouldn't that be amazing to have a group of Haitian children welcome us to our Father's house?

So I invite you to imagine your giving with that eternal perspective. But not just for special causes. As a congregation, we are part of the Christian Reformed Church in Northern Alberta and in North America. Together with the larger church we share ministries of evangelism, outreach, and care for a wide range of needs. Each year, the denomination and the regional body simply asks for an amount per active member in support of those ministries. It's not a very glamorous way of raising funds, but it is very efficient, very stewardly, and it allows us as a denomination to 'punch above our weight'. If we tackle it together. The problem with the system is that asking for the same amount per professing member is hard to justify. We have the full gamut and range of incomes in our congregation. The apostle Paul says that we should give according to the way we have been blessed. In the life of this church, I do not know if we have ever fully met our ministry share commitments. Maybe we should treat them as a special cause at the start of the year and pay them upfront. We will see. Need to all do our best together.

Eastern Canada and just about anywhere in the United States has been hit harder by the economic downturn than we have. Maybe that's a challenge to us to step up.

What Jesus invites us to do today is to use our imaginations when we give. So imagine a missionary in Kenya or China, or an evangelist from Back to God ministries saying, “there is no way I could have done the work without your support!” Imagine a native Canadian living along Kingsway in Edmonton, inviting us into eternal dwellings on that great day, “Your gifts helped me follow Jesus’ call right off the streets!” Let me show you around this place!

Let’s give with an eternal perspective.

The Lord be gracious to you, the Lord be gracious to me. And all God’s people said, Amen.