

# THE WORD OF GOD: Choosing Discipleship

## Lesson 18. Sunday of the Steward

### Bible Study Preparation and Materials Needed:

**Reading of the day:** Luke 16:1-31

**Prepare Ahead:** The background section is material for the instructor and is not meant to be used word for word. The answers to the Bible Study discussion questions are provided for informational purposes and can be read aloud and shared verbally.

### References:

[www.vemkar.us](http://www.vemkar.us)

Orthodox Study Bible

### Memory Verse:

**If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.**

**Luke 16:31**

## Bible Study Lesson

### Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տո՛ւր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քո՝ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց, ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛ զիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos, ee paneets yev kordzots prgya zees yev voghormya ko araradzots eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

## For Students

### The Shrewd Steward (Luke 16:1-31)

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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.’

<sup>3</sup> “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. <sup>4</sup> I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.’

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

<sup>6</sup> And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’

<sup>7</sup> 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.’ <sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? <sup>12</sup> And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own? <sup>13</sup> “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.”

<sup>14</sup> Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. <sup>17</sup> And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. <sup>18</sup> “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.

<sup>19</sup> “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup> But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, <sup>21</sup> desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

<sup>22</sup> So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. <sup>24</sup> "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

<sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

<sup>27</sup> "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' <sup>29</sup> Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' <sup>30</sup> And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' <sup>31</sup> But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

### **Questions:**

1. *Jesus often spoke in parables concerning money. Why do you think He used money to explain the Kingdom of Heaven?*
2. *What is a steward?*
3. *The money we have in our bank accounts, wallets, and piggy banks, doesn't really belong to us. Whose money is it?*
4. *What does Jesus mean when He says, "No man can serve two masters...you cannot serve both mammon and God" (verse 13)?*
5. *Has there ever been a time when you have been in need and someone ignored you, like Lazarus in the parable? How did you feel when this happened?*
6. *What kind of a great gulf do you think is being spoken of in verse 26?*
7. *Whom do you think Abraham is referring to in verse 31, when he says, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead"?*

## For the Teacher

### Background:

The *Sunday of the Steward* instructs us to use one's possessions prudently and wisely. Here, Jesus uses the example of a shrewd manager to reveal the foolishness of hoarding earthly riches. The lesson of the parable revolves around the shrewd manager realizing his own predicament, that he would be judged for the dishonest way he had handled his master's possessions. He tried to obtain friends who would provide for his welfare later, by decreasing what was owed to his master. His shrewd action would guarantee his future welfare.

With this parable, Jesus is pointing out that everyone should follow this manager's example. Instead of frantically holding on to one's possessions that will soon disappear, people should give possessions away, especially to those in need [Luke 12:33]. Money will not last, but God's Word and His Kingdom will.

### Questions:

**1. Jesus often spoke in parables concerning money. Why do you think He used money to explain the Kingdom of Heaven?**

Money is something that everyone uses and knows about. It does not mean that everyone is good at managing money, but it does mean that we all can relate to it and have come in contact with it.

Our use of money is also a good test of the lordship of Christ, because:

- a. Money belongs to God, not to us; so we must use our resources wisely.
- b. Money can be used for good or evil; just with all of creation, things can be used for evil and money is no different.
- c. Money has a lot of power and cannot be used without wisdom and forethought. When we use money carefully and thoughtfully, it can become a great tool and blessing from God.

We must use our material goods in a way that will foster faith and obedience. When we learn how to control our money and material goods, we become good stewards and servants of Christ and His kingdom.

**2. What is a steward?**

A steward is someone who is responsible for managing his master's property and looking after the welfare of his servants. A steward is literally one who takes care of or watches his master's home. The Armenian word is *un'untu/dndes*. In this parable, the steward represents and teaches that the unrighteous are better at using money to make friends in the world than believers are at using money to make friends for the Kingdom of God—which is accomplished by spending it on the needy.

In many of our parishes, we refer to people as stewards because they help take care of the church, their home, by dedicating their time, talents and treasures.

**3. The money we have in our bank accounts, wallets, and piggy banks, doesn't really belong to us. Whose money is it?**

The test as to whether God will bestow heavenly blessings (true riches) on a person is directly related to how that person spends his money. The money we consider our own is actually another's, that is, belonging to God, or at least to the poor. The Fathers universally see a person's failure to give money to God's work as stealing: nothing less than embezzlement of money belonging to someone else. All the money we have been given is from God for us to use and spend wisely, namely for helping the poor and needy. It is a common truth that the more one spends on the less fortunate, the more God will give them to be stewards of.

**4. What does Jesus mean when He says, “No man can serve two masters...you cannot serve both mammon and God” (verse 13)?**

Jesus is describing two distinct forms of service which are truly incompatible. In most cases, there will be love for the one, and a real hatred for the other. The man who loves God cannot love the evil world, and, so far as it is evil, will learn to hate it. The man who loves the world will, even in the midst of everything, hate the service of God in his innermost heart. But there are natures which seem hardly capable of such strong emotions as love or hatred. A man’s will will drift in one direction or another. He will cleave to one with such affection as he is capable of and will hold the other cheap. God or mammon (money), not both together, will be the ruling power with him.

This is true in other areas of life. No one can truly work two jobs equally. He will love one more than the other and will also dedicate more time and effort to one over the other. This is true with God and worldly objects (mammon). We cannot serve and do God’s will while also serving our passions and pleasures in this world. We must dedicate ourselves and families to God fully, for God is eternal and the world (and everything in it) will pass away.

**5. Has there ever been a time when you have been in need and someone ignored you, like Lazarus in the parable? How did you feel when this happened?**

Answers will vary.

**6. What kind of a great gulf do you think is being spoken of in verse 26?**

The great gulf is not a geographical divide, but the complete separation between virtue and wickedness, a separation that cannot be overcome after death. Note that torments have not changed the rich man’s heart, as he still sees Lazarus as a servant existing for the sake of his own comfort. Finally, this account by Christ reveals the communion of the saints, the reality that the saints can speak and communicate with us and God even after death. In this parable, a man, who is not even a believer, calls out from Hades and converses with the Prophet Abraham!

Some Fathers actually see this parable as being set after the final judgment, citing the punishment and reward being received by the two men respectively. Others, however, see this parable set at a time after death but before the second coming of Christ, as evidenced by the man interceding on behalf of his brothers who are still living. The torment he is experiencing would be but a foretaste of his final state. From this perspective, we learn that souls of the departed have awareness of and concern for the state of those still alive on earth (see Luke 9:30, 31; 2Mac 15:12-16; Mt 2:18), but also that the intercessions of a wicked man are heard, but avail nothing (contrast Jam 5:16).

**7. Whom do you think Abraham is referring to in verse 31, when he says, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead”?**

Naturally, he is speaking of Jesus Christ. If the Jewish people had not listened to the prophets and Moses, why would they listen to a man risen from the dead? St. John Chrysostom says, *“The ignorance of Scripture is a great cliff and a deep abyss. It is impossible for anyone to not understand if he reads continually and attentively.”* In addition, those who did not understand the scriptures were not persuaded even when people did rise from the dead (Mt 28:11-15; Jn 12:9-11).

**Close with prayer:**

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ճանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesheree, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sasanetsayts yev voghormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

## At Home

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*Please complete the assignment by next class.*

**Memory Verse:**

“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”

- Luke 16:31