

## A Word about Investing in People

Luke 16.1–15

### Sermon

J's parables difficult for many reasons: cultural distance bet our context & theirs (e.g., 10 virgins), nature of topics addressed (e.g., hell), interp of story not so clear (e.g., end of Mt 13). Today's parable has all three challenges: cultural distance, nature of topic (money), interp of story not imm clear. You can see from OofW I orig named this serm A Word about Shrewdness. But after more study/reflection, shrewdness not precisely main point of this parable. Key v 8 §: comparison & contrast bet manager in story & *peo of light*. J lamenting something about peo of light/those who know & bel truth. Something true about *dishonest manager* that he wishes were true of his own peo. What is that?

Summary of parable §: *manager* resp for all household affairs, but acting irresponsibly, called to acct, about to lose job (1–2). Brings a moment of reflection §: couldn't do blue collar work, didn't want to beg. Hatches a plan §: systematically contacted debtors & wrote off huge parts of their bills. § 900 gallons of olive oil cut in half. § 1,000 bushels of wheat marked down 20%. Now, why did he do this? § so that *peo would welcome him*. IOW he worked out a way that would provide for him after he lost his job. Might say this was 1st golden parachute.

A lot that's confusing about this parable. Start w this §: why did *master commend* him (8)? Bc if master commends him so does J. Lots of interps: perh write-off was only commission (unlikely, way too much); perh debts were hard to recover & write-off would encourage payment, ergo master getting something better than master getting nothing (better, but no hint of that). Most likely I think *master commending him* a sort of grudging acknowledgement of manager's shrewdness: "what do you know? smarter than I gave him credit for, still going to fire him, but have to hand it to him: he made best of an imposs sit."

That gets at § *shrewdness* J speaks of. What did manager do? Looked ahead, saw handwriting on wall, anticipated coming predicament & used what he still had to provide himself w a future. Here's where comparison/contrast comes in & you have to get them right or you misunderstand whole. J not telling his discs, "Act dishonestly in your business dealings, live your life for golden parachute deals, simply be more shrewd." Not telling them to imitate his behavior but to imitate his mindset: you're going to be called to acct, so stop/think/reflect, leverage what you have now for your future benefit.

& now you see why § J laments diff bet peo of world & peo of light. Successful peo of world constantly doing this: live w end in view (Covey), live like no one else so that some day you can live like no one else (Ramsey), use every angle—job, wealth, network, power—to create best poss sit for yourself in fut. 30 yrs ago, we'd say that fut was focused on retirement. But now that fut in view by wealthy of Silicon Valley not just retirement but living forever here on earth ([NYer article](#)). Now we who are bels might scoff at attempts like this, don't have to be a Xian to find these endeavors hopeless. But don't miss J's point: peo of world might delude themselves into thinking that they can create fut of their dreams, whether retirement or never dying. Peo of light know better/this isn't all there is/an eternity awaits. & yet—& this is J's lament—peo of world are far better at acting now w their desired fut in view than peo of light. Irony: peo of light know what's coming, but don't act presently w fut in view/fail to leverage what we have now for our own future benefit.

Ergo J goes on to say §: *use worldly wealth to gain friends* (v 9). Take what you have & invest it for fut/eternal gains. Raises two qs: what are we investing w & what are we investing for? IOW what are we putting in & what do we hope to get out? § J ids what we're investing w as *worldly wealth*. Certainly includes money/resources/investments/property, any financial tool at your disposal. But goes beyond that:

money not only resource at our disposal. *Wealth* also includes non-monetary capital like power & influence, pos of auth (whether formal or merely recognized), knowledge & edu, job & career, even tech & retirement. J says *use* these things. But what for? § *to gain friends*. Goal is relats/friendship/closeness w other humans. But more than just indiv friendships. Just like *wealth* points to something beyond just money, so *friends* points to something beyond just relationships—peo. Use what you have to work for flourishing of all peo & you'll find a reward for yourself: they'll *welcome you into eter dwellings*. That's the certain fut we have as peo of light, so leverage what you have in behalf of peo.

Ans just about every q you might have about this vs, except one §: why is *wealth* called *worldly*? Lit. “unrighteous.” Is J saying money is inherently sinful? Don't think so, bc in light of Heb Scr's if something were unclean, he'd tell us to avoid it. Instead he tells us to use it. Why then “unrighteous”? I think most likely bc that's how *wealth* is typically used in this world, to pursue ends that are contrary to what G wants. In fact, if you think about it, the posture of the world is precisely opp of what J is commending. J: leverage wealth/power/position/knowledge/career/retirement to work for flourishing of peo. World: leverage peo to work for flourishing of your wealth/power/pos/knowledge/career/retirement. We've reversed the values: instead of prioritizing peo over advancement, we prize our own achievements & run roughshod over peo to get there. Reason I don't even like word “network” anymore. Ill of MLM marketers. & not just them/peo of world. § Remember, whole thing began w J lamenting that *peo of light* were not living w fut in view, that they in fact were living just like peo of world.

But there's a worse prob yet. I've been talking in terms of leveraging what you have, but some of you have already noticed prob I haven't brought up: *manager* in story was just that—a manager, not owner. Who owned all those resources in story? § Not manager, but rich man. Whose possessions was manager wasting? Not his own, but his master's. See, a

further prob J id'ing here about peo of world & peo of light. Bad enough that we reverse G's values & leverage peo for sake of our own wealth/power/such. Worse yet: resources we have don't even belong to us. We are no more than managers, stewards of someone else's poss. If we have wealth, we're not owners of it, but stewards, power/position/knowledge/job/retired. So when we reverse G's values & leverage peo to advance our own cause, we're not simply misusing our own poss, we're wasting G's poss. & we're culpable for it. Ergo connection to previous parable/prod son: *wasting* (1) same as *squandered* (15.13). By going from 2 sons to 1 manager, J suggesting we're all younger son.

Friends, this is why gos is such good news. We haven't valued peo over wealth/power/pos/knowledge/work, misused & mismanaged what G has entrusted to us in pursuit of our own selfish interests, haven't leveraged what we've been given for flourishing of others. But good news is that Someone did live this way, Someone did value peo over his own wealth/power/pos/knowledge/work, leverage everything he was given for benefit of humans. Ergo Paul writes this of J §: *did not consider equality w G something to be used for his own advantage* (Phil 2.6–7). Never valued stuff over peo, didn't even value his own life over others, but instead § *humbled himself to very point of death, even death on a cross*. Why die on cross? On behalf of all of us who did value stuff over peo/mismanaged what G has entrusted to us/lived for ourselves instead of dying for others. But J no longer on cross or in tomb. § *G exalted him*, alive again & gives new life to all who turn from rebellion to him. This is gos: not that you can successfully fulfill G's laws, but that J has successfully fulfilled G's laws for you & satisfied G's justice for you & will give new life to you, if you turn from your own way & trust him.

### Investing in people

- Repentance (v 8). We're all guilty (1 Jn 1).
- Evangelism (v 9). Speak up & share J.
- Faith & work. CSL "Learning."