

SUNDAY OF THE STEWARD

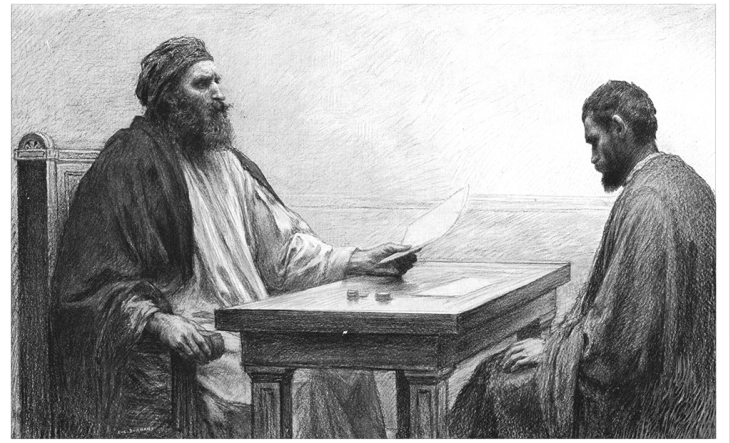
(LUKE 16:1-13)

The steward is the highest class functionary of the great and noble families of ancient times; he controls the entire finances of the family and administers almost all the affairs of the house.

In this parable, the sin of the steward is the same as that of the prodigal son: spend-thrift-ness; that is, using for other purposes properties entrusted to him. Both the prodigal son and the steward spend the belongings of others for their personal use.

The parable of the steward is rightly considered to be one of the most difficult parables of the Gospel to understand. In order to understand this parable one has to differentiate as between the explanation of the “sons of light”, from the “sons of this world”. There exists for Jesus but two classes of men. The first class is composed of those who live just for this world and according to its laws. The people of the second class are those who live for heaven and consequently in accordance with the laws of God. By this parable, Jesus takes an example from the life of the “sons of this world” to give the “sons of light” a lesson and instruction.

The steward of the Gospel is a fraudulent person and is qualified as “unrighteous”. He is a typical “son of this world”, very clever, smart and far-sighted. He is a man who knows how to make profit from all the opportunities provided him for personal benefit. He wastes the possessions of his landlord for his personal use, instead of using them for the family. The landlord, having been informed of the fraud, decides to dismiss him and, therefore, invited him to give an accounting. The shrewd steward uses even this critical situation for his material security. To gain their friendship, he discounts the debts of his landlord’s debtors so that, when he is put out of office, he may be welcomed to their houses. The landlord learns about this new unfaithfulness, too, but he acts like a “gentleman son of the world”. The Gospel says: “The Lord commended the unjust steward for his prudence”.



The parable ends at this point and Jesus, in further elucidation, makes this remark: “For the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light; and I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations”.

The Sunday of the Steward also urges us to use “the mammon of unrighteousness”, that is, material fortune and brain, to buy “eternal tabernacles” or mansions. Besides, the ability to use “the mammon of unrighteousness” correctly is a guarantee that we will be able to utilize beneficially “the true one”, that is, the lasting riches – our spiritual capacities. For if we can not make use of the material which is “foreign” to our nature, no one will give us that which is “our own”, namely, the “talents” of the “sons of light”.

The central instruction of this parable is encouraging also for those who, though “not far from salvation”, but being occupied by worldly problems, can not yet devote time to lay up spiritual treasures for themselves. We may have friends in heaven by performing benefactions in this world; for each person is an intercessor for his benefactor by the throne of God. However, if one of the conditions for our admittance into the “eternal tabernacles” is the good management of the worldly riches, derived from a good stewardship, the other condition is the prayer.

To that idea is dedicated the next Sunday, the Sunday of the Judge.

A Lesson for STEWARD SUNDAY on HONESTY

Theme: A Story for Steward Sunday

Object: A money bag

Scripture: "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much." Luke 16:10



Parable Looys!

One day Susie's mother sent her to the store to buy a loaf of bread. She gave Susie five dollars and told her she could keep the change. When Susie paid for the bread, the cashier accidentally gave her too much money back. Susie knew right away that it was too much money. What should she do? Should she tell the cashier that she had made a mistake, or should she just keep quiet? What would you do?

Hagop was going through the cafeteria line at school and looked down to see a ten-dollar bill on the floor. There was no way of knowing who had lost the money, and no one would ever know if he just picked it up and put it in his pocket. What should he do? What would you do?

Aram found a moneybag like this one containing \$350 on the playground at his school. Wow! That is a lot of money. Just think of all of the things you could do with \$350! What should Aram do? What would you do?

Every day we are faced with decisions that test our honesty. It may be a small amount of incorrect change, a dollar found on the floor, or a large amount of money such as Aram found at school. The amount of money is not important; it is a question of doing what is right.

One day Jesus told a parable about a rich man who accused his manager of wasting his money. He called him in and told to give an account of the way he had been managing his money. Sure enough, he had been taking some of the money for himself and cheating his employer.

Since the manager knew he was going to be fired, he came up with a plan that would make a lot of friends. He called the people who owed his boss money and asked them how much they owed. When they told them how much they owed, he told them they only had to pay a much smaller amount. As you can imagine, the people were very pleased to only have to pay a fraction of what they owed. The manager now had plenty of friends to help him when he no longer had a job.

Jesus told this story to show that "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much." If you and I make sure that we are honest in small things, then we can be sure that we will be honest in the big things. If people know that they can trust us in small things, they will know that they can trust us in the big things too.

Dear Heavenly Father, help us to remember what Your Son and our Lord Jesus taught about honesty -- and help us to be honest in every situation -- big or small. Amen.

GROWING DEEPER



1. How would your life be different if you were **not** a Christian?

2. Which of the following things do you think have helped you grow the most in your faith?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing God with others | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Christian books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling guilty because of sin | <input type="checkbox"/> Becoming a member of your church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serving others | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorizing Bible verses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Praying | <input type="checkbox"/> Hanging out with Christian friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Giving money to the church | <input type="checkbox"/> Being part of a Bible study |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Going through confirmation | <input type="checkbox"/> Being baptized |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being part of a small group | <input type="checkbox"/> Confessing your sins |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attending church | <input type="checkbox"/> Attending youth group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walking your talk | <input type="checkbox"/> Asking questions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hanging quotes from the Bible in your locker | <input type="checkbox"/> Discussing God with other Christians |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading the Bible | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worshiping God at church | |

3. What do you think? Would you mark each of these **M (me)** or **N (not me)**?

- ___ I have spent time trying to understand my Christian faith.
- ___ I pray in other places besides church.
- ___ I have talked with another Christian about my questions regarding Christianity.
- ___ I try to consider how Jesus might want me to handle my problems.
- ___ I read my Bible in places other than church.
- ___ I have talked with my friends about what it means to be a Christian.
- ___ I am regularly involved in my church's activities.
- ___ I have helped someone in need during the past month.
- ___ I talk over my life decisions with God before I make a choice.
- ___ I believe Christianity is one of the most important influences in my life.
- ___ I have experienced God's love and forgiveness.
- ___ I realize I need God's continual grace and love.
- ___ I attend church more than once a week.

4. Who is **one** person you think most reflects Jesus Christ in their life?

How do you think you can become more like Jesus?

5. What do the following Bible verses say about **spiritual growth**?

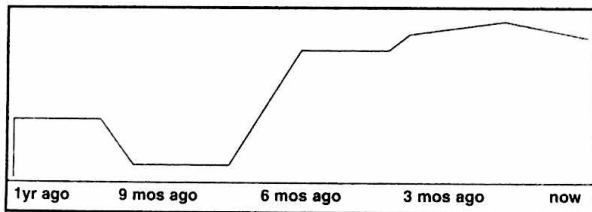
- | | | | |
|---------------------|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Corinthians 13:12 | 2 | Corinthians 3:18 | Hebrews 5:11-14 |
| 1 Corinthians 14:20 | | Ephesians 3:17-19 | |

THIS WEEK

Christian growth is the process of becoming like Jesus. What a big topic for discussion! Teenagers don't usually discuss this on a day-to-day basis. This TalkSheet discussion can powerfully motivate and encourage Christian growth. Everyone in your group can be a resource to help everyone else grow in Christ.

OPENER

Ask your teens to chart their individual spiritual growth over the past year. The horizontal line should be labeled with the following—one year ago, nine months ago, six months ago, three months ago, and now. Beginning with one year ago, have the kids draw lines representing their spiritual progress. Significant points, high or low, should be indicated by a cross and a comment. For example, a week at camp may be marked with a cross and a comment about its significance. Hanging around with a negative friend may drop the line below the baseline. When they are done, have the kids share their spiritual progress with the group. For example, a student's chart may look like this:



THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Let the kids hypothesize what their lives might be like without Christ. Some kids will think it would be improved, others will see no difference. Allow all the kids to share without being put down. This activity will let you know where your kids are really at. You can then facilitate the discussion more productively.
2. Let your kids share and debate what's been helpful in their Christian life and what hasn't. Have some of these been more effective than others? Why or why not? Why does the church have different activities for different people?
3. Ask kids to resist telling the group what they think the group wants to hear. Encourage honesty and role-model support as the students examine their own lives. Which ones do your kids pick as them? Which ones don't they?

4. A Christian growth role model can be helpful to young and old alike. If people see that others are growing more like Christ, they realize that they can too. Ask volunteers to share why their chosen people are most like Christ. Create a master list of all the ways in which the group can become more like Christ.
5. Ask which passage they would like to discuss first. Focus your attention on that choice. How does it relate to spiritual growth?

THE CLOSE

When people talk about Christian growth, they typically focus on the individual's responsibility to become more like Jesus. But people grow in Christ through community as well as individual focus. That's one reason for the establishment of the church. The context of our growth is the living body of Christ, with him as the head. Take time to close the session by examining with the young people how the church can better promote their Christian growth.

MORE

- It's important for everyone to have spiritual goals. If you feel it's appropriate, ask each of your youth (or those who want to) to write a letter stating their spiritual goals and how they want to grow as Christians. Give them envelopes, which they will address to themselves and seal. Mail the letters to them anywhere from six months to a year.
- Do your kids want to get involved and learn more? You may want to start a small group Bible study and discussion with those who are interested. Check out Youth Specialties (www.YouthSpecialties.com) for some study tools, including the Creative Bible Lessons series and *Downloading the Bible*. You'll also find links to student Web sites (such as www.christianteens.net or www.teens4god.com) where your kids can download devotions, find information, and learn more about how to grow in their faith.

Readings for Lent Sundays

1. SUNDAY OF THE STEWARD READING - LUKE 16:1-13

The Parable of the Unjust Steward

16 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 [a]wasting his goods. 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.’

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

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

9 “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous [d]mammon, that when [e]you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. 10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?

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.”

2. SUNDAY OF THE UNJUST JUDGE - LUKE 18:1-8

The Parable of the Unjust Judge

18 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor [a]regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, [b]‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will [c]avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’ ”

6 Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”

3. SUNDAY OF THE ADVENT - MATT. 22:34-23:39

The Scribes: Which Is the First Commandment of All?

34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

37 Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord?

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”

They said to Him, “The Son of David.”

43 He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying:

44 ‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool” ’?

45 If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” 46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

Woe to the Scribes and Pharisees

23 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, 2 saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. 3 Therefore whatever they tell you [a]to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. 4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5 But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the [b]best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ 8 But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your [c]Teacher, [d]the Christ, and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be [e]humbled, and he who humbles himself will be [f]exalted.

13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. 14 [g]Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of [h]hell as yourselves.

16 “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’ 17 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that [i]sanctifies the gold? 18 And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.’ 19 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? 20 Therefore he who [j]swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. 21 He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who [k]dwells in it. 22 And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and [l]self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and [m]adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’

31 “Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’

guilt. 33 Serpents, brood[n] of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? 34 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 38 See! Your house is left to you desolate; 39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”

PALM SUNDAY - MATT. 21:1-11

The Triumphal Entry

21 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. 3 And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”

4 All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

5 “Tell the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your King is coming to you,
Lowly, and sitting on a donkey,
A colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ”

6 So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, [c]and set Him on them. 8

And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

“Hosanna to the Son of David!
‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’
Hosanna in the highest!”

10 And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying,
“Who is this?”

11 So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.”