

## Dr. Joe Jursa's Sermon

### [My Master, Who Do You Serve](#) - Luke 16:1-13

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. <sup>2</sup> So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.'<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.'<sup>5</sup> So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' <sup>6</sup> He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.'<sup>7</sup> 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.'<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> "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. <sup>11</sup> If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? <sup>12</sup> And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? <sup>13</sup> 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."

Bruce Ford reminded me of something he learned in the Navy, he said it helped him in particular in working with the youth or young people just entering naval service. It went something like this, "You do not get what you expect, you get what you inspect!"

The owner had heard tell that one of his managers may not have been handling his funds right. In fact what it says is that the manager was squandering his funds. He had not inspected. While the owner had expected that the manager would treat his property correctly and not use things wastefully, he was not inspecting the man's work. So this whole discussion comes about because the owner remembers the Navy's axiom, "You do not get what you expect, you get what you inspect."

So the time of inspection is upon the manager. It says he realizes that he has not done things correctly and that he is about to be caught in his improper use of the masters funds. What does this wise manager (that is what the scripture calls him – a wise or shrewd manager) do? He makes certain his last acts are not on behalf of his boss, he makes certain that in the closing days of his time with the company he makes as many friends of the men who owe the company as possible. Why? So that when he is fired, he will be able to find work among the people he has befriended.

Jesus says this man understand the world and the way things work in the world. He has used the money available to him to secure his future in the world. He has used the money to befriend those who will be able to help him in his hour of need.

But the difficulty the man really faces is that in order to win these friends in the world, he has had to ignore what is right and appropriate in the eyes of God. He has in effect helped these men steal from his boss, he has defrauded his employer. While Jesus congratulates the man on his wise understanding of how the world works, Jesus also uses this to remind us of a very important truth.

You cannot please everyone! If you work to please the world, to make friends with the world and the businesses of the world, if you determine that all that is important is getting by in the world today; you may very well be doing the very thing that separates you from God. God demands of us integrity, honesty. When the manager used deceit to win friends in the world and to get by, he was severing his relationship with God. He was doing the very thing that insured that he would be at odds with God.

I just as well should bring it up now as later. Last week you were threatened. I did it. I told you that next Sunday we were asking you to bring a guest with you to worship and all who did not have a guest would be asked to stand up. We have laughed around the office and with some of you over the course of the last week because it will be one of our best attended service because of all the friends or one of the worst because of people staying home so they don't have to stand up and be embarrassed.

Next Sunday I am going to ask everyone who brought a friend to remain seated and for all the rest of us to stand. Then I am going to ask us to move around the sanctuary and make those friends of friends feel welcome by greeting them. I will ask those of you who brought friends to introduce them to others.

Is bringing friends to church the kind of thing that God would desire for us to be about? I think you can agree that it is. Do we sometimes fail to do that because it might embarrass us before friends, or it might not be appropriate in our business environment, or because somehow it might not help us get along in the world as well as we might like? Probably those or any number of other reasons.

The manager in the story is wise in making his way through the world, but he has forgotten about his relationship with God and what it takes to strengthen it. God calls us to be obedient. Now there are lots of places for each of us to obey God's call upon our lives. Sometimes as members of his church we need to be reminded that inviting others to join us in worshiping God is being obedient to what we know God would want.

Generally when we look at this story about the manager caught in his crooked dealings we focus on the statement that we cannot serve two masters; we will either serve the world or we will serve God. I know that lesson makes perfect sense to each one of us. We experience it all kinds of ways.

You cannot be married to one woman but keep another on the side without the first getting mad and divorcing you if she finds out. You cannot serve in the military handling government secrets and equipment and at the same time be paid by another government to send them information about our military. You cannot be employed at a topless bar by night and stand in the picket lines against the bar during the day. If you choose to be in relationship with God, there are certain things you cannot do in the world without risking losing your relationship with God.

What I want you to think about today is the actions of the owner in the beginning of the story. He is told by someone that his manager is misusing his funds and so he comes to inspect what the manager is doing.

What ever the reason, the owner comes to inspect the work. Someday people we are all going to have to stand before the owner of it all and give an accounting of what we have done. The manager in the story thinks that he is in part going to be able to fool the owner. God is not going too fooled.

Why am I asking you to bring a friend next week to church? To help introduce people to St. Paul – certainly. To allow other members to help you make friends feel welcome – sure. So that we will have higher attendance numbers to report – I'd be stupid not to try and increase our numbers. But the real reason I ask you to bring a friend because one day you will stand before God and it just might help you to be able to remember that at least on one occasion you were encouraged to bring a friend to worship and you did it!

Are there things we need to do to be in good relationship with God? Certainly. Are these things going to be at odds with what the world would want us to do? Many times.

But there are people you are encountering each week who are interested in a better relationship with God and maybe all that is needed is some encouragement for you to extend an invitation for them to come. And in so doing you will be doing that which is pleasing to God and helpful to someone in the world who is already seeking God.

One day we will all stand before God who owns everything, may we be as wise as the manager and use the things we have today to prepare for our life in eternity with God.

I do not want you to think you are being punished next Sunday if you don't bring a guest to church; my intention is not to embarrass anyone. Use this week as an opportunity to do something we all know God that would approve. Invite a friend, co-worker or anyone to join you at church.

Use what you have today to influence your forever.