

Acts 2:44-47; Luke 16: 1-15  
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We see in our text in Acts, Chapter 2, the economy of heaven replacing the economy of earth in the lives of believers. And, I want to pursue that angle a little further this week before we move on in the Book of Acts. What we see happening, and will continue to see as the Book of Acts unfolds, is an economy of faith, an economy of love, an economy of hope replacing the priorities, and the cares and anxieties of worldly mindedness. And, that is the work of the Holy Spirit that has been poured out in these believers' lives. How profound it is to realize that, beginning with the conversion of our souls, we may also convert our wealth. There are a number of angles that we could take with this point, and profitably so. We convert our time. The Bible tells us to redeem the time because the days are evil. We convert all of our attitudes and activities and desires and capacities. But, germane to our text, we can convert our wealth. We can actually sell an asset, dispose of real, hard, material, earthly wealth in such a way as to meet a tangible, material need of another (or perhaps a spiritual need that has a price tag.) And, indeed, those needs that we are meeting will not be cancelled by our giving. So, we are not solving the problem, so to speak. That's the wrong approach. We are not at all trying to stop people from having needs. Needs are what drive people to God. These needs will continue perpetually. And, we'll have our turn in having needs also.

But, by our participation in this New Testament economy, we can make an investment in heaven. Treasure on earth can be liquidated and then stored up in heaven. God has an accounting system, a banking system (if you will.) We see this economic bottom line in the evidence of the new birth in our text in Acts, Chapter 2. It will be called upon as we go on through the Book of Acts. And, as you read the Epistles, you'll see the same bottom line called upon by the Apostles. Conversion to Christ converts our budget and our assumptions. And, we see the leverage of love. God loves us. Therefore, we love him. His love constrains us. And, we see the leverage of that love transform our attitudes about everything in life, of course, about what our time is for, what our potential is for what our activities are for, what even our desires are for. But, it transforms our attitude about what wealth is for, and who it is for. And, we need to know how to take advantage of this blessing of storing up treasure in heaven, because, that's what these people in Acts, Chapter 2, are doing.

Ask yourself, "How many people will be in heaven thanking you for their invitation?" "How many saints in heaven will be grateful for you for an eternity for the part you played in their triumph, their perseverance in life's scheduled course of sanctification for them, meeting their needs, getting them through?" "How many saints are thankful in heaven for our participation in their lives in God's family, grateful for the fact, thanking God and thanking us that we have treated them like family?" Part of heaven's fellowship starts now. The fellowship we have now continues then. That's very clear in both of these texts. And, I've never been satisfied with my previous efforts at the "unjust steward" in Luke 16, so, I wanted to try again and get it right. But, I believe the way to do that is in light of Acts, Chapter 2. And, it's the same author, written to the same person, who's presumably a wealthy person. We might have a clue there.

And, the key verse of Luke 16 has got to be verse 9. Jesus says, to his disciples, "I

tell you,” (whatever else it means, this is the bottom line command; this is what’s imperative,) “use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves so that, when the worldly is gone,” (and it will be,) “you will then be welcomed by these friends you have gained with your wealth into eternal dwellings.” That’s the command. This age is going to end. Time is running out. The hourglass has been turned upside-down, and the sand’s all running out. This is a time-limited age. These are called the “last days” for good reason. And so, the earthly lives that we all have will certainly cease. The time we have will expire. The opportunity we have will be gone. The income, the assets, the budget, the wealth that God puts into our hands and into our power are time-limited. They are not eternal. They are time-limited to this life. And, someday, they will be zero. Someday, our net-worth will be zero. Someday, what is now worth something to us will be worth nothing. Of money as well as time, and activities we can say, (I don’t know whose saying it is,) “Only one life will soon be passed, it’s only what we do for Christ that’s going to last.”

But, today we have leverage. We have discretion. We have power. We have influence by our use of our time and our energy and our lives and our opportunities, and by the use of our wealth, our excess. But tomorrow, we may have no discretion. What we do now with our excess possessions and assets and wealth and time matters. It counts. It means something for eternity. And, they always say, “you can’t take it with you.” Jesus says you can take this with you. There is a way to convert it. There’s a way to have treasure stored up in heaven that’s there before you are. There is a way to take it with you. He said, “store it up in heaven.” He taught that we can leverage and provide eternal assets and wealth and blessing using present, tangible material, luxury, and riches to do it. But, it involves converting our assets from these carnal kingdoms of earth to his heavenly kingdom. And, this is what we have to realize as we study the Book of Acts. Conversion is not a Gnostic, isolated conversion of a soul, it is the conversion of everything. And, it includes the conversion of our pocket-books.

In Timothy, Chapter 6, Paul wrote to Timothy, the young minister. And, he said, “command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty,” not to think they are somebody because they make more than they need, “nor to trust in these riches, because they are uncertain. But, they should trust in the living God, who gives all of us richly many things to enjoy.” And, he says, “let them do good, so that they may be rich in good works, ready to give and willing to share,” (why?,) “storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” That’s the same perspective Jesus taught. That’s the perspective that is changed from the carnal mind to the heavenly mind. Too many people think more about their immediate, earthly future and their prospects than they do about their eternal future. We participate, Peter tells us, in the divine nature in our calling according to the promises of God. That’s what should direct our attention as we consider the future.

But, it’s natural to be natural minded. But, it’s also carnal. It’s evidence of a blinded mind. Our minds are to be renewed. We’re transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we know and can prove and can demonstrate what is acceptable to God. And so, worldly thinking and worldly assumption have no proper place in our thinking. We are, indeed, in the world, surrounded by it, with all of its clamoring demands and comforts and pleasures and cares and anxieties. But, scripture says that we’re not of the world. And now, instead of the gloomy prospect of death, and the end of all of the results, all the

effort of our work and labor and material gain,...and that's the way a lot of people see it. It's all just a fatalistic, gloomy thing. We just have to do it. And, someday we die and it's all worthless. Jesus says no, it isn't. There's a purpose to it. There's a redeemed purpose to it. We have the blessed prospect of eternal life in glorified bodies, and the fellowship of friends, who we have loved and blessed. Some of these friends we have made by our use of material giving. Because, heaven's fellowship starts now. Eternal life begins at the new birth. And, we have the delightful anticipation of meeting the friends we are making now by use of our excess wealth someday in heaven. Sometimes we know who they are. They're in our immediate group. That's the situation in Jerusalem in Acts, Chapter 2.

But eventually, when we have wealth in excess of those needs, and we give to other geographic areas, we have no idea who those people are that benefit. Or, when we support a missionary or an evangelist, we don't know who hears their preaching and is converted. But, imagine someday that a host of these people greet you because they know you. And, they're thankful for your use of your material wealth, which is, by that time, gone anyway, but you've transferred it to heaven. You used it for spiritual priorities, and they were the beneficiaries of it. And, of course, no doubt, we will thank other people who used their wealth for our benefit, and their time, and effort and prayer. But, how many may say to you, "I am here because of your faithfulness. You were part of it. You were part of the way that God saved me, by your financial faithfulness, as well as in other ways." They, of course, owe their salvation to Jesus, but, we are blessed to participate directly in the building and the nurturing of his eternal family.

And, this parable is quite clear, in Luke, Chapter 16, in presenting a stark contrast. And, we see both sides of things, both options, in this parable. People on earth judge us by what we have, by how we look out for ourselves, by how we take care of ourselves, by how we meet our needs or even our desires and pleasures. The world admires us for our resourcefulness in selfishness. But, is that your audience? Is that your approval group? Is that who you want to please? The Bible says that the fear of man, the respect and regard of man, is a trap. The world judges you on what you have and how you do with it, what you've gained for yourself. God judges us on what we gave compared to what we kept. He judges by what we gave to his family, to his kingdom. When the banker wants to know your net worth, he wants to know what you have. When God is delighted with our net worth, he presents the glory of what we gave. God has invested his Son in us. He's invested his Spirit in us. All the riches in heaven, all the promises of his word, he has invested in us. Now, if he's calculating his worth, his return on that investment, what is our worth to him, in terms of his glory, and his joy, and his pleasure?

You see, in Acts, Chapter 2, we see people who now live in the fear of God, with singleness of mind, singleness of heart, purity of purpose...no longer two or three or four motives. So, they don't have so many decisions to make. When they have two or three hours of nothing else to do, they don't have so many bewildering decisions to make. When they have excess money and wealth, they don't have to wonder what on earth to do with it, and how to keep from losing it. Their life is clarified. And, in Acts 2, we see born again, wealthy people, people with excess. And, I think that's one of the greatest miracles, in Acts, Chapter 2. And, wealth is defined as being blessed with excess, being given more than you need for daily life. We're not talking about your starving to death so that somebody else doesn't. That's not at all the point. We see that a converted mind

accurately perceives by faith what the excess of money and time and opportunity is for. The unconverted mind has no idea. That's why they spend it running around like a dog in circles trying to catch his own tail, trying to have more and more fun, more and more pleasure.

But, a converted person knows what that time is for, knows what that excess is for. We need to know what we are here for. Because, a lot of people that say they're believers evidently don't have a clue. They don't know that you're converted from something to something. We need to know what our abilities and capacities and gifts are for. We even have to know what our potential for pleasure is for. And, guess what? It's not for ourselves. We die to self. We deny self. We crucify self. And, we need to know what our money is for. We need to know what our extra income is for, what our extra wealth is for. We need to know what our ability to go to work and gain income and wealth...we need to know what that's for. He has bought us at a great price. That means it all belongs to him. We can't "gnostify" this and invent this split between the material and the spiritual. It all belongs to him. It's all for his use. We are to glorify him in and with our bodies.

And so, our personal budgets are theological statements. They're statements of faith. They're statements of belief of priority. Our cash flow makes a doctrinal statement. The history of our lifetime of expenditures should show forth the influence of God's grace. It should be a history of an investment pattern in heaven. And, it must show forth the influence of God's life-giving spirit in our lives. Clearly, in Acts, Chapter 2, these folks are completely different after conversion. I don't know whether you did any research this week on economic wealth or not, but Jesus told thirty-eight parables, and sixteen of them are about material possessions and wealth. We talked about the law of proportion in doing Bible study, the emphasis that God makes by the preponderance of evidence.

The Bible gives us approximately (you may have an exact count) five hundred verses on prayer, (that's all; sixty-six books and we have five hundred verses on prayer,) less than that on faith, and more than two-thousand verses on money. So, you see why Luke is making this point to Theophilus, that the main thing that shows these people were converted was what they started doing with their money. The main proof of the outpoured Holy Spirit was economic. But, the reaction of the Pharisees, here in Luke 16, is typical. It's typical. And, unfortunately, it's typical, not only of the ungodly. It's typical of the religious. It's typical because people, who make gods out of wealth and what it can do for themselves, don't want to hear what the one, true God has to say about it. We get most defensive about the things that are most dear to our hearts. And, that's the way it should be. That is proper. Some people slander defense mechanisms. We shouldn't slander them. They're appropriate. But, sometimes, they're not accurate. Then they're not appropriate. They're insane.

But, we get most defensive about the things that are most dear to our hearts. Now, guess what's most dear to the hearts of the Pharisees? Our defensive reactions reveal the truth about us. They show the truth. We are very properly defensive of the things that we protect and nurture. We're appropriately very sensitive about the things that provide our security. But, we observe the miraculous evidence in Acts, Chapter 2, of a new source of security. We observe the evidence of new birth and changed lives and changed minds. And, it truly has tangible proof, tangible results, not just spiritual or ethereal or verbal results. It has "bottom-line" results. And, here in Luke 16, we realize that prior to

Acts, Chapter 2, Jesus had already told these men, (and Luke has already told Theophilus,) that they could make friends in heaven with their money on earth. We can use money now in Christian fellowship, and then enjoy that investment forever in eternity. It's actually a gift to yourself that keeps on giving.

Now, no one can buy their way into heaven. So, don't mistake that. No one can purchase forgiveness or eternal life. No one accrues any merit. All of the money in the whole world can't buy one ounce of merit or credit or value. We're talking about diminished value, not enhanced value. That's the irony here. We see these things as less valuable than the world thinks they are. We see them as expendable commodities. But, money can be used on earth to conduct heaven's business. And, by our use of money and our earning power and health and wealth, we can be an active participant in what the outpoured Holy Spirit is doing in these last days. Our use of money on earth can make friends for us in heaven. Eternal investment, that's the insider's secret for the people of God. Because, evidently, in heaven, people who benefit from our giving will learn about us. They'll realize our faithfulness. And, they'll praise God for it. But, they'll love you for it too. They'll love you for the love you gave them. You may never know, in this life, the good that your giving does. And, those who are blessed and helped might never know you. But, in heaven, they'll know and we will know, and we will rejoice together for what we received by grace, and for how God's grace to us made us gracious givers like God, because we give it all by grace.

But, keep in mind that we have no guaranteed payoff for any of this here and now. So, don't try to call that account to balance today. This is a promise of God for eternity. When you give money or time or effort or prayer to do the work of the gospel or the work of evangelism or the work of the Church, so that God's people are converted and blessed, so that their needs are met, the world around you doesn't care. They don't value it. When you do that, you won't get your name on a brick on a sidewalk outside of Town Hall. You won't get a plaque or a trophy. You won't get your name in the newspaper. But, your investment will be used and it will be accredited by the Holy Spirit because it is known by God, and it's known in heaven, and it's part of the fellowship of heaven. It's part of the joy of heaven. It's part of the glory that we give to God in heaven. Our investment is supporting the investment that Jesus made of himself. Paul even uses that imagery, that he's fulfilling the work of Christ by his own sacrifice, by his personal sacrifice.

Christ cares for all of his people. We saw that in Hebrews. He is the High Priest. He meets the needs of all of his people. He ministers to all of his people, but, he does it through you and I. The outpoured Holy Spirit has to be financed. And, God converts people and he converts wealth so that happens. So, everything about us is converted. Everything is in play when the Holy Spirit takes over our lives. There is no just "pocket of salvation for its own sake" and everything else can just "hang around the fringes." That's a "gnostified" religion. We're to be faithful with God's grace.

So, does Jesus commend a crook for being crooked here in this parable? No, he doesn't. Not at all. Rather, the priorities and the shrewdness of a crook are compared and contrasted with the priorities and the single-mindedness of the saints of God. And, it is assumed that a spiritually enlightened person can tell the difference. Most people can relate because we are all naturally depraved. We were born that way. We can all identify with this man's clever and resourceful thinking. We do that kind of thinking all of the

time. If we are trying to please ourselves, we do this kind of thinking all of the time. We make provision for it. We grudgingly admire some things about this man even now after we are converted. And, Jesus often used parables like this to show a comparison and a contrast at the same time. Do you remember the story of the unjust judge that the woman is pleading with, praying to?

So, we do learn some things from a scoundrel here. But, we take these things and translate those things from his stage of life over to ours. We translate from his arena to our arena, from his context to ours. And, he acted wisely given his own goals and realities. If you assume, hypothetically, the priorities of his immediate life, then he acted wisely. But, keep in mind that's only an assumption for the sake of the argument and the lesson. Now, had this servant had gained eternal priorities, then, of course, he would have repented, and stopped being a thief, and trusted God and God's family to provide for himself. So, his agenda, his context is thoroughly wrong, but it shocks us because he's smarter than we are. That's what Jesus is saying to his disciples. He did take action. He didn't talk about his situation. He did something about it. He did works in accord with his perception of his true situation. He had faith in his ability to solve his crisis. And, likewise, we, with different goals, different desires, different futures, a different context, we must also, however, work, not talk. We must act, not meditate. We must plan and choose, and we must do it urgently and quickly in view of the times, in view of the times and in view of our time, because, our time might not last as long as the last days. And, James told us that true faith takes action. That's the bottom line. What we are is what we do. What we talk about is, usually, some kind of a fraud. And, if this man in our parable did all of this for his vain, futile, temporary, short-sighted, condemned life, then what should we be doing in the light of our calling, and our glorious eternal goals and objectives, and in light of the price that Christ paid for our redemption? What should we be doing?

So, what have we learned from this scoundrel, from this crook? I can think of at least three things. I'm sure there's more. But, first of all, he faced reality in truth. The truth wasn't in him, but, it was sure around him. And, he faced it. He was realistic about his situation and the consequences that he faced, and, he predicted accurately what came next. Now, our society does not like to tolerate concrete thinkers anymore, but, here was a concrete thinker, unfortunately an unregenerate one, but, he was a concrete thinker. He did not "gnostify" his situation. He didn't mystify it. He didn't pray about it. He didn't wonder about it. He knew what comes next, because, the actions around him predicted accurately. He did not pine away his time wishing or hoping against the indicators of reality that were evident around him. And, we are fools when we fail to do that. With the Word of God that we have, everyone of us in our hands, we can accurately predict with absolute certainty what is in store in our future. We don't know exactly the day. Neither did this man. But, we need to exhibit the fear of God, the singleness of mind, to spur us into some concrete, realistic thinking. It is appointed, for example, to every man once to die, and, after that, judgment. Now, that is scheduled. God said it. That is a more sure reality than what this steward faced. This is an absolutely certain prospect for every one of us and everyone we know, every person on earth. But, do we live and think and plan and act like it is true? If this steward had believed it was true, he would have acted that way, because, look at what he does with the nutty things he does believe. They're accurate things, but, they're short-sighted, temporary. Does the fact of what God

says, and the fear that should come from that orientation to what God says, constrain our present behavior? You see, what we truly are is what we are when no one is looking. What this steward really is, is what he did when there is nobody thinking around him, nobody influencing him, it's just himself and his thoughts and his choices. That's what he is. That's what we are, what we really think, when no one is looking...except God, he's always looking. But, all of the talk, all of the relativities, all of the explanations, all of that's just fraudulent politics. What we really are is what we are at the core. And, this man shows what he is.

Too many in our day live in a bewildered, "Gnostic" fog. They wander around in some mysterious time-warp, some reality distortion. And, of course, we know that it's devised himself. He blinds our minds, keeps us amused, entertained, so that we avoid and deny and ignore the gripping reality of what God says that we are facing. This unjust, unconverted steward was not that dumb. The Bible tells us to pray to God to teach us to number our days. And then, in that light, to apply our hearts to wisdom. Have you ever numbered out your days, and then judged your present choices, desires, priorities, urgencies, emergencies, and all of that by that number? Now, of course, we don't know it for sure, but, go ahead and be optimistic. Do the math anyway, and then ask yourself, "When am I going to start acting on the priorities and facts which I know, but which I repress or deny?" And, how much time do we have left to start? (There's) maybe not even one more day. We don't even know. So, how have we done so far. Do we look like these folks in Acts, Chapter 2? Do we even look like the unjust steward who isn't even born again? You see, what is our investment account in heaven like, how prosperous, how fruitful are we in heaven's bank, how productive and worthwhile are we in the things which God values?

This steward acted with urgency because he knew that his need was urgent. Is he smarter than we are? Our "Gnostic," mystical paganism, of course, tells us that if you face up to something, if you talk about it or think about it and plan for it, than, somehow, you're going to make it happen. So, if you number your days and think about what you want your life to amount to on the day of your death, you'll just make your death happy. That's Gnosticism if there ever was such a thing. That's paganism. Paganism also teaches that if we deny something mystically, we can make it go away materially. How dumb is that? But, our whole culture believes that. And, of course, paganism requisitions human faith in all of these efforts of denial and make-believe and superstition. God has already made our appointments. He's already set our calendar. He's made all of our dates for us. He determined our boundaries before we were even born. So, we're relieved of all of that pressure. We don't need to have all of that anxiety. But, we're free to act only most faithfully in every situation. That's the only question that we have to ask. Not, "will I live?," "will this cost me my life?," "what are the ramifications?" Our only question is, "what's the most faithful thing to do?" That's all. God covers everything else. And so, we're equipped by the knowledge of the Word of God to face our true situations boldly, and to then act boldly in the light of that truth. And, that's what this unjust steward does in his situation. Jesus asked, who of you by worrying can add even one second to your life? No one can. And, no one can subtract any either. So, don't worry about it. Don't waste your time. Redeem your time from the evil of these days, and redeem your money and wealth as well.

This steward was unjust, ungodly, unconverted, unrepentant, and even he, in his

short-sighted priorities, did not waste time wishing or worrying or denying the truth. He got busy. He got to work in view of reality. And, of course, we would expect a crook to do more crooked things as he does that. But, we know enough to get busy working in view of what God himself has told us, because, we have the faith of Christ and it works. It is powerful. It doesn't just talk or believe. So, we need to cast down and cast out every vain imagination, and every vestige of Gnostic, pagan mysteriousness. We need to receive the truth, and then, by faith, plan, and then, take action, changing our minds and our affections, according to Paul's instructions in Romans, Chapter 12.

In Matthew, Chapter 6, Jesus said, in verses nineteen and twenty, do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where liability, and risk and loss is routine, but rather, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. And, all of the treasure you store up in heaven is eternally secure. None of that can happen to it, he says. And, why do this? He tells us, because you're heart will be where your treasure is. You're heart will be where your treasure is. That's the defensiveness again. Our heart always follows, always defends, our treasure. So, where's our heart? The better question is, "where is your treasure?" Because, if you answer either one of those, then you've answered them both. They're in the same place. That's how you understand human behavior. And, it doesn't take a rocket scientist. And then, Jesus goes right on into the subject of singleness of heart, which is one of the key characteristics in Acts, Chapter 2. In verses twenty-two, twenty-three, and twenty-four, in the same passage, right after he says, don't store up treasure on earth, but, lay up treasure in heaven, he says, the lamp of the body is the eye, (talking about the singleness of mind, the single eye,) if therefore your eye is good, then your whole body is going to be full of light. But, if your eye is bad, then your whole body is full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in you is darkness, (now there's a Gnostic phrase that we ought to study,) if what we call light is actually producing darkness in us, then, how great do you think that darkness is? You're being deceived. You're being lied to by somebody. And, your mind is being blinded by the God of this age, because, verse twenty-four, the next verse, no one can serve two masters. That's the bottom line. It cannot be done. You can pretend to do it. But, it can't be done. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or else, he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You can't serve God, and money, in this case.

So, this steward made provision for his future based on what he believed to be true. And, that's the wisdom that we should copy. He planned and prepared accurately. His urgency was fueled by truth, and, surely, we are called to live right now in the light of eternity and in light of the promises of God which we say that we believe. So, we need to maintain heavenly-mindedness. And, we will, if that's where our treasure is. We must think of heaven constantly. And, we will, if that's where our treasure is. We must think and plan and act in the light of eternity. And, we must remind each other of this at every opportunity, because, we are guaranteed to forget. But, surely, we won't all forget at the same time. Every gathering of Christians requires, (they always talk about having a "designated driver,")...I think every assembling of Christians needs a "designated reminder." And, of course, we ought to all designate ourselves and do our best. But, we need to be reminded of the perspective of eternity on what's immediately in front of us. Of all of our planning and investing and spending, what percent of it is in view of eternity? And, what percent of it is in view of the temporary? How many people spend more time planning a weekend or a vacation or a retirement than they have ever spent



planning for heaven? Jesus challenges us to invest the visible in the invisible. And, that takes faith. That takes faith. Granted, an unregenerate person couldn't ever do that. But, that's what Hebrews taught us about faith, that the invisibility of our faith and its objects is actually superior, because nothing on earth can happen to it. We need to spend the visible for the invisible.

We are converted to invest materially in eternity. We are called to invest visible material in the Kingdom of God. The things that we do in our bodies visibly, tangibly, palpably, count forever. The Gnostic says that such a thing can't be done. But, Jesus said that it can. The Gnostic says that it doesn't matter. Jesus says that it does, because, he says that you don't belong to yourself anymore. You're mine. I bought you. Your time is his. The desires of our heart are his. Our money is his. In Acts, Chapter 2, they acted like they are now participants in a new family, in forever-kinds of relationships.

So, this steward acted on his convictions. His convictions, make no mistake about it, were immoral, short-sighted, and wrong, but, he did not just value them. He acted on them. How incriminating it is when people with strong commitments to wrong things put us to shame by their actions. People who believe lies often act with greater commitment, greater trust, greater belief, than people who believe truth. In verse eight, Jesus says this in verse eight of Luke 16, that the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. And, the implication is that we should deal with our own kind, other people of the light, with the same priority. This is why the master commended the dishonest steward, because, they are actually "birds of the same feather."

But, Jesus invites us to compare our commitment to theirs. Would Jesus, if telling this parable today, use a parable, maybe, of a "suicide bomber," maybe a high-jacker, to say "look at them; they're ready to die." They'll give all they have, all of their assets, all of their wealth, all of their pleasure, all of their opportunities. They're ready to give their lives. (They) don't know anything about what they're doing. They're totally wrong, but, they're acting on their convictions. They're boldly leaping, actually, into an eternity in hell. But, how is it that we're planning to leap into heaven? Should we have less commitment than the ungodly? Jesus said that our righteousness has to exceed that of the Pharisees and the Scribes. Verse eleven of Luke 16 gets to the point. The way that God evaluates our worth (is that) if you're not trustworthy with worldly wealth, which you have as a bodily person, who is going to trust you with true riches? The first fruit of regeneration, again in Acts 2, shows that they are trustworthy with worldly wealth. It says, later on of them, (that) they didn't think that they owned what they had all by themselves for themselves. Whenever we start thinking that we own whatever we have, whether it's time or desire or money... whenever we think that it's ours for ourselves, then we're more like the unjust steward than we should dare to be. We dare not be in his fellowship of selfishness, with regard to money or life or anything else. Worldly people, indeed, do look out for themselves. They look out for their wealth, their pleasure, their comfort, their benefit, their desires, but, they do not look toward eternity.

And, we are stewards and managers also. And, we have a master. And, he's not like this unjust steward, and, he's not like the unjust steward's master. He has given us his own example. He laid down his life for us. And, we lay down our lives by our use of our wealth and our time and our effort. And every other resource or potential or desire that we have in our discretionary power, we lay it down to serve the needs of God's people.

In verse 13 of Luke 16, Jesus repeats the same statement that he made earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, in verse 24 of Matthew 6. It's the same statement, "No servant can serve two masters." Either he hates one and loves the other, or he's devoted to one and despises the other. You can't serve both.

So, I hope that we have, from this text in Acts 2, and in Luke 16, a new, refreshing reason to go to work in the morning, a new reason, an invigorating reason to earn money and accrue wealth. And, I hope that we have an invigorated sense of purpose in the everyday routine of our working life, our working hours. We are not wasting our time. We are about our Father's business, even while we redeem, not only time, but also wealth from the devil's economy and deposit it in the treasuries of heaven. Let us put our money where our faith is, and our hearts will follow. Let us not have the attitude of the Pharisees in verses 14 and 15 of Luke, Chapter 16. We have got to be careful of that. But, let us enjoy the privilege of laying up treasure in heaven and of using our time and our effort and our money and our prayer in making eternal friends of God's beloved people, so that we can enjoy them with him forever. And, may the Holy Spirit change our hearts as necessary for the good of Christ's kingdom.

Hymn #414 (Baptist Hymnal) - Because I Have Been Given Much

Because I have been given much, I too must give;  
Because of thy great bounty, Lord, each day I live.  
I shall divide thy gifts from thee with every brother that I see  
Who has the need of help from me.

Because I have been sheltered, fed, by thy good care;  
I cannot see another's lack that I not share.  
My glowing fire, my loaf of bread, my roof-safe shelter overhead  
That he too may be comforted.

Because love has been lavished so upon me, Lord;  
A wealth, I know, that was not meant for me to hoard;  
I shall give love to those in need, shall show that love by word and deed;  
Thus, shall my thanks be thanks indeed.

Hymn #407 (Baptist Hymnal) - A Charge To Keep I Have

A charge to keep I have; A God to glorify,  
Who gave his Son my soul to save and fit it for the sky.  
To serve the present age; my calling to fulfill.  
Oh, may it all my powers engage to do my master's will.

Help me to watch and pray, and on thyself rely,  
Assured if I my trust betray, I shall my Lord deny.  
Arm me with jealous care, as in thy sight to live.

And, oh, thy servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give.

Jon's Prayer:

Lord, we thank you that you give us the wonderful opportunity of eternal retirement with you, and that we can store up treasure there, and even have the joy of giving it here, and reaching out to meet other's needs with the money that you have supplied us with. We thank you for the meaning that that places on the minutes that we spend in seemingly fruitless activity of work, that it isn't fruitless, but that it truly has a spiritual end, that it's a faithful activity. We thank you that we can even have our minds changed about that, and our attitudes changed. We thank you that you give us each other to look out after, and, more than that, those that we don't know, that we can support, and that opportunity. Lord, so often we look at it as more of a burden, more of a obligation, and we resent that we should have to give that which we have for that. But, in reality, it is a golden opportunity to express our love to you, and to, actually, store it up somewhere else for a greater reason, a greater cause, a greater benefit.

Help us to incorporate this in our thinking, this week, in our nickels and dimes, in our minutes, in our activities, that we might be a people who can trace back everything that we do to the "why" being Jesus, and his love for us. We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen.