



December 11-12-13, 2021 – WELS Stewardship Series #4

A God-Lived Life: A Live Lived Shrewdly

Preacher: Pastor Scott Oelhafen

Sermon Theme: Now What Will I Do?

1. Live for the here and now 2. Live for the new life in Christ

Sermon Text: Luke 16: 1-15

Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.’ ³ “The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg— ⁴ I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’ ⁵ “So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶ “‘Nine hundred gallons^[a] of olive oil,’ he replied. “The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.’ ⁷ “Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’ “‘A thousand bushels^[b] of wheat,’ he replied. “He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’ ⁸ “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. ¹⁰ “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own? ¹³ “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” ¹⁴ The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. ¹⁵ He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.

In the saving name of the Triune God, dear fellow Christians blessed by God.

“Now what will I do?” Ever ask that question before? Maybe you’ve asked that question in frustration when the garage door froze shut, you’re late, and you have to get to work or the kids to school. Maybe you’ve posed that question in fear when you were at the doctor’s office and you just received a medical report you didn’t want to hear. Sometimes we ask that question because life just happened and we had zero control over the situation. Other times, we asked that because honestly, we blew it. Mistakes were made, BIG mistakes, and we’re not quite sure how to proceed.



This weekend concludes our four-part Stewardship series on the theme: "A God-Lived Life." Now when most people think about Stewardship, they think about money, and specifically how important it is for Christians to generously give money in a congregation. Yes, it's true. Money is part of stewardship, and money is a very big blessing from God. But, money isn't the only blessing our good and gracious God has given us. As we consider how to effectively live a God-Lived life, from this St. Paul's pulpit, we've already heard how to live the life of a disciple, how to live a life in service to others, and how to live a life of hospitality. Today, we explore the God-lived Life as we focus on the theme: a life-lived-Shrewdly. And I think you know what you're thinking: "Oh sure, another sermon talking about money." But, let me tell you what I'm thinking: "Oh sure, give the NEW guy a chance to talk about money". What are Scharf and Smith thinking as they scheduled me to preach today?" After all, money is a subject where fools rush in where angels fear to tread. The thought has crossed my mind with my sermon theme.. "Now, what will I do?" That's the question isn't it. But, let me assure you: our sermon reading from Luke, chapter 16, talks MORE about the attitude of money than giving money itself. And no guilt will motivate us to give, only love – the same love that God the Father had for each of us to give up something far most precious than money, but to sacrifice His only Son on the cross for every single one of us to save us.

"Now, what will I do?" That's the question asked by the shrewd manager in Luke, chapter 16. But, really, this manager was a jerk, wasn't he? I know "jerk" isn't a nice term we like to use. But, from Scripture's own assessment, this guy is a self-centered narcissist who is dishonest and unjust. Does that description really make any of us want to listen to him? But, here's the deal. In this parable in Luke, chapter 16, Jesus introduces us to someone we can all relate to. Call him: "Mr. Selfish". And I think you know how we can relate to him. Too often, we are him. We make decisions, especially with money, based on three factors: "me, myself, and I".

As we consider how to live a God-lived life more Shrewdly, let's ask the same question in our use of money: **Now What Will I Do?** Let's look closer at Luke chapter 16, and further ask: Will I live only for the now? Or will I live for the new? **With God Guiding Me, What will I do?**

Let's set the stage. Jesus isn't teaching us this parable to imitate Mr. Selfish. He wants us, God's people, to learn one thing: how to be shrewd. To be shrewd means to be intentional, to think through your situation, to keep the goal in mind and how to reach that goal.

Jesus begins: ***There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'*** Mr. Selfish was the house manager of a rich man. That meant he had total control of his master's finances. His job was to use those finances for the master's



good. Apparently, he had done something wrong and was now getting fired. Now remember, the word “steward or manager” is the same word often used to describe Christian believers. Everything belongs to God. We’re only stewards, managers of the time, talents, and treasures God has given us. But, knowing what God says in His Word how to use His blessings, should make us realize we haven’t always been faithful either. Yet, here we see Mr. Selfish’s shrewdness. He thinks through the situation: ³ **“The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg – His options how to earn a living aren’t good and the time is short. But, he realizes that the solution to all his problems must come outside himself. Until he hands over the books, he’s still got something. He’s got right now. Think how that applies to the treasures we have – we only have our bank accounts, the cash in our back pockets, and our retirement funds for a short time. So this steward says: ⁴ I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’ ⁵ “So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶ “Nine hundred gallons^[a] of olive oil,’ he replied. “The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.’ These are huge numbers and lots of money is changing hands here. Likely we’re talking about long term renters of the land who are partners with the wealthy master. A deal is getting done for the benefit of ... Mr. Selfish. ⁷ “Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’ “A thousand bushels^[a] of wheat,’ he replied. “He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’ This steward, this Mr. Selfish, was shrewd, wasn’t he? He used his master’s money with a clear goal in mind. But, he chose to live for the now. This guy failed by stealing his master’s wealth. But, he was also doing something else. He was counting on the master’s mercy. The only way this works is for the master to go along with the plan. And the master does get it and even seems to go along with it, like God seems to do in our world . The master doesn’t commend the stealing. The scriptures say: ⁸ “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. “Well played Mr. Selfish, well played.”**

The only point of the parable is to be more shrewd with the money we’ve been given – but for a very different purpose, for a new purpose, for God’s purpose. Jesus gives us this final application: ⁹ **I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.** We have an eternal purpose far greater than anything in this short life, to serve God above all else: to gratefully give the best of our income in church offerings, to take care of our families’ earthly needs and to pay the bills. What we do in this short life matters. That’s why Jesus also gives us a clear warning: ¹³ **“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”** When it comes to the use of our money, there is only one merciful master. It’s been said: “There are a lot of things God will put up with, but second place isn’t one of them.”



Notice that Jesus doesn't defend Mr. Selfish. The man's goal was all wrong – self-preservation. Mr. Selfish wanted to serve himself by buying friends. Jesus makes it clear. Believers have true riches, God's riches. Let's use those riches to gain opportunities to tell our friends about Christ.

Jesus doesn't just teach us about how to use God's blessings. He came to save us for every time we've misused God's blessings. Jesus came to this earth for a limited time – only 33 years. Notice how he used God's blessings

Already as a twelve-year old in the temple, he used his time to grow in the Word for every time we didn't. He paid his taxes, and used money to give to Caesar what is Caesar's perfectly. Jesus cared about the needs of others, even when it wasn't convenient. And through it all, we see him committed to us, even if it meant sacrifice. He was committed to go to Jerusalem, to be beaten and betrayed, to suffer and die, for sinners like us. He put us first and literally saved us from the hell we deserved by his cross and tomb.

And now Jesus changes our outlook. He gives us a life, a new life – a life forever in heaven and a life of purpose right now, a God-lived life. What does that God-lived life look like? Look at the challenge cards in the bulletin. There are some great ideas how to be more shrewd, to prioritize God's work in our budgets. Let's remember what Jesus says about eternity instead of only focusing our finances on the here and now. Let's trust that God will take care of us as our merciful master who loves us and will give us more than we need and more than we deserve. Let's use God's blessings, not like Mr. Selfish, but knowing we are only managers of them, and we have them for such a short time.

Finally, let's talk directly about money. How is money like manure? It's not worth anything, until we spread it around. Until then, it stinks. My friends, knowing we are forgiven by Christ for the past, empowered by him to be generous in the present, let's be more shrewd in the future as we spread that money around. "Now What Will I Do?" I pray you ask that question whenever you use God's blessings. Let's not live for the now, but for the new.. After all, this season of Advent reminds us: Joy to the world – the LORD is coming and he's coming soon. Amen.

