



Matt. 6:20 where Jesus says, “**lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.**” Essentially, we are to use all of our means including “unrighteous mammon” or worldly riches for benevolence, aiding the brethren, the poor, and to the glory of God. Notice He does not instruct us to use our means the same way the cheating steward did, and elsewhere we are warned of the entangling power of wealth (cf. Mark 4:19). Jesus shows that just as the unrighteous steward sought accommodations after he was removed from his station, we too should exercise the same forethought that we may find friends, comfort, and a welcoming home if we use our means to glorify God. In short, our spiritual *goal* is the same as the steward’s physical goal, but we are commanded to strive for it honestly and in a manner worthy of the Gospel. In this short parable we see— among other lessons—the danger of the love of money, the necessity of using our means to glorify God, and to be honest in the use of the wealth entrusted to us. Brethren, let us each take these things to heart so that we can store up for ourselves treasure in heaven.



eternal things when compared to industrious, creative, and motivated people who were worldly minded. After this teaching Jesus gives additional instructions to his audience proclaiming, “**I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations**” (v. 9 KJV). The message here is the same as that in

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Faithful Sayings Issue 13.33 August 14, 2011

# Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.

ISSUE

13.33

BULLETIN OF  
THE OLSEN  
PARK CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

# Faithful Sayings

August 14  
2011



## Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM  
10:20 AM  
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

### Elders:

Pat Ledbetter  
Jeff Nunn  
Kyle Pope

### Deacons:

Dean Bowers  
Eddie Cook  
Bill Davis  
Steve Dixon  
Pat Goguen  
Jack Langley  
Neil Ledbetter  
Brady McAlister  
Walker McAnear  
Lance Purcell  
Rusty Scott

### Evangelists:

Kyle Pope  
Jason Garcia

## The Dishonest Steward

By Jason Garcia

We find in Luke 16 the strange story of a rich man and his manager. Strange because the manager is caught in deception and relieved of duty, nevertheless, his master commends him upon learning of subsequent iniquitous behavior. Why would the Lord use such a parable? There are a number of teachings we can derive from this passage, but certainly not that the Lord approves of dishonesty. Rather, He uses this occasion to illustrate preparation for the life to come. Many teachers have misconstrued several things from this passage, and come away with ideas not found in the Law of Christ. Let’s examine the text as a whole.

The Lord begins by describing the troubled relationship between the two men. The manager is indicted before the rich man for wasting his money, and is “fired” or relieved of duty (vv. 1-2). The word translated manager is *oikonomos*, which is a steward or overseer of possessions. It was com-

mon for slaves to attain the status of *oikonomos* as the result of their fidelity to their master. Unfortunately, the position gave opportunity to dishonesty, embezzlement of property, and other occasions which might easily be used to betray the confidence of the master. Undoubtedly, this was the lot of the steward in Jesus' teaching who—being found untrustworthy—is stripped of his status and



can no longer stay with his master. Returning to our story, we find the steward or manager now reasons within himself saying, **“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 ESV). The manager begins to reveal more of his character at this point. He seems to be either unable to do physical labor perhaps due to an infirmity, or he could mean that he was unwilling to work daily for a living. I'm convinced he meant the latter because of his dishonest conduct as well as what he says about begging, namely, that he is ashamed to do it. There was no legitimate reason he could give for begging since he was able-bodied and beggary would be to his shame. It was common in ancient times for the lame, sick, or feeble to beg as there was no provisional care from the civil government for such folks. His dishonesty had led to him to his present circumstance and robbed him of his status and employment. This is a lesson we should recognize and take to heart, because sin will always be found out (Num. 32:23).

The steward, however, comes up with a plan (v. 4). He resolves to go to each of his master's debtors and reduce the amount each owes to a sum that is presently payable. His desire in doing this is that he might still be received into other peoples' houses once he has been removed. The first debtor he comes to is one who owes 100 measures of oil, and the steward instructs the man to re-

duce the bill by fifty and takes the payment. Incidentally, a “measure” is said to have been anywhere between 9-12 gallons (v. 6). The steward continues to disobey his master. His lord had initially asked for him to turn over the accounts of which he was given charge. Rather than do so, he continues to consider his own interest and abuse the authority with which he's been entrusted. How many people living in sin imitate this same behavior? When convicted by the Gospel and recognizing their accountability before God, they try to avoid the inevitable—answering for their actions. The steward comes to another debtor asking, **“How much do you owe?”** (v. 7). He again reduces the bill or lease and takes the payment. We aren't told how the master finds out about his steward's continued disobedience, but he actually *commends* the dishonest man for his shrewdness. It's important to note that it is not Jesus who commends the dishonest servant, but rather it is the master within the narrative or the parable. Furthermore, the master does not commend the servant's immorality, but the simple fact that he was “wise” (v.8). The rich man no more approved of the steward's continued nefarious dealings than his initial disobedience, but he was nevertheless impressed by his servant's shrewdness.

Now then, we come to Jesus' teaching—the goal of this parable. He says, **“For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light”** (v. 8). So what's His point? The “sons of this world” (such as the unjust steward) who are more concerned about procuring physical necessities and worldly status, are much more diligent, show more skill, and contrive more ways to provide for themselves than those who have been enlightened by the Gospel show in teaching and promoting spiritual truth. Does Jesus say, “It's better to be a worldly person because they're smarter?” No, not by any means. He simply wanted to expose how imprudent, unmotivated, and unaware of opportunities some of His followers were about