



CENTER FOR STEWARDSHIP

Possessions & Parables

Sunday Morning Bible Study

NOVEMBER 9-23, 2014

Possessions & Parables

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Introduction

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Jesus talked more about money than he did about heaven or hell. Why is that? The answer is obvious—Jesus knows that we spend more time thinking about money than heaven or hell. Much of our life is focused on how to get money, how to make it, how to save it, how to spend it, how to invest it, and how to protect it. It dominates a large part of our lives.

And so that’s why Jesus talks about money, especially in his parables. In fact, over half of the parables that Jesus told deal with money and possessions. This month we are going to take up six of these stories, all of them are in Luke. Our stewardship emphasis is therefore called “Possessions and Parables.”

The Sunday morning Adult Bible Class will study “Parables on the Way to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51–62), “The Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan” (Luke 10:25–37) and “The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus” (Luke 16:19–31).

The lineup for weekend sermons is as follows:

- **NOVEMBER 8-9:** “The Parable of the Rich Fool” (Luke 12:13–21)
- **NOVEMBER 15-16:** “The Parable of the Shrewd Manager” (Luke 16:1–14)
- **NOVEMBER 22-23:** “The Parable of the Minas” (Luke 19:11–27)

On the weekend of November 22–23 all families are asked to commit a portion of their finances, their time, and their spiritual gifts to move our ministry forward in 2015.

Jesus’s parables challenge our preconceived notions about money and point us to more faithful use of our resources. Let’s listen!

Overview of Goals

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT BIBLE STUDY

- 1 INTEGRATE PREACHING & TEACHING**
- 2 ENCOURAGE STUDY & REFLECTION DURING THE WEEK**
- 3 MOVE FROM INFORMATION TO TRANSFORMATION**
- 4 CREATE A WARM AND LOVING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**
- 5 INVITE FRIENDS**



Luke and Possessions

NOVEMBER 9

Mary sings that God “has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.” (Luke 1:52–53) This great financial reversal weaves its way throughout Luke’s two-volume set—his Gospel and the book of Acts. See, for example, Luke 3:10–14; 6:21–25; Acts 2:45; 4:34–5:11; 20:35.

The term “possessions” appears in Luke 8:3; 11:21; 12:33, 44; 14:33; 16:1, 14; 19:8. Possessions, though, are better understood as gifts. In Luke, often possessions become a snare through theft and exploitation, hoarding, inordinate consumption, as well as when the needs of outsiders and people of low status are dismissed.

Yet Luke says that there is nothing wrong with wanting possessions. The basis of Buddhism is all that suffering is the result of desire and so the goal is to get rid of human desire. If you can get rid of all of your desires then you will never have any more pain. The state of no desire is called nirvana. Nirvana does not mean pleasure. It does not mean heaven. Nirvana means nothingness. A state where I have zero desires so nothing can hurt me.

But desires are not wrong! In fact, our desires come from God. See 1 Timothy 6:17; God richly provides creational gifts for our enjoyment. But the problem becomes exactly this; sometimes our desire for creational gifts becomes uncontrolled. Then desire becomes greed. When we desire something that is not righteously ours, that’s evil.

Capitalism says, “What’s mine is mine, and I’m going to keep it.” And if you don’t make it, tough luck. Too bad for you. Communism says, “What’s yours is mine, and I have a right to take it.”

That's called redistribution of wealth. I can take yours and give it to somebody else. Christianity says, "What's mine is really God's, and I'm willing to share it."

LUKE AND PARABLES

Christ's parables about possessions seem harsh and arbitrary to those who have oriented their lives around the quest for status grounded in wealth and around legal interpretations that lead to perpetual separation from the needy.

A parable is a story with two levels of meaning, where certain details in the story stand for other things. Does this mean that a parable is:

- A story where every detail stands for something else?
- A story with only one point?
- A story with one main point for each main character?

All three statements are true, depending on the parable itself.

TWO KINDS OF PARABLES:

I. Kingdom of God Parables

- They use stock metaphors (vineyard, harvest, reapers).
- These may be harder to preach/apply because of different hearers.
- These generally speak of God's action, Kingdom, and Last Day.

II. Piety Parables

- These have no comparable use of stock metaphors.
- They are more for "everyman," like the parable of the rich fool and shrewd manager.
- These generally speak about human action.

STEPS FOR INTERPRETING PARABLES

- Get clues from the context.
- Distinguish the main points from background material.

- For a Kingdom Parable, ask if there are there standard images, e.g., vineyard, harvest, reapers?
- Who are the main characters? How do their interactions with each other and their circumstances contribute to the meaning of the parable?
- Consider the “shock” component of a parable.
- Be sure that you understand cultural significance of items in the text.

PARABLES ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM: Luke 9:51-62

Talk about a time when you were determined to get somewhere.

Luke 9:51 is a major turning point in Luke’s gospel. Beginning here and continuing to Luke 19:36, Jesus travels to Jerusalem. He shows single-minded obedience (cf. Luke 9:53) and calls us to follow in like manner. Christ “being taken up” includes his death, resurrection, ascension, and giving of the Spirit.

Luke 9:57-58: Luke 13:32 states that “Herod is a fox.” Foxes, then, were Edomite interlopers. “Birds” is used in intertestamental Jewish literature as a term for Gentiles; Jesus uses it here to describe the Romans. The sense, then, is that everybody has a home in Israel except Jesus. If you throw your lot in with Jesus then you enter the ranks of the dispossessed. See Daniel 7:13-14 for a definition of “the Son of Man.” What a surprise!

Luke 9:59-60: What the second man wants is not to bury his father who just died. Rather, he wants to serve his father while his father is alive, and then be there to bury him. Surely Jesus doesn’t expect him to violate the expectations of his community!

Yes he does. Those who would be Christ’s disciples must reckon with how identifying with Jesus might place them outside the boundaries of what is acceptable to a world not oriented toward the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:61-62: Elijah allowed Elisha to return and say goodbye to his parents (1 Kings 19:19-21). Jesus does not allow such a delay. The kingdom of God redefines relationships (Luke 8:19-21);

14:26). Both Jewish and Roman laws expected children to obey their fathers even into adulthood. Note that in Luke the command is starkly put, “Seek his kingdom” (Luke 12:31). Compare this with “Seek first his kingdom” in Matthew 6:33. Luke’s gospel has a sharper and more radical call.

Getting seed into the ground involved four plowings. In the first, big furrows were made to break up the soil. In the second, smaller furrows were made to provide proper drainage. In the third, close-set furrows were plowed, without intervening bands. The seed was then sown. In the fourth, the seed sown by hand was covered. With his left hand, the plowman held the plow to regulate the depth of cut and to lift it over rocks and stones. With his right hand, he directed his unruly ox out front, using a six-foot goad tipped with an iron spike. He had to look between the hindquarters of the ox to make sure that the furrow was straight. If he turns his head and looks back while plowing the field, he is sure to make a crooked furrow instead of a straight one.

Luke does not record the responses of the three would-be disciples; this is much like the ending of Jonah.

SERMON: “THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL”- (Luke 12:13–21)

It happened when I was seven years old. I was with my family at a place called Eliches, an amusement park in Denver, Colorado. My dad had talked me into getting on something called “The Rocky Mountain High.” For the uninitiated, “The Rocky Mountain High” used to be one of the largest wooden roller coasters in the world.

We began slowly, making our way up a steep incline. Off to one side we could see Denver’s skyline. Off to the other side we could see Pike’s Peak. Pretty soon we could see downtown Kansas City! Then we got to the top. Suddenly everything changed. Chaos and confusion broke loose; so did a whole lot of screaming. Within a few seconds we went from a ride that was calm and enjoyable to one that was frantic, unsettling and very, very loud.

Our life is a lot like a roller-coaster when it comes to money. How many times have we been on easy street—we just get a raise, or an inheritance, or a financial break—and its smooth-sailing. But then we start heading down, down, down—down dooby do down-down! A medical bill shows up; a car

expense comes out of nowhere; a child goes to college; and suddenly chaos and confusion break loose; so does a whole lot of screaming.

Money management is so vital to our lives. That's why, for the next three weeks we're going to be in a series called "Possessions and Parables." The parables are in the Gospel according to Luke.

Let's look at some statistics.

- 65% of all parables in Luke deal with money and possessions
- One out of every six verses in Luke deal with money and possessions
- In Luke Jesus speaks more about money and possessions than he does heaven and hell

What is the point? If we don't manage money; money will manage us.

Let's begin with our first parable, "The Parable of the Rich Fool."

- The Context (Luke 12:13-15)

"Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. But he said to him, Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you? And he said to them, Take care, and be on your guard against all greed, for one's life ["life" appears in Luke 12:15, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25; it is a key word in the chapter] does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

In what follows, Jesus becomes a judge over these two brothers; not between them. He judges their hearts, not their pocketbooks. The brothers have something to learn about money. So do we.

The word for "greed" here is very descriptive. It means something like, "The thirst for having more." It's like children and Halloween candy; they always want more! It means hoarding things for yourself. This attitude measures life by possessions. That's why Jesus asks, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his own soul?" (Luke 9:25)

- The Contrast
- True Poverty

“And he told them a parable, saying, The land of a rich man [note what these texts have to say to the rich, Luke 1:52-53; 6:24] produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops? And he said, I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” (Luke 12:16–19)

Rather than building additional barns and taking up land that might otherwise be used for agricultural production in subsequent years, the rich man elects to tear down his current storage facilities in order to make room for larger ones. To do so takes great wealth!

The general public lived on a subsistence economy. The rich man’s decision to withhold his produce brought great hardship on others. Ample space was already available; in the mouths of the poor and the needy.

Note the times the man refers to himself. It is fifteen times! The assumption is that God’s gifts are personal possessions earned by one’s own efforts and therefore at one’s disposal to hoard or waste foolishly.

In Luke 15 the shepherd, the woman and the father have others to share their joy with. This rich man has nobody to celebrate with. He thinks that the total needs of his total person can be met by material surpluses. The rich man lived alone; planned alone; built alone; indulged alone; and died alone.

“But God said to him, Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Luke 12:20)

The term “demanded” or “required” is used in Greek sometimes for the repayment of a loan. The rich man’s soul is on loan from God and now God wants the loan returned. His goods are a loan; so, too is his life!

Money is like manure. If you spread it all around it helps things grow—like fertilizer. But if you pile it up it just starts stinking.

- True Wealth

“So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:21)

How do you and I become rich toward God?

Last year I came across an interesting story; it was about a honeymoon disaster. The newlyweds arrived at their hotel and found that their room was about the size of a closet. It had no view, no flowers, a small bathroom and just a foldout sofa. The next morning the sore-necked groom stormed down to the manager’s desk and vented his anger. The clerk asked, “Did you open the door to your room?” The groom returned to the room, only to open the door to what he thought was the closet. It opened up into a huge room, complete with fruit baskets, flowers, and chocolates.

They thought the door was a closet! So do we!

That’s why Jesus says, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32) Our Father is exceedingly rich towards us. Luke is clear on that. “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11). At age twelve Jesus asks his parents, “Did you not know that I must be about the things of my Father?” (Luke 2:49). The impersonal verb *dei* (“I must” in this translation) appears in our Lord’s passion prediction (Luke 9:22) as well as in the Easter proclamations (Luke 24:7, 26, 44). The Father’s will, along with our Savior’s love, compelled him to turn his face to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51) where he would be betrayed, arrested, slandered, spit upon, scourged and crucified. But death could not hold him; the grave could not keep him! Through Christ’s death and resurrection the Father gives us the kingdom. And what a kingdom it is! We are exceedingly rich! Open up the door to bask in baptismal promises, Eucharistic joy and gospel power!

We are rich towards God because he is first rich towards us—is he ever!

Aren’t you tired of the yelling and the screaming and the ups and downs and constant stress that comes with a misunderstanding of money? It is time to get off of the roller coaster. And how does that happen? Meet your generous God, again, for the first time. His name is Jesus.

Amen.

ORDERS OF WORSHIP: NOVEMBER 8-9

THEME OF THE DAY

Money management is so vital to our lives. That's why, for the next three weeks, we're going to be in a series from Luke's gospel called "Possessions and Parables." Today we begin with our first parable, "The Parable of the Rich Fool" from Luke 12:13–21. There is much to learn!

***Note:** All three worship services begin with this invocation and call to worship

INVOCATION

P: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

C: Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP (Selected verses from 1 Timothy 6)

P: Godliness with contentment is great gain.

C: For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we can take nothing out.

MEN: But if we have food and clothing, we will be content.

WOMEN: People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap.

ALL: And into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction.

P: For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

C: Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

MEN: Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth,

WOMEN: Which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

ALL: Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds;

P: And to be generous and willing to share.

C: In this way we will lay up treasure for ourselves as a firm foundation for the coming age;

ALL: So that we may take hold of life that is truly life.

HYMN – “When Morning Guilds the Skies” (LSB, 807)

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

P: Jesus says, “Take care, and be on your guard against every form of greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

Holy God, merciful Father,

C: Much like the rich man in today’s parable, we place our faith in wealth and possessions.

P: We live as if You do not matter and we matter most.

C: Like the rich man, our sole goal in life becomes to earn enough money so we can relax, eat, drink, and be merry.

P: Then we are blind to the needs of others, becoming miserly and stingy.

C: Then we lay up treasures for ourselves and are not rich toward God.

P: We are sorry for all our sins.

C: We seek Your mercy through Jesus Christ to forgive our sins and lead us to amend our sinful lives.

P: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

P: He who began this good work within You bring it to completion on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. His peace be with you.

PRAYERS OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. God our beloved Creator and Father, make us wise and faithful stewards of your gifts, so that we serve our neighbors in need, extend the Gospel to people without Christ, and live to the praise of Your glorious name; through whom You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

ALL: Amen.

Readings – Ecclesiastes 2:1-11/ 2 Timothy 3:1-5/Luke 12:13-21

POSSESSIONS AND PARABLES PART 1:

“The Parable of the Rich Fool.” (Luke 12:13-21)

- 65% of all parables in Luke deal with money and possessions
- One out of every six verses in Luke deal with money and possessions
- In Luke Jesus speaks more about money and possessions than he does heaven and hell

1. THE CONTEXT

“Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. But he said to him, Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you? And he said to them, Take care, and be on your guard against all greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” (Luke 12:13-15)

2. THE CONTRAST

True Poverty

“Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. But he said to him, Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you? And he said to them, Take care, and be on your guard against all greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” (Luke 12:13–15)

True Wealth

“Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. But he said to him, Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you? And he said to them, Take care, and be on your guard against all greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” (Luke 12:13–15)

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read the parable of the shrewd manager in Luke 16:1-14 and answer these questions:

1. What is so odd about this parable?
2. What did the shrewd manager do right?
3. How does this parable impact your use of money?

SERIES THEME HYMN – “The Earth is the Lords” (St. Denio, LSB, 802)

(Sung after the sermon in all three services)

The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.

Redemption reminds us, O God, of your love.

By grace we are learning, as year leads to year.

We’re called to be stewards, your caretakers here.

Too often, O God, we abuse your good earth.
We fail to remember its beauty and worth.
We take from creation much more than we need,
We threaten your mission through excess and greed.

May we be good stewards of all that you give.
Extending your Gospel wherever we live.
May we be a church that renews and restores
And lovingly cares for these gifts that are yours.

This hymn is adapted by R. Lessing

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This hymn is available with the hymn text and music together
on the United Methodist Church Worship Office web site.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P: All things are Yours, blessed Lord, but You have granted us so much to use and manage to extend the mission of your church. We trust in Your mercy and have confidence that You will grant us all things needful, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: We give Thee but Thine own, whate'er the gift may be.

P: Guard our hearts against greed, for life does consist in the abundance of our possessions.

C: All that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord from Thee.

P: Guard our hearts against anxiety, for life does consist in the abundance of our possessions.

C: May we Thy bounties thus as stewards true receive.

P: Guard our hearts against miserliness, for life does consist in the abundance of our possessions.

C: And gladly as Thou blesses us to Thee our firstfruits give.

ADDITIONAL CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS

P: O God, empower us by your Holy Spirit to be good and faithful stewards, sharing with others the resources you have given us,

C: And we believe Thy Word though dim our faith may be.

P: We have freely received, now let us freely give.

C: Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord, we do it unto Thee.

P: In Jesus' name. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN – “We Give Thee But Thine Own” (LSB, 781)

SILENT PRAYER

Heavenly Father, give me ears to hear and a heart to respond to the financial truths of my Savior, as he speaks them in the parable of the rich fool. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.



The Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan

NOVEMBER 16

“Believe” appears 272 times in the Bible.

“Pray” appears 371 times in the Bible.

“Love” appears 714 times in the Bible.

“Give” appears 2,162 times in the Bible.

What shall we make of this?

The practice of God’s word is a central issue in this parable; note the repetition and placement of the verb “to do” in Luke 10:25, 28, 37; cf. Luke 6:46–49; 8:21. It is one thing to discuss the law; it is another thing to do it. It is one thing to interpret the law correctly, another to internalize and perform it.

Luke 10:25: The only other time “test” appears in the third gospel is in Luke 4:12.

Luke uses “lawyers,” “teachers of the law,” and “scribes” interchangeably; cf. Luke 9:22.

The man wants to do something to gain eternal life; he does not know mercy.

Luke 10:26–28: The lawyer’s response is Deuteronomy 6:5 which follows the Shema. In Leviticus 19:18 love is commanded for fellow Israelites as well as for “resident aliens” who embrace the covenant with Yahweh (Leviticus 19:33–34).

Luke 10:29: “Who is my neighbor?” implies inclusion of some and exclusion of others. The first people the lawyer would include would be priests and Levites; the first he would exclude would be Samaritans. This is part of Luke’s great reversal motif (Luke 1:52–53).

The book of Sirach, also known as the book of Ecclesiasticus, was composed in approximately 200–175 BC by the Jewish scribe Shimon ben Yeshua ben Eliezer ben Sira of Jerusalem. An example of its ethical teaching is below.

“When you do a good deed, make sure you know who is benefiting from it; then what you do will not be wasted. 2 You will be repaid for any kindness you show to a devout person. If he doesn’t repay you, the Most High will. 3 No good ever comes to a person who gives comfort to the wicked; it is not a righteous act. 4 Give to religious people, but don’t help sinners. 5 Do good to humble people, but don’t give anything to those who are not devout. Don’t give them food, or they will use your kindness against you. Every good thing you do for such people will bring you twice as much trouble in return. 6 The Most High himself hates sinners, and he will punish them. 7 Give to good people, but do not help sinners.” (Sirach 12:1–7)

Luke 10:30: “A certain man” makes it impossible to identify him; stripped of his clothes and left half-dead, the man’s anonymity throughout the story is insured. He is a human being.

“Half-dead” implies next to dead.

Jerusalem is 2500 feet above sea level; Jericho is 800 feet below sea level. This was a very dangerous seventeen-mile road to travel.

Luke 10:31–32: The priest and Levite would have a heightened concern for corpse impurity. Their job was to differentiate between clean and unclean, and this included people.

Luke 10:33–35: How does the priest know if the man is his neighbor? The victim has no identifying clothes and he is unable to speak. Why, the man might even be a non-Jew! Then there is the possibility that the man is dead. A priest could not get closer to a corpse than four cubits. Ritual purification could only take place in Jerusalem; if he becomes unclean he would have to return there to be purified.

The Levite was not bound to as many regulations as the priest. His rationale for passing by was probably fear; he, too, could be beaten and robbed.

Robbers might have respected a priest and Levite; but not a Samaritan! The priest only goes down the road; the Levite comes to the place; the Samaritan comes to the man.

On Samaria/Samaritan see Luke 9:53; 17:11–19; Acts 1:8. The rabbis taught that, “He who eats the bread of a Samaritan is like one that eats the flesh of swine.”

Note these verses from Sirach: “There are two nations that my soul detests, the third is not a nation at all: the inhabitants of Mount Seir, the Philistines, and the stupid people living at Shechem.”

(Sirach 50:25–26) “Shechem” was the home city for the Samaritans.

The travelling merchant does good, making no arrangements for reciprocation (cf. Luke 6:32–36). He even enters into an open-ended monetary relationship with the innkeeper, a relationship in which the chance of extortion is very high.

Divine compassion (*splanchnizomai* from where we get our English word “spleen”) is described in Luke 1:78; 7:13; see also Luke 6:27, 36.

Priests and Levites poured out wine and oil on the altar as part of worship; the altar, then, becomes those who need us. The Samaritan offers true worship; see Hosea 6:6.

Luke 10:36–37: Life is the question; give is the answer. Jesus sees the Torah as Scripture that leads to Galatians 5:6; the lawyer sees it as a legalistic system (Galatians 3:10, 12).

The exchange between Jesus and the lawyer is open-ended, just like the parables in Luke 9:51–62. Both invite our response.

In groups of three or four, discuss how these words intersect with this parable.

“In view of what he plainly said, is it any wonder that all who were rich and prosperous felt a horror of strange things, a swimming of their world at his teaching? He was dragging out all the little private reservations they had made from social service into the light of a universal religious life. He was like some terrible moral huntsman digging mankind out of the snug burrows in which they had lived hitherto. In the white blaze of this kingdom of his there was to be no property, no privilege,

no pride and precedence; no motive indeed and no reward but love. Is it any wonder that men were dazzled and blinded and cried out against him? Even his disciples cried out when he would not spare them the light. Is it any wonder that the priests realized that between this man and themselves there was no choice but that he or priestcraft should perish? Is it any wonder that the Roman soldiers, confronted and amazed by something soaring over their comprehension and threatening all their disciplines, should take refuge in wild laughter, and crown him with thorns and robe him in purple and make a mock Cæsar of him? For to take him seriously was to enter upon a strange and alarming life, to abandon habits, to control instincts and impulses, to essay an incredible happiness.” Matt. xii, 46–50. Mark x. 17–25. Mark vii. 1–9. (H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, Vol 1, pp. 423–26). all may be blessed (Mal 1:11)—including Esau and Edom (cf. Am 9:12; Acts 15:13–19).

SERMON: “THE PARABLE OF THE SHREWD MANAGER”- (Luke 16:1-14)

You know, some things just don’t make sense. They’re illogical, non-sensical, but true. Take some towns; Moscow, Idaho; Berlin, New Hampshire; Mexico, Louisiana, and Nevada, Missouri; and Nashville, Illinois. Then there are these contradictions. The way to stop a loud argument is by a soft-spoken word. The way to show yourself wise is not so much by speech but by silence.

Funny, isn’t it? There are so many things that are illogical, non-sensical, but true. Add to this list our parable from Luke 16.

We’re in a series called “Possessions and Parables,” using the Gospel of Luke. Last weekend we looked at the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12. This weekend it is the parable of the shrewd manager in Luke 16. And my guess is that when this parable was read most of us thought something like, “This is illogical and non-sensical!” Here is our Lord commending a dishonest businessman. Here is our Lord telling us to use worldly wealth to gain friends. Here is our Lord saying just the opposite of what we teach, believe, and confess! But this is God’s word. In some places it may appear illogical and non-sensical; but it is always true.

To understand what is going on we need to begin by seeing whom Jesus is speaking to; “The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him” (Luke 16:14).

Jesus loved to take the prudish and the pompous and the proud and pop their balloons. And so Jesus says, “Ok, you Pharisees. You’re the most religious people around. I’m going to give you a model and your model is a crook!”

In several other parables in Luke Jesus uses unsavory characters to make a point. For instance, in Luke 11 there is a man who needs three loaves of bread. He asks his friend for some and the friend answers, “Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything.” But he finally gets up and gives his friends some bread. And in Luke 18 an unjust judge finally vindicates a widow. In like manner, this dishonest steward is a similar unsavory character who is used as an example of doing at least some things right. What is commendable about this dishonest steward?

- HE LOOKED AHEAD

“And the manager said to himself, ‘what shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg’” (Luke 16:3). As we manage our money we will want to look ahead at what could or could not happen.

- HE PLANNED AHEAD

“I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses” (Luke 16:4). In each case the debtors save about 500 denarii. A denarius is a day’s work; in today’s monetary system that would be about \$100,000! As we manage money we will want to plan; make investments, save for retirement, make a will, and the like.

- HE TRUSTED IN THE MASTER’S MERCY

“And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager’” (Luke 16:2).

The manager should have been fired on the spot; but the master doesn't jail him or even scold him. He is merciful, unusually so! So the manager decides to risk everything upon the owner's mercy.

"The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness" (Luke 16:8a). The master doesn't jail the manager earlier; he doesn't now. The master does not commend his manager for his dishonesty, but for his mercy. The manager showed mercy, just like his master.

Jesus tells us to make the same commitments when it comes to money: look ahead, plan ahead and trust in the Master's mercy.

Let's look at this closer.

1. THE PURPOSE OF GIVING

"And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings" (Luke 16:9).

Jesus is not saying buy your way into heaven. He is not saying pay for your salvation. He is not saying bribe God to get your way into heaven.

Luke is clear on that. He records our Lord's first sermon in chapter four of his gospel. After Jesus reads words from Isaiah 61 and announces the Jubilee—the year of freedom from debt and slavery—he says, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Meaning what? Meaning that the Jubilee is ongoing throughout Luke's gospel. To a sinful woman at the house of Simon the Pharisee he says, "Your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48). To the starved, the famished, the empty, "Come, for everything is now ready" (Luke 14:17). To the Romans who maimed him, mauled him and mocked him, he says over and over again, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). And to every one of us he will one day announce with a loving gleam in his eye "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise!" (Luke 23:42).

This good news is too good to keep to ourselves! That's what Jesus says in our parable. "You will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." Heaven should be full of people who say, "Thanks. I'm here because you gave to that church and that church's ministry led me to Jesus." Wow!

When I give to a ministry, when I give to the Lord's work, when I give to this church; two things happen. Number one: people come to know Jesus. Number two: I make friends for eternity.

Companies make burial suits and guess what? There are no pockets in burial suits. Now why is that? Say it with me. "You can't take it with you!" But you can send it on ahead. Jesus is saying to use your affluence for good influence!

2. THE PATTERN FOR LIVING

"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much" (Luke 16:10).

If I'm faithful with a little, God can trust me with more. You've got a little money, manage it carefully and you'll get more.

Now I'm not a believer in the health and wealth gospel. I don't believe that the Lord wants everyone to be a millionaire. But financial stability comes when we're faithful in the little things, like giving money for the Lord's work. Faithfulness in the little things is what counts.

Have you ever heard someone say, "When I make it real big, then I'll start giving"? And God says, "Who are you kidding?" If I'm not faithful now, what makes me think I'll be faithful then?

3. THE PRINCIPLE OF BLESSING

"If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?" (Luke 16:11).

What I do with my money determines how much God can bless my life. I'm not talking about God being some kind of slot-machine; put in \$20 and get out \$200. But listen to this. There is a direct relationship in the Bible between what I do with my money and the spiritual depth of my life. That is clear in passage after passage. How I use my money; how I spend it; how I save it; how I give it, directly effects my spiritual life. "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38).

4. THE PRIORITY OF LOVING

“No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Luke 16:13).

Mammon refers to money and possessions. It probably derives from the Hebrew word *amen* which means “that in which one puts one’s trust.” Will I love God by loving my mammon?

I recently read about a church that announced they would draw an envelope at random from the offering and award two times the amount to the giver. On the second Sunday, they awarded five times the amount. On the third Sunday, ten times the amount. On the last Sunday, they awarded 100 times the amount in the envelope. And guess what? The church had the highest attendance ever for one month and they raised their annual budget in just four Sundays!

I’ve got bad news for you. Our church is going to do it the old-fashioned way. Our motivation comes from the gospel. The Master is merciful and so is the manager. Let’s go and do likewise!

ORDERS OF WORSHIP: NOVEMBER 15-16

THEME OF THE DAY

Upon hearing the Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1–14) we might say to ourselves, “That’s illogical and non-sensical!” Today, though, we find out that it is also true. How so? Let’s find out!

HYMN – “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (LSB, 803)

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

P: Jesus says, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Luke 16:13).

C: If we are honest with you, we have a hard time believing this verse.

P: We become anxious about money and we won't let go.

C: We think we can manage it without you.

P: We have a difficult time believing that you will care for us.

ALL: O God, we need your help.

P: Break us open.

C: Crack our shells.

P: Grant us repentance.

C: Forgive us and take us back, free to be yours, free to serve in Christ's holy name.

P: Jesus died on the cross to free us from the dark prison of our greed. He rose from the dead to shatter the doors of guilt and shame. For His sake and by His command I announce to you that your sins are fully and forever forgiven in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

ALL: In this way we will lay up treasure for ourselves as a firm foundation for the coming age;

P: So that we may take hold of life that is truly life.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. O God, our almighty Father, You have shown to the world Your love in the most glorious sacrifice of Your beloved Son. Fill us with Your same sacrificial love that we may offer our lives for the sake of Your kingdom and the salvation of many; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

ALL: Amen.

Readings – Ecclesiastes 2:1-11/ 2 Timothy 3:1-5/Luke 12:13-21

RESPONSIVE READING - Luke 16:1-14 (NRSV)

P: Then Jesus said to the disciples, ‘There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property.

C: So he summoned him and said to him, ‘‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an account of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’’

P: Then the manager said to himself, ‘‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg.

C: I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’’

P: So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘‘How much do you owe my master?’’ He answered, ‘‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’’ He said to him, ‘‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’’ Then he asked another, ‘‘And how much do you owe?’’ He replied, ‘‘A hundred containers of wheat.’’ He said to him, ‘‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’’

C: And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.

P: And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

C: ‘Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?’

ALL: No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

P: The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him.

POSSESSIONS AND PARABLES PART 2:

“The Parable of the Shrewd Manager” (Luke 16:1-14)

“The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him” (Luke 16:14).

What is commendable about this dishonest steward?

- HE LOOKED AHEAD

“And the manager said to himself, What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg” (Luke 16:3).

- HE PLANNED AHEAD

“I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses” (Luke 16:4).

- HE TRUSTED IN THE MASTER’S MERCY

“And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager’” (Luke 16:2).

1. THE PURPOSE OF GIVING

“And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings” (Luke 16:9).

2. THE PURPOSE OF GIVING

“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much” (Luke 16:10).

3. THE PRINCIPLE OF BLESSING

“If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?” (Luke 16:11).

4. THE PRIORITY OF LOVING

“No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Luke 16:13).

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read the parable of the minas in Luke 19:11–27 and answer these questions:

1. Why is this an appropriate parable when we recall Christ’s Second Coming?
2. How do the two servants demonstrate their faithfulness?
3. How does this parable impact your use of money?

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P: Almighty God, you have named us and claimed as your children in Holy Baptism and set us on a path to make disciples of all nations.

C: We praise you, O God our Redeemer Creator.

P: You call us to trust your mercy and to invest in the Gospel mission of our church and schools.

C: In grateful devotion our tribute we bring.

P: There is no escape from your judgment, O Spirit of Holiness, but neither can we flee beyond your limitless love.

C: We lay it before you, we kneel and adore you.

P: We offer our financial gifts for caring use among the suffering; for gentle use among the hurting;

for encouraging use among the dispirited; for powerful use in worldwide missions; and for worship, teaching and service within this church.

C: We bless Your holy name, glad praises we sing.

ADDITIONAL CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS

P: In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN – “We Praise You, O God” (LSB, 785)

SILENT PRAYER

Heavenly Father, give me ears to hear and a heart to respond to the financial truths of my Savior, as he speaks them in the parable of the shrewd manager. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

3

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

NOVEMBER 23

The rich man equals the Pharisees (Luke 16:14) and Lazarus is described in e.g, Luke 4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21.

Luke 16:19: White garments were an indication of an elite status; purple was the sign of the highest status. The rich man has no name. Perhaps Jesus is inviting his money-loving listeners to provide their own. The rich man is often called “Dives” which is a transliteration of the word translated “rich” in the Latin Vulgate.

The verb “be merry” (euphraino) comes four times in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:23, 24, 29, 32). Merry making was not an everyday experience, but it was for the rich man.

Luke 16:20–21: The wealthy man has a “gate,” signifying an estate or housing compound. This is the only time a personal name appears in any parable in the gospels. “Lazarus” is the Greek of the Hebrew “Eliezer, the one whom God helps.” See Luke 10:20.

The clothes of Lazarus are not mentioned; instead we are told that he is covered with sores. The rich man was probably looking at Lazarus through the theology of Job’s friends. This faith operates with a mechanical view of retribution: good works earn rewards and prosperity, while evil works bring punishment and suffering. God automatically makes this happen, so he is more like a vending machine than a person (e.g., Job 4:7–9; 5:11–16; 8; 11; 15; 18; 20). For instance, Eliphaz responds to Job’s plight with a sympathetic appeal to Job’s former piety, automatically and perhaps unconsciously assuming that Job must have had a serious lapse which has occasioned his present sufferings. According to his principle of retribution, the upright never perish (Job 4:7), while those who sow trouble reap it (Job 4:8). Two more examples illustrate the friends’ approach

to serving God. Eliphaz describes how upon seeing a “fool taking root,” God “quickly cursed his household” (Job 5:3). Temporal prosperity for the ungodly is utterly intolerable and retribution must be immediate, not eschatological. Bildad, who generally lacks the tact of Eliphaz, epitomizes the friends’ counsel to the bereaved Job: “If your sons sinned against him [God], then he gave them over to the hand of their transgression” (Job 8:4).

The verb in Luke 16:21 “be satisfied” (*chortasthenai*) also appears in Luke 6:21; 9:17; 15:16. In this economy even the rich could only afford to kill a calf occasionally. Scholars estimate that to have three-fourths pound of meat on the table on a daily basis, one must have the wealth necessary to pay thirty workers for a whole year.

Dogs are not “man’s best friend” in the Bible; instead they are always spoken of in contempt. Most of the thirty-two occurrences of “dog,” in the Old Testament hardly hold these animals as man’s best friend. Both Job (Job 30:1) and Solomon (Ecclesiastes 9:4) make comments that show disdain for canines who were not regarded as household pets but as unwelcome varmints (cf. Exodus 22:31; 1 Kings 21:19–24; Psalm 22:16; Matthew 7:6; Mark 7:28). They were also dangerous for other animals (e.g., Exodus 11:7). It was a deep disgrace to be called a dog (e.g., 1 Samuel 17:43; 24:14; 2 Kings 8:13). Quoting Proverbs 26:11, Peter maintains that false teachers are like a dog who “returns to its own vomit” (2 Peter 2:22).

Luke 16:22: See Luke 13:28–29.

Luke 16:23–26: The rich man’s use of “father Abraham” tells us that he is Jewish (cf. Luke 3:7–8). Amazingly, even in death the rich man is not humbled, but still insists that Lazarus serve him. Even in death the rich man thinks of himself and his needs before those of Lazarus.

Luke 16:27–31: The rich man now knows that repentance is crucial. But he does not consider the Word of God sufficient to produce repentance, so he seeks a sign, cf. Luke 11:14–23, 28–30.

In groups, discuss these texts.

- “It is better to be satisfied with what you have than to be always wanting something else.” (Ecclesiastes 6:9, GN)

- “Do not wear yourself out to be rich; have the wisdom to show restraint.” (Proverbs 23:4, NIV)
- “The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what is the advantage of wealth—except perhaps to watch it run through your fingers!” (Ecclesiastes 5:11, NLT)
- “A working man...can get a good night’s sleep. But the rich man has so much that he stays awake worrying.” (Ecclesiastes 5:12, GN)
- “A greedy man brings trouble to his family.” (Proverbs 15:27, NIV)
- “If you love money, you will never be satisfied; if you long to be rich, you will never get all you want. It is useless.” (Ecclesiastes 5:10, GN)
- “O God, I ask for two things from you before I die: First, help me never to tell a lie. Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God’s holy name.” (Proverbs 30:7–9, NIV)

SERMON: “THE PARABLE OF THE MINAS”- (Luke 19:11–27)

Bunkie Newsom’s dad was the president of General Motors. When Bunkie was 16 years old, his dad called and asked him when he could get down to GM. Bunkie, who had just crawled out of bed at 11:30am, asked his father, “Why? What do you want me to do now?”

His dad said, “Bunkie, I’ve got a brand new Chevy for you in the shop.” Bunkie was down there in a flash. His dad led him out back to an assembly building, opened the sliding doors and there was Bunkie’s new 1927 Chevy—in several thousand pieces! It reminds me of the three most horrifying words in the English language—“Some assembly required.”

Today’s parable from Luke 19 tells us that there is “some assembly required.” Let’s get some context.

Luke 19:11 is a key verse. “While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to

appear at once.” People thought the kingdom of God was going to appear as soon as Jesus arrived in Jerusalem. So he tells them a parable about the kingdom. It would come in Jerusalem, but in the way of the cross. Jesus is a King (Luke 19:38; 23:2), but one who would be crowned with thorns and executed by the Romans (Luke 23:37–38). Just as Jesus is a different kind of king, so his kingdom is not of this world—especially when it comes to money.

1. THE PREMISE: IT IS ALL A GIFT

“Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas” (Luke 19:13a).

A “mina” was an Old Testament measure of weight consisting of 50 shekels; in our Lord’s day a mina was about three months’ wages. The 2014 equivalent of one mina, then, would be about \$20,000; so ten minas equal \$200,000. What a generous master! The nobleman is first and foremost the giver of gifts.

When I was a child it was my heart’s desire to play “Hide-And-Go-Seek” with the big kids on the block. First they said that I needed to be able to count to 100. That I did. Then they asked if I knew how to end the game. I said, “Sure, Every kid in America knows the words that end “Hide-And-Go-Seek.” They are, “Ollie, Ollie ox in free.”

No. They are not. Originally, the words were “All and all and all are free.” That’s the message here. Out of his abundant grace our God says to us, “All and all and all are free.” Forgiveness. Mercy. Life. Love. Power. Purpose. Heaven itself. “All and all and all are free.”

The premise is that it is all a gift, even our money. “Now wait a minute,” you say. “The money I have is the money I earned! And while we’re at it, let me make it clear that I earned the degree and the promotion and the job.”

Question: Who gave you the mind, the body, the brain, and the opportunity to get that job and make that money? Answer: The Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “All and all and all are free.” Here’s the problem. Let’s say you have a lake house and you say, “I’m going to go to Europe for a year. We’re going to let you and your wife use our lake house for a year.” So we use your lake house for a year. You call up a year later and say, “We think we’re going to stay. We’re having a good time

and we're going to stay another year in Europe. Use our lake house for another year." The third year you call up again and say to go ahead and use it for a third year. By this time I'm starting to think "This lake house is mine." You come home after year four and say, "I'm ready to move back in." I say, "What do you mean? You're not moving in here. This is my house. Possession is nine-tenths of the law!" We tend to think because God has loaned it to us for an extended period that it's ours.

No. The premise is this; it is all a gift.

2. THE PRINCIPLE: IT IS UP TO US

"He said to them, 'Engage in business until I come'" (Luke 19:13b).

This is a lot like Bunkie Newsom's 1927 Chevy. There is some assembly required!

Recall these earlier words in the parable; "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return" (Luke 19:12). The gifts were given. The orders were stated. Then the nobleman went to a far country.

While away in a far country the nobleman wasn't there to look over his servants shoulders; to do weekly checkups; or to do monthly audits. That's the principle. "It is now up to us." God is not going to hassle us, harass us, or harangue us.

Let's drill down a bit further. The minas, or the money, is a tool to be used. You use money and you love people. If you get that reversed you're going to be in trouble. Because if you start loving money, you will use people. People are to be loved; money is to be used.

You say, "But isn't money the root of all evil? Isn't that what the Bible says?" That's not what the Bible says. The Bible does not say money is the root of all evil. It says "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). Money is neutral. It can be used for good or for bad. It could be used by Hitler to bomb Europe or it could be used by churches to spread the gospel. You can use it for very selfish purposes. Or you can use it for very unselfish purposes.

What can you do with that money? You can waste it. And there are plenty of ways to waste it. You can spend it. You can use it. You can invest it. You can hoard it. There's lots of ways and God lets

you choose which way you want to do it. That's the principle; it is up to us.

Some of us waste so much money because we impulsively buy stuff. The big temptation for me is when I go to Costco. I go in there and I know I don't need a hundred pounds of rice but look at the price! What a deal! I don't really need a five-gallon barrel of jalapenos? But look at the price! What a deal! Two years later, it's still taking up space in our refrigerator. The jalapenos have turned purple but I saved a lot on it. There's lots of foolish things we can do with our money.

3. THE PROMISE: IT IS ALL ACCOUNTABLE

“When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business” (Luke 19:15).

The nobleman returned, having received his kingship; this is Christ's Second Coming, for Christ is the Nobleman who promises to return. On that day he is going to settle accounts. The difference between the IRS and Jesus, though, is that Jesus has all the records. We won't have to bring anything to this audit. He's already got it. He's seen everything we've ever done with our money.

Someday I'm going to write a book and the first sentence of the book will be “What you think you own is really on loan.” I didn't own anything before I was born. I didn't bring anything into the world. I was there at the birth of our three children. None of them came in bringing a sack full of money. I've been there at the other end too, at the funerals, nobody takes it out with them. You never see a hearse driving a U-Haul.

So let's use our money to invest in Christ our King and his Kingdom. And why should we? It's all a gift. It's up to us. And the day is surely dawning when our King will return and what a joy it will be to claim his forgiveness, bask in his love, and rejoice that his Holy Spirit enabled us to use money faithfully, wisely and generously; all for his glory and the growth of his church!

ORDERS OF WORSHIP: NOVEMBER 22-23

THEME OF THE DAY

In this the last weekend of the Church Year, we anticipate our Savior's triumphant return. What are we called to do in light of this promise? Jesus spells it out in today's parable of the minas.

HYMN – "O Worship the King" (LSB, 804)

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

P: Jesus tells us, "Put this money to work until I come back" (Luke 19:13). O God, we confess that we can be like the unfaithful servant who said,

C: "I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth" (Luke 19:20).

P: And so we confess to You, O Lord.

C: Our discontent with Your gracious provision,

P: We open up to You, Lord.

C: Our meager generosity,

P: We lay bare to You, Lord.

C: Our plans keep more and give less,

P: We reveal to You, Lord.

C: Our unwillingness to trust Christ as life's most valued treasure.

ALL: Amen and Amen!

PRAYERS OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, You reign among us by the preaching of Your cross. Forgive Your people their offenses that we, being governed by Your bountiful goodness, may enter at last into Your eternal paradise; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

ALL: Amen.

Readings – Ecclesiastes 2:1-11/ 2 Timothy 3:1-5/Luke 12:13-21

POSSESSIONS AND PARABLES PART 3: “The Parable of the Minas” (Luke 19:11-27)

“While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.” (Luke 19:11)

1. THE PREMISE: IT IS ALL A GIFT

“Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas” (Luke 19:13a).

2. THE PRINCIPLE: IT IS UP TO US

“He said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come’” (Luke 19:13b).

3. THE PROMISE: IT IS ALL ACCOUNTABLE

“When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business” (Luke 19:15).

FOR NEXT WEEK... (forthcoming)

COMMITTING OUR GIFTS FOR 2015

P: We pause, O God, in this moment of dedication to reflect on what we have let go, and on what we have kept back, what we have given in the past and what we plan to give in the future. And we reflect upon the overwhelming claim you have on all we possess. Make us more faithful, more generous, and more cheerful givers. We also join in thankful praise today to you, Jesus, the Giver of all good things and the Crafter of such powerful parables.

C: Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee.

P: We recall the parable of the rich fool when Jesus said, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a person’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

C: Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.

P: In the parable of the shrewd manager we remember these words, “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Luke 16:13).

C: Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold.

P: We embrace our Savior’s command in the parable of the minas, “Put this money to work until I come back” (Luke 19:13).

C: Take my heart, it is Thine own, it shall be Thy royal throne.

P: We bring our commitments in response to God’s great gift of salvation in Christ Jesus.

C: Take myself and I will be, ever, only, all for Thee.

HYMN OF DEDICATION – “Take My Life and Let it Be” (LSB, 783)

SILENT PRAYER

Heavenly Father, give me ears to hear and a heart to respond to the financial truths of my Savior, as he speaks them in the parable of the minas. In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.

Upcoming Classes

2014-2015: Year of Paul at St. Michael

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT BIBLE CLASS

NOV. 30 - DEC. 21: 1 Thessalonians: *Lo He Comes with Clouds Descending*

JAN. 4 - FEB. 15: Philippians: *The Choice to Rejoice*

FEB. 22 - MAR. 22: Amos: *Restore the Roar!*

APR. 10 - MAY 17: Ephesians: *Sit, Walk, Stand*

