

Lost and Found

Riches and the Kingdom in the Lukan Journey Narrative 5

- ^{15:1} Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.
- ² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”
- ³ So he told them this parable:
- ⁴ “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?
- ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.
- ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’
- ⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.
- ⁸ “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?
- ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’
- ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”
- ¹¹ And he said, “There was a man who had two sons.
- ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them.
- ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.
- ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.

- 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.
- 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.
- 17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!
- 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.
- 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.” ’
- 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.
- 21 And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’
- 22 But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.
- 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.
- 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.
- 25 “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.
- 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.
- 27 And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’
- 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,
- 29 but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.
- 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

^{16:1} He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.

² 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.'

³ 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.

⁴ I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.'

⁵ So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

⁶ He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'

⁷ Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

⁸ The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ "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.

¹¹ If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

¹² And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

¹³ 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."

- ¹⁴ The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.
- ¹⁵ And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.
- ¹⁶ “The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.
- ¹⁷ But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.
- ¹⁸ “Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.
- ¹⁹ “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.
- ²⁰ And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,
- ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.
- ²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried,
- ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.
- ²⁴ And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’
- ²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.
- ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’
- ²⁷ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house—
- ²⁸ for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’

²⁹ But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' ”

(Luke 15:1-16:31)

Lost and Found

Many years ago, I went to a Denver Bronco game where we sat in our season seats on the very top level of old [Mile High Stadium](#). Though I didn't drive, as you might expect, I still brought [my wallet](#). I was a senior in high school and besides the obvious money, it also contained my two credit cards, my driver's license, and my school ID. At some point, I went down to the fifth level to get some nachos, missed most of the third quarter, including a great comeback that I didn't get to see, returned, ate my food, we won, and I went on my merry way.

Early the next day I realized that [my wallet was gone](#). The last time I saw it, I had put it in a coat pocket way up in those rafter seats. I was not happy. Immediately after each game, a thousand volunteers sweep and clean the stands to

get ready for the next event. I cancelled my credit card, but I was determined that I would not go to the school office and most certainly would not yet go down to the DMV to get a new license. Instead, I would wait until I returned the next Sunday, knowing that it was a home game and there were no events scheduled between now and then. Everyone thought I was crazy. I can't say that I had a premonition or anything, but it was a strange sense of calm.

The next Sunday, as we walked our usual mile hike to Mile High from the Riverside Baptist parking lot to our nose-bleed seats, I was eagerly apprehensive. There was no possible way it could be there. People aren't that honest. As we walked into the stadium, I bypassed the lost and found and headed straight to our section. I walked the fifteen or so steps up to my usual spot, bent down to take a look under my seat, took my hand out of my pocket, smiled, and **picked up my wallet**.

Fifth of Seven Cycles of the Journey Narrative

Just like the fourth (middle) section of Jesus' Journey Narrative, the passage today is a lengthy **two full chapters: Luke 15:1-16:31**. It is the **fifth of seven cycles** of Jesus journey to Jerusalem. Recall that these cycles mirror one another

in an ABCDC'B'A' pattern. The center (D) of this longest part of Luke (**Luke 9:1-19:27**) was the previous two chapters, and now we are making our way back out as we also get closer to Jerusalem.

The **central message** was all about making sure you **enter the kingdom of God**. Prior to that, we had a whole chapter focusing on **why and how not to worry** in this life. In that section (C), the third of the seven, Jesus began with a group of people gathered around him to hear him speak (**12:1**). He ends his long discussion with a solemn warning that he who does not settle with his accuser will never get out of prison until he has paid the last cent (**12:59**). In between, Jesus talked about money, possessions, and stewardship.

Our passage is **parallel**. Similar to the other opening, Jesus begins with a group of people drawing near to hear him speak (**15:1**). Also similar, it ends with a solemn warning to a man in eternal prison (hell), that if the living will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead (**16:31**). In between, Jesus again talks about money, possessions, and stewardship.

Both tell stories about **a rich man**—one a rich man who tore down his barns to build bigger ones, but who died and never got to enjoy the fruits of his labor (**12:13-21**). The

other about a rich man who lived a life of luxury, but neglected poor Lazarus, who then also died, finding himself tormented in hell (16:19-31). The former eats, drinks, and is merry (12:19). The latter refused to feed Lazarus (16:21). The point seems to be that **material wealth in this world tends to create a spiritual bankruptcy** that leads only to destitution and separation from God in the life to come. It is something of which we must beware in our own lives.

Both have a story of **a household manager**. In the former, he is wise and faithful and his master puts him in charge of all his possessions (12:42-44), but warns him if he should mishandle the possessions (45-48). The latter, he is a shrewd manager (16:1, 3, 8), whom the rich man is about to fire for mishandling his possessions (16:1). Both close with a teaching on stewardship that emphasize the word “**much**” (12:48b; 16:10-12).

Both prioritize the importance of **focusing on God and not money** and material possessions. In the former, Jesus teaches us to give up our worries by selling possessions and giving to the poor (12:32-33), thereby seeking first the Kingdom which will never pass away, and resting on God who is in charge of our food and clothing (12:22-31). He then cautions, “**For where your treasure is, there your heart**

will be also” (12:34). In the latter, Jesus says you cannot serve for God and money (16:13), and then warns the Pharisees who love money, “God knows your hearts” (16:14-15).

Both use money and material goods as an illustration of what God values. In the former, Jesus tells us of the cheapness of sparrows who are sold for pennies, but God loves them and therefore loves us more (12:6-7). In the latter, Jesus tells the religious authorities that he eats with tax collectors and sinners (15:1-2) because God values them, illustrating this love through a series of parables that talk about losing and finding something of great value: a sheep (3-7), a silver coin (8-10), a son; (11-32). In the former, Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom (12:31). In the latter, it is God who is seeking the lost until he finds them (cf. 15:8).

Finally, both contain forceful teachings against the contamination of the Pharisees, who are full of hypocrisy (12:1) and love what God hates (16:14-15). Knowing that they are powerful on earth, Jesus tells his disciples that following him will therefore not be easy. Nevertheless, they should fear God, because the consequences (in the former it is Gehenna-hell [12:5] and in the latter it is Hades-hell [16:23] are unthinkable. But God shows his love for those who trust him

in both cases in unexpected meals (12:37; 15:22-24, 32). This is something that money cannot buy.¹

Importantly, our passage by itself is set up as a series of two parallels:

A. Jesus gives three parables on the lost being found in response to the Pharisees (15:1-32)

B. **Climax:** Parable of the shrewd household manager and a rich man (16:1-13)

A'. Jesus gives three teachings on ungodly pharisaical conduct to the Pharisees (16:14-18)

B'. **Climax:** Story of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31)

A. begins with **three parables**, *things that didn't happen but could* that illustrate the lost being found in response to the Pharisees. **A'.** begins with **three teachings** on ungodly pharisaical conduct of things that *they are actually doing*. **A.** ends with a two-fold description of a repentant son who was dead but lives, was lost and is found, but a brother who was never lost, or so he thinks. **A'.** ends negatively with a two-fold description of a man who divorces his wife and remarries to commit adultery and with a woman who does the same. This parallel explains why Luke is not concerned with the “**exception**” **clause** to divorce and remarriage that we find in Matthew.

B. tells a parable, a story that *did not happen but could*, to illustrate how wealthy believers should **use their wealth to**

¹ This is my summary of the one found in [Buckwalter](#), 75-77.

help poor believers, so that poor believers can then welcome wealthy believers into their eternal dwellings (16:9). It ends with a warning about serving money and now not to be lost. B'. tells, in my opinion, a story with real people and real places that becomes a kind of prophetic tale that will hit everyone between the eyes, especially as Jesus approaches Jerusalem. It illustrates what happens to someone who neglects the needs of the poor on earth, for it keeps him from sharing the poor man's comfort in the afterlife. It ends with an emphatic declaration, not of works salvation by helping the poor, but of personal allegiance and the need for faith in Christ, lest you be eternally lost.

Lost and Found—The “A” Unit

We begin with a series of three parables: the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the longest, the Lost Son.² “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him” (Luke 15:1). These are the outcasts of society whom we have seen before (cf. 7:34). They come near to Jesus and he does not cast them aside. His is that “mixed” kingdom as we saw when thinking about the mustard plant, the one considered

² Each of the three is chiasmic in nature. See Robert Reid, “[The Rhetorical Structure of Luke 15: A Teaching Outline for Group Study](#),” *University of Dubuque*.

unclean by the Scribes and Pharisees. But the reality is, his kingdom is the most holy and clean of all.

This raises the dander of the Pharisees. “**And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them’**” (2). The question we are being confronted with is why. **Why would Jesus not be like these Pharisees?** Why would he hang out with those that most other people went out of their way to ignore or turn away?

Parable of the Lost Sheep

He gives the answer in **three parables**. A parable is a simple story used to illustrate some larger, connecting point. The first (3) is about **a shepherd and his sheep**. It’s fine here to think of John 10 or Psalm 23 and the Good Shepherd, for that’s exactly what Jesus is. “**What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost’**” (4-7).

The first thing to notice is **the numbers**. There are **a hundred sheep**. They are divided into **two groups**: 99 and 1. The

ninety-nine are fine. The one got lost. It is difficult to explain this parable any better than the old Gospel song written by Elizabeth Clephane who put it this way, “There were ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold. But one was out on the hills away, far off from the gates of gold.” She understood what she was writing. She is clearly **seeing beyond the physical** to the spiritual realm of eternity, and she would die herself soon after penning these words.

She then asks, “Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine; are they not enough for Thee?” That’s the Pharisees’ response. “But the Shepherd made answer: ‘This of mine has wandered away from me.’” So what does the Shepherd do? “Although the road be rough and steep, I go to the desert to find my sheep.” After giving a beautiful metaphor of **the cost for Jesus to save this sheep**, at the price of his own blood, the song concludes, “All through the mountains, thunder-riven, and up from the rocky steep, there arose a glad cry to the gate of heaven, ‘Rejoice! I have found my sheep!’ And the angels echoed around the throne, ‘Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own.’”³

This little parable helps you realize that **it is not enough for Jesus** to hang out with the important people. His kingdom

³ Originally, **Elizabeth Cecilia Clephane**, “There Were Ninety and Nine That Safely Lay,” *The Family Treasury* (1868, 1874), 595.

is not like theirs. And yet, he uses an illustration that they all would have agreed with. If one of the sheep is lost, the shepherd would certainly **go out and find it**, even if it meant leaving the others behind. **Jesus seeks sinners, poor pathetic dumb sheep.** Lost sheep don't seek the shepherd. Jesus finds the sheep, puts them upon his back, and brings them home. You know why? There's a hilarious video out there if you type into a search engine: "**sheep saved from ditch jumps back in.**" It begins with this poor sheep who has fallen into a very narrow and deep ditch. It is totally stuck and will die if not rescued. A boy starts pulling, and pulling hard, on its leg. It looks like it probably hurt a lot. But the sheep eventually is wiggled up and out to safety. The ecstatic sheep is so obliviously giddy with his newfound freedom that he starts running and jumping and not three seconds later jumps right back into the same ditch where he's now stuck again.

Parable of the Lost Coin

The second parable is about a woman who **loses a coin.** I'm a coin collector and so I can appreciate this. I once lost a full book of Jefferson nickels going back to 1938. I never did

find it. It makes me sick to this day. “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (8-10). First a shepherd, often despised outcasts of society. Then a woman, the “lesser” sex as so many thought in those days. Those who lose something in the parable are appropriately like the tax-collectors and sinners themselves.

Now, let’s note that there is a number in this parable as well. This time it is 10. We’ve gone from a hundred down to ten. As someone summarized it, we’ve gone from a hundred to one odds of redemption to ten to one odds.⁴ But as the odds go down, the price seems to go up. For 1/100 of a flock is not as big a deal as 1/10 of one’s net worth. This makes finding the coin ten times as important.

After sweeping the house, perhaps more difficult a task than you might think, given that the floor was probably itself dirt, her response is nevertheless the same as before. She

⁴ See Robert S. Reid, “On Preaching ‘Fictive Argument’: A Reader-Response Look at Lukan Parable and 3 Sayings on Discipleship,” *Restoration Quarterly* (Spring 2001), 6 [page numbers not original].

calls her friends and neighbors and **tells them to rejoice**, for she found the coin that she had lost. Obviously, she had told them all and had them looking for it as well.

The key to both of these parables is found at the end, for this tells you meaning of the story. The lost sheep and coin represent **sinners who repent**, humbling themselves, confessing their sins, and turning to God by faith. It can mean nothing less, because it is **heaven itself that rejoices, even the angels, when just one sinner repents**. The implications for what this means in heaven each time just one person is saved are pretty staggering, and one could let their mind dwell on this for a while. But we have much to get through, so let's continue with the third parable.

Parable of the Lost Son

Often called the parable of the **Prodigal** [extravagant; wasteful] **Son**, if read in conjunction with the previous two stories, it is better to see it as the parable of the **Lost Son**. And how does he get lost? With the sheep, it had wandered away. With the coin, it had been misplaced. With the son, it is these things and more.

It begins, “**There was a man who had two sons**” (11). Let’s stop and notice the **number**. We have now moved from 100 to 10 to 2. The odds, if we want to put it that way, are now 50-50. But the stakes are the greatest of all. For it is not a sheep and not a coin, but one of just **two sons of a father**. The story is long and chiastic and takes place in two acts:⁵

2 Sons in 2 Acts	
¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them.	A Son is Lost
¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.	Goods Squandered
¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.	All is Lost
¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.	The Depths of Sin
¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.	Total Rejection
¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!	Comes to Himself
¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.” ’	Initial Repentance
²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.	Total Acceptance
²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’	Full Repentance
²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.	Everything Gained
²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.	Goods to Celebrate
²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.	Rejoicing over One who Repents

⁵ Chiasm below from Reid, “[The Rhetorical Structure](#).”

25	“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.	Brother Hears Joyful Celebration
27	And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’	Your Brother is Safe and Sound
28	But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,	Father Explains
29	but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.	Complaint
30	But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’	Complaint
31	And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.	Father Explains
32	It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’ ”	Your Dead Brother is Alive

Because we will look at this parable by itself next time, we won't get into the nitty-gritty here. It begins with a **younger son** who wants his inheritance early. So, the father, kindly, obliges (15:12). Immediately, the younger son leaves home for a faraway land and squanders all of it “**in reckless living**” (13). A famine comes and the boy is not able to take care of himself. He has lost everything (14). So, he hires himself out as a slave, and is immediately put to work with the pigs (15), unclean animals to Jews, the same beasts that Legion jumped into. Things got so bad that he only ate the food of pigs (16).

At some point, he finally **comes to himself** and remembers his father (17). He thinks to himself that he might be

able to get a job as a hired hand in his household if he returns humbly and confesses what he's done. But he knows that his father would never accept him back as a son, even if he is sorry (18). This is **the first half of the center of the story**. Amazingly, he plans to return and humbles himself and ask his father if he might be treated as simply a hired servant, since he is not worthy to be called his son (19). This is **the second half**. It is the literary turn of the story and it deals with **repentance**, which means **"to turn."** How appropriate.

As he approaches the estate, his **father** saw him a long way off, and was so **overcome with emotion** for his lost son that he ran out and embraced him and kissed him (20). His rejection has become acceptance. Mirroring the worst part of his life with the pigs, he tells his father that he has sinned. He leaves nothing back. This is not repentance with conditions. He is at the end of himself and this is his only hope.

But whereas he has previously **lost** everything ("**spent everything;**" 14), he is now unthinkably **clothed** with the best robe, fitted with the finest shoes, and given the ring of a prince (22). In contrast to his squandering everything in the party life, the father throws his son a party and they eat and celebrate together (23). For **"He was lost, and is found"** (24). But it isn't *just* that he is "found," like the other two parables.

For, the lost son is called the “dead” son, and he is “alive again.” He has gained everything back, and more, for he did not have the clothes of royalty when he set out from home. He got everything he set out for and more, the right way.

Act I of this story is the story of redemption in a nutshell. Sinners who deliberately squander all God’s good gifts, realize he is their only hope, come to him for forgiveness, begging nothing but to eat the scraps under his table like dogs, but at least being in his house, are given all the blessings of Christ and privileges of sons of God. It puts a fine point on the theme of all three parables. This is the Gospel, the good news. God seeks us out. God forgives all our sins, even those done on purpose. God does not treat us as outcasts, but as his beloved children when we humble ourselves and confess that we have fallen short of God’s glory. It is the power of the seeking God that gives us such grace to do this. I’m going to skip the ending of this parable for later.

The Rich Man and the Manager—The “B” Unit

Let’s skip ahead to the “B” unit. Jesus begins talking to his disciples. This is a change, for he was talking to the Pharisees. He tells them a story about a rich man who had a manager. “And charges were brought to him that this man was

wasting his possessions” (16:1). Sound familiar? It’s exactly what the younger son did.

So, the rich man calls the white-collar manager in and says, “What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager” (2). This is a very different response from that of the father to a son. Why? Because they are *business* partners, not family. Their relationship is built on works and obligations. Business is run strictly by contracts. Family works on different values. Are you God’s child by faith or is he your boss by works? All are in one relationship to God or the other. There is no escaping this truth, even if you deny it.

The manager is instantly troubled. He’s about to lose his job because he knows *he’s a thief*. He has sinned. He has broken the contract. “What shall I do ... I’m not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg” (3). He *refuses to do blue-collar work*; he’s too wimpy for that. He *refuses to beg for his job*; he’s too prideful for that. He knows what he’s done. He’s cooked the books. And he’s in trouble. Yet, the son also deliberately squandered his inheritance. But this is the opposite response of the younger son, who having lost everything begged and expected nothing.

The manager begins **plotting**. That's the watershed moment. Either repent or start plotting. He figures out how, after he loses his job, he can at least be in the good graces of his master's debtors (4). That's crazy. I'm not saying that these debtors are the master's moral enemies, that's taking the parable too far. But financially speaking, they owe him. That's a kind of enemy. The bank is not your friend; it exacts a price. He's deciding to **sleep with the devil**.

He summons the master's debtors one by one. (5). The first owes **a hundred measures of oil**, so cuts the debt in half, redrawing the books to only **fifty** (6). The second owes **a hundred measures of wheat**. He gives this guy a 20% discount to only **eighty** (7). More numbers. These amount to **a year's worth of wages**. It was brilliant! They would still owe their debt, but now, before anyone knows about this manager's crooked dealings, they will be happy with him for this good news and the rich man won't be able to change the deal without great public outcry. He'll still be fired, but he'll have friends that he can go work for.

This makes the rich man's response all the more amazing. He "**commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness**" (8). We might say, "**Well played.**" The rich man is **not**

justifying what the manager did. As someone said, “I applaud the clever steward because he acted dishonestly,” is totally different from saying, “I applaud the dishonest steward because he acted cleverly.”⁶

The editorial comment of Jesus is not justifying it either. He says, “For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light” (8). The word “world” is actually *aeōn* (age), and he is contrasting the two kingdoms or ages here, the present evil age and the age to come. I think Jesus is lamenting the fact that his own disciples don’t understand the way his kingdom works in comparison to those who belong to the evil kingdom. They know it and use it to their advantage. Imagine if God’s people really understood the ways of his Kingdom as he’s teaching us throughout these many chapters. Imagine if we put others above our self as much as this buy put himself above all others. How would it change the world?

Jesus gives you a practical lesson. “I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth (*mammōn*), so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings” (9). Here, he introduces wealth or mammon. But the

⁶ T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1949), 292. Cited in Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 171.

ESV reads strangely to me. The Living Bible gives the meaning, “Here’s the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.” He is showing you that those in his kingdom must not use wealth for their own gain, but for the gain of others. One day, your money will be all gone. It is inevitable. What matters is where you will spend eternity. It’s more **lost and found**. Lose your money, find life.

But, where you spend eternity is rooted in **what you love now**. Jesus gives another traditional saying. “One who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much” (10). The one who can be trusted with a little can be trusted with a lot. And it makes sense. Because it is the little things that no one sees. It’s easy to steal fifty cents. No one cares or notices. But, if you have “**not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth,**” that is, the money and wealth of his world, “**who will entrust to you the true riches?**” (11).

What are true riches? They are eternal life and all the benefits that accrue through it. The next two verses get at this. First, “**If you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?**” (12). In

other words, true riches are those which will belong to you, not in that which is someone else's. Remember, this is a parable about a manager who embezzles or steals or whatever. True riches are eternal and given to you by God.

Second, [the most famous verse of the passage](#). “No servant can serve two masters (*kuriois*), 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” (13). Jesus is here likening [Mammon](#), what is translated as money or wealth, as a god or demon (the NIV capitalizes it as “Money”). It is a “master” or “lord” (*kurios*). It is likened to God himself and is something you serve. It is something you are devoted to.

Some say that Mammon was actually a deity, a god/demon in the old world, and while this is true after the saying in the church, it does not seem to have been the case before it. In fact, mammon is simply wealth, and it is not inherently evil. But the [supernatural or spiritual effects that money has on people](#) do show that there is a power here, whether there is some entity behind it or not, that leads one's heart astray and turns them to worship the world. Jesus says you cannot have it both ways. His kingdom does not have two kings. In this story, I hope you can hear the contrast between the manager

and the younger brother. If you are a manager, God will treat you like your boss. If you are a son, he will treat you as a child. Believe in him and know that you are a child of the heavenly Father.

The Law, The Kingdom—The “A” Unit and the Older Son

The way Luke has structured his Gospel, **Luke 16:14-18** parallels the three “lost” parables that Jesus told to the Pharisees and scribes. Jesus gives three sayings. In it, we return to the Pharisees. “The Pharisees, who were lovers of money (*philarguroi*), heard all these things, and they ridiculed him” (14). That’s never going to turn out very well, when you ridicule the God of all Creation.

To understand these verses, which have some difficult teachings, we need to dissect its structure. The ESV splits vs. 18 from the other verses with a new heading, but this **does violence** to what is otherwise a unity. It begins with them being “lovers of money” (14) and ends with a two-fold comment on adultery, which is the **third of three** sayings. “Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery” (18). So two sins of these evil

men, greed and adultery, hold the unit together. This also explains why Luke does not have an exception clause to divorce, as Matthew does. Matthew is concerned about the heart of the law. Luke is concerned with the heart *of the Pharisee!* They hate the heart of the law, and so for them, there is no forgiveness and exceptions are pointless. Exceptions are for those who haven't sinned.⁷

From here, we see that the Pharisees “*heard all these things, and they ridiculed him*” (14). *Ridiculed him* for what? For what he just told his disciples. For saying that you can't love God and money. They love money and said that they loved God. They didn't. The end of vs. 15 is the parallel. Something is “*an abomination in the sight of God.*” Notice Pharisees + heard + ridiculed parallels abomination + sight + God.



⁷ **Going deeper.** Those who argue that there are no exceptions for divorce and remarriage make Luke a priority (see for example **John Piper**, “[Divorce and Remarriage: A Position Paper](#),” *Desiring God* (July 21, 1986)). But this is nonsensical because Matthew has an exception that they just dismiss out of hand. We must explain why Luke does not have an exception, and it is the structure and unity of these five verses that provides the answer. Jesus is not here giving so much a teaching on the law, as a teaching *on the Pharisees*. He has no exception here because the Pharisees refuse to humble themselves and repent, even though they are guilty of two great sins. It would be pointless to add the exception clause here, because to comment on that would be to destroy the point he is making about their own hard hearts. That there are exceptions is still clear from the fact that not “*one dot of the Law*” will become void (17), and the law provides exceptions. For more, see **Joe M. Sprinkle**, “[Old Testament Perspectives on Divorce and Remarriage](#),” *JETS* 40.4 (Dec 1997): 529-50.

In between, we have **the first saying**. He said to them, “**You are those who justify yourselves before men**” (15). This is paralleled by “**For what is exalted among men.**” In the **center**, “**God knows your hearts.**” Hence, the central point he is making is that these men are hypocrites and God knows it.

When the **Pharisees ...**

heard all these things,
and they **ridiculed** him

He said ..., “You are those who
justify yourselves before men,

**but God
knows your
hearts.**

For what is **exalted
among men**
is an **abomination**
in the **sight**

Of **God**

People who love the world and its power and money can't help but **think the ways of the kingdom are absurd**. But they cloak their greed in their eloquence and schmoozing and politics. But God knows the heart and his kingdom works backwards from that of sin and pride. And God finds these attitudes disgusting. These people are lost.

It is into this that we come to **the second saying**. It also has a structure. “**The Law and the Prophets were until John**” (16a). This parallels the end of **vs. 17**, “**... one dot of the Law to become void.**” So **the law** holds this one together. In between, we have **the center**. “**Since then the good news of the**

kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it” (16b). As we have found elsewhere in Luke, this is the kind of stuff Matthew had in the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, a very similar comment on Law is how Jesus opened that sermon. It seems at first as if Jesus is saying that he is overthrowing the OT with the Gospel. But he isn’t. The Law and the Prophets are not opposed to the good news. Rather, these people are overthrowing the OT with their hypocritical reading of what it taught about money and salvation and marriage.

The first part of this center is simple enough to understand, even if it is a huge theological subject. Jesus is bringing the kingdom of God through the Gospel. It’s the second half that is very hard to interpret. **What does it mean, “everyone forces his way into it?”**

Is forcing your way into it opposed to the gospel, so that perhaps people are trying to work their way into the kingdom? That doesn’t really make sense of the violence. Is forcing their way into it something like trying to seize the kingdom and destroy it (perhaps like the NRSV, “**everyone tries to enter it by force**”)? That might make sense of the Pharisees, but it’s hard to see what this has to do with the gospel

and this part of the sentence is connected to the gospel with “and” (*kai*).

One reading that is very intriguing and which one scholar has done an exhaustive search of all the translations of this verse in the early church and uses of the word *biadsetai* (pres.mid.ind.3.sing.) in Greek, is that rather than an active sense, it is **passive**, “**The kingdom of God is being preached and everyone is forced into it.**”⁸ Cyril of Alexandria gives the sense, “**Since the kingdom of heaven is the faith in Christ, it began with John the Baptist's announcement, who showed that the announced one would lead to the Kingdom through baptism. Those who are forced to enter the kingdom of heaven are those who detach themselves from the old and trivial custom of idolatry and those who pay no attention to the mere literal meaning, but they are dragged to the other side with violence, so to say, by the faith in Christ.**” (**Cyril of Alexandria, fr. 138**).⁹ The parallel in Luke is in the parable of the Banquet, where the master tells the servant, “**Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in,**” by which it has the sense, “**force anyone to enter.**” God greatly wish that all will enter and

⁸ **Ilaria L. E. Ramelli**, “[Luke 16:16: The Good News of God’s Kingdom Is Proclaimed and Everyone Is Forced Into It](#),” *JBL* 127.4 (2008): 737-58.

⁹ Cited in Ramelli, 754.

when he gives faith, there is an inner desire that now arises in a person that forces them to enter the kingdom. They are compelled, just like the younger son was compelled by his horrible circumstances to humble himself and reenter his father's kingdom.

But the **Prodigal's Son**, to which this is parallel, does not stop with **the younger brother**, and story here begins and ends with **the Pharisees**. They are peas in a pod. And since they are paired stories, we need to return to the Prodigal's Son. **Luke 15:25-32** is *Act 2* of the Prodigal Son. A shorter version of the first half, it is also chiasmic, but with one glaring difference.

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,

²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.

³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’ ”

It begins with **the older son** who is in the field. He comes home and hears music and dancing (25), so he calls to the servants to find out what's going on (26). He is told, "**Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound**" (27). That's **the good news!** How will the older respond?

"**But he was angry and refused to go in**" (28). Remember, Jesus is hanging out with "**sinners.**" Who does he think he is? So who is the older brother? He who has forgotten about these "sinners," who are his siblings—his brothers and sisters! They are like the older brothers of Joseph who seek to put him to death because they are jealous.

"**His father came out and entreated him ...**" (28b). That's what Jesus has been doing. Going to their **synagogues**. Going to their **homes**. **Eating** with them. **Befriending** them. The Father is like the Son. He desires their salvation. The Pharisees, I mean. He is pleading with them to see and respond well to their own brothers. As he has earlier said, "**How often would I have gathered you children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!**" (13:34).

"**But he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command...'**"

(15:29). That’s how they view all these people Jesus is also hanging out with—disobedient, rebellious, good-for-nothing grifters and freeloaders and parasites. But as I said, jealousy is at the heart of it. “I’ve been the good boy, the faithful boy, the obedient boy, the one whose done all your work, ‘yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends’” (29b).

This is the first half of the center of this shorter act, and we can compare it to the younger brother in the same part. One realized his need. The other had no need. One realized his poverty. The other had everything. One humbled himself. The other had no need to humble himself for anything. One expected nothing. The other expected everything. One knew himself a sinner. The other acted like he never sinned a day in his life.

Younger Brother Central Verses	Older Brother Central Verses
<p>“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!</p>	<p>but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.</p>
<p>I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”</p>	<p>But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’</p>

Incredibly, the father responds to the older son, not as the rich man to the manger, but in love—a father to a son. He said, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours” (31). All he had to do was ask. But he didn’t. It never even occurred to him. He’s been acting like his father was his boss and not his dad. So he got angry and his jealously consumed him, even though he never thought about it from the right point of view.

The father concludes, “It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found” (32). This is how the first act ended. What is missing is that we do not get a conclusion to the chiasm. It is an ABCDD’C’B without the final A’. What about the older son? The story is left up in the air, deliberately. Our teachings about the law begin to fill in a little more of what was going on in this older son’s head—duty, obligation, hypocrisy, greed, adultery, and disobedience. He isn’t as good as he thinks himself to be. None are, who refuse to bow their knee to the heavenly Father. If only they could see it.

The Rich Man and Lazarus—The “B” Unit

This leaves us with the final story. It is one that we will also return to by itself, so we won’t look in full detail at it

today. Here, it is important to remember that it **parallels the rich man and the manager**. It, too, begins with a rich man. “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen who feasted sumptuously every day” (16:19). So far, it begins like a traditional parable.

But **something changes in the next verse**. “And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus” (20). Something that many have pointed out is that if this is a parable, it is **the only one with an actual name in it**. In fact, there are two (including “Abraham”). “Lazarus” name can mean “**God has Ruled**” or “**Without Help**,” and both have some meaning in the story.

Curiously, Lazarus was “**covered with sores**” (20b) so that **the dogs came and licked** (21), but “**desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table**” (21). In this, he is humble, like the younger brother. But the younger brother was not sick and ceremonially unclean with disease. So, of course, a “good” rich Jewish leader would never dream of helping such a soul as that.

But what gets me is **what happens to this Lazarus**. He **died** (22). Why does this get me? Because the only other man named Lazarus in the Scripture also died. And, it appears from the parallel, that his father had leprosy (**Matt 26:6-13**;

Mark 14:3-9), sores of the body.⁹ For these and other reasons that we will get into when we take a deep dive into this story, I believe Jesus is using real people to tell a story will have parallels in a soon to come event and as such becomes a subversive statement about known powerful rulers and where they are headed. For certainly, the disciples who are hearing this story now would have been stunned in a few weeks time when Lazarus, Jesus' young friend, died and was raised from the dead.

Jesus continues by telling us that he was “**carried by the angels to Abraham's side**,” or more famously, “**bosom**” (*kolpon*).¹⁰ Abraham is the second person who is named, and

⁹ **Matt 26:6; Mark 14:3.**

¹⁰ **4Macc 13:17**, “If we suffer thus, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob will receive us, and all the fathers will commend us.” “The origin of the imagery is much discussed, but it probably combines the idea of John 13:23 of a guest's place of honor at a banquet, where the guest would recline next to the table with his head near or touching the host (cf. Jn 21:20) with the idea of a child lying in a parent's bosom or lap (see Jn 1:18, where Jesus is in his Father's bosom).” **Leland Ryken** et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 5.

The Apocalypse of Zephaniah has something similar to 4Macc, but it includes the Hellenized Jewish parallel of Charon, the Ferryman of Hades. “Be courageous! O one who has triumphed. Prevail! O one who has prevailed. For you have triumphed over the accuser, and you have escaped from the abyss and Hades. You will now cross over the crossing place. For your name is written in the Book of the Living ... Then he ran to all the righteous ones, namely, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Enoch and Elijah and David. He spoke with them as friend to friend speaking with one another.” (**ApocZeph** 9:1-2, 4-5).

Mentions of “the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” have been found in burial papyri in Israel (cf. papyrus Preisigke Sb 2034:11). In early Rabbinical legends and Jewish mythology “the Bosom of Abraham” was where the righteous went (cf. Kiddushin 72b, Ekah 1:85). See **Steven Cox**, “[The Rich Man, Lazarus and Abraham \(Part 3 of 4\)](#),” *The Christadelphian Tidings* (Dec 29, 2020). NOTE: This journal is from the heretical sect of Christadelphians, who deny the deity of Christ and the Trinity, but as far as the exegesis of the main part of the article goes (not the application), I think it is solid.

we know that he is a real person. Later, Abraham will talk. Why would Jesus say this if it wasn't really Abraham? He never does that anywhere else.

At any rate, contrary to popular opinion, this place is **not heaven**. Abraham's bosom is rather, a compartment of Sheol-Hades, the equivalent of the Greek **Elysium, the fields**

Shedd writes, "There was one *hadēs* for all, consisting of two subterranean divisions: Elysium and Tartarus (n. 6—WS: The pagan nomenclature is self-consistent, but the pagan-Christian is not. In the pagan scheme, hades is a general term having two special terms under it: Elysium and Tartarus. But in the paganized Christian scheme, hades does double duty, being both a general and a special term. When the pagan is asked, "Of what does hades consist?" he answers, "Of Elysium and Tartarus." But when the mythological Christian is asked, "Of what does hades consist?" he must answer, "Of paradise and hades." He cannot answer, "Of paradise and Tartarus," because the latter is gehenna, which he denies to be in hades. Hence he converts the whole into a part of itself. To say that hades is made up of paradise and hades is like saying that New York City is made up of Central Park and New York City." William Greenough Thayer Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, ed. Alan W. Gomes, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2003), 833.

Likewise, Robertson says, "The ancient pagans divided Hades (α [*a*] privative and ιδειν [*idein*], to see, abode of the unseen) into Elysium and Tartarus as the Jews put both Abraham's bosom and Gehenna in Sheol or Hades (cf. Luke 16:25). Christ was in Hades (Acts 2:27, 31), not in Gehenna." **A. T. Robertson**, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Mt 16:18.

Tertullian (*Apology* 47.2-3, 12-13) explains that the Greeks got all this from the Jews rather than visa versa (apparently, "Who among the poets, who among the sophists, has not drunk from the fountain of the prophets? From them the philosophers have slaked their thirst of mind; with the result that what they borrow from our books sets you comparing us with them. Hence, I opine, some have driven out philosophy—the Thebans I mean, the Spartans and Argives. In rivalry with our authors, and being men with a passion (as I said) for vainglory and eloquence and nothing else,—whatever they stumbled on in the sacred digests they took it, they recast it to match the plan of their fancy, turned it to their own purposes ... If we raise the threat of Gehenna, which is a treasury of hidden fire for punishment underground, in just the same way we meet with utter derision. For just so Pyriphlegethon is a river among the dead. And if we name Paradise, a place of divine beauty, reserved for the reception of the spirits of the holy, kept from the knowledge of this common world by the fiery zone as it were by a wall,—the Elysian fields are before us in capturing belief." (See also Gregory Nazianzen, *Orat.* 20. in laud. Basilii).

of forgetfulness.¹¹ For it says, “The rich man also died and was buried” (22), “and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side” (23). This lifting up of the eyes is not a looking to heaven, but a looking to Abraham and Lazarus, whom he can see.

The problem of the story now inserts itself. “And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame’” (24). The man is being tormented in the fires of hell. He can’t stand it and hopes, like the younger brother, that he might get just a little mercy.

But this is the afterlife, not the present life, and this story is more the parallel to the rich man and the manager. “But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us’” (25-26). He calls him “child” because he is one of Abraham’s descendants. But this place is the “reward” only for

¹¹ See Ed Christian, “[The Rich Man and Lazarus, Abraham’s Bosom, and the Biblical Penalty Karet \(‘Cut off’\)](#),” *JETS* 61.3 (2018): 513-23.

those who would not receive their award on earth. For those people, like this rich man, his reward for rejecting God is anguish.

The turn of the story is next. “And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house’” (27). We’ll see just who I think this person might be when we look at it in more detail in another sermon. Here, I’ll just point out that the request is for Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead. Just how is not explained. As a ghost? As a revenant? Through a dream?

Why would he want this? “For I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment” (28). This man is in hell and he wants at all costs for his living family not to come here as he has.¹²

The “boom” moment is found at the end. “But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them’” (29). What is not often pointed out here is that Jesus has just talked about “Moses and the prophets.” It came in vs. 16 when he said that “the Law and the Prophets were until John.” The Pharisees and scribes and priests loved to say they loved the law of God. But their lives were too hypocritical to admit they were sinners like everyone else. So

¹² For that sermon, perhaps begin with stories of people who have died and gone to hell. Also, tell the story of Lazarus being hated after he was raised, and they wanted to kill him.

Abraham says, “If you the love the law so much, let them read that, for it tells them all they need to do to avoid this place.”

But the rich man realizes that it **wasn't enough** for him. Send them *a sign* instead. “And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent’” (30). A wicked generation demands a sign, Jesus has already taught us (cf. **Luke 11:16, 29**). Even in hell, this man has the wrong idea. That's why he's there in the first place. He wouldn't listen.

Thus, Abraham concludes, “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead” (31). The point about **resurrection** will have amazing implications when we look at this in more detail. Because we are looking at the two chapters together, I want to finish today by thinking about how this contrasts with the other rich man story. For after all, this is a story about **a rich man who dies**.

Jesus is deeply concerned with how **money impacts people**. The woman almost went crazy looking for one coin. The younger son spent his entire inheritance on vice and depravity. The manager ripped off his boss. The Pharisees

were lovers of money. Now, a rich man dies, goes to hell, and still can't understand the truth.

You can't have love of money and still think some sign is going to wake you up. You can't have the love of money and God. You can't have the love of money and think you care about God's word. This *isn't a comment on having money*. It is a comment on *the love of money*. Solomon said, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money" (Ecc 5:10). The love of money blinds you to eternal realities. In a word, you get lost in it.

The only way one gets found is by humbling themselves as they hear the good news of the gospel that the Father forgives them and welcomes them back home. Otherwise, they've cut their father-son relationship off and all they have left is the boss-worker. And the *wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*. He is the one who finds us when his word penetrates our hard hearts through the light and heat of the conviction of sin and good news that comes through the gospel. It comes because he has been raised from the dead.

Now the only question is, if you are lost, *will you be found*? Listen to the Master calling you. And if you are found, will you go out and get lost? If you do, God always

stands to forgive. But if you do, will you be taken over by the love of money and sin? The Gospel changes our hearts so that we have new desires. If the Gospel is true, then we can do whatever we want. The question becomes, now what do you want?

The Parable of the Dishonest Manager

16:1 He also said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.
2 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.’
3 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.
4 I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’
5 So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’
6 He said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’
7 Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’
8 The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.
9 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.
10 “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.
11 If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?
12 And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?
13 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.”

The Rich Man and Lazarus

19 “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.
20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,
21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.
22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried,
23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.
24 And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’
25 But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.
26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’
27 And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house—
28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’
29 But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’
30 And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’
31 He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’ ”

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- n. 10 sources are for next time.