

## **PREPARE YOUR ETERNAL DWELLINGS SHREWDLY**

Luke 16:1-18

Key Verse 16:9

I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

### **First, "Use your worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves" (1-12).**

Look at verse 1. It states, "Jesus told his disciples,..." So this parable of a shrewd manager is for his disciples, the believers. Jesus wants us to be shrewd managers like the manager in this parable. There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, "What is this I hear about you? Give me an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer." Now, this manager was in big trouble. His conduct as a manager was less than satisfactory. He was going to be fired. So what did he do? He 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 – I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses." So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, "How much do you owe my master?" "Eight hundred gallons of olive oil," he replied. The manager told him, "Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred." Then, he asked the second, "How much do you owe?" "A thousand bushels of wheat," he replied. The manager told him, "Take your bill and make it eight hundred." In this way, he lowered the amount of debt each of the debtors owed his master. These debtors felt so good and thankful that, later, when the manager lost his job, they were more than willing to welcome him into their houses. Look at verse 8. Let's read this verse together:

<sup>8</sup>"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.

Verse 8 starts with the sentence, "The master commended the dishonest manager,..." It means that the master found out what the manager had done to his debtors. Oh, no! This manager had done something really terrible against him – he had brought great loss to him. It seemed that the master should have been really angry and punished him severely and then, kicked him out to the street or sent him to prison. But strangely, verse 8 says that the master commended the dishonest manager. Wow! The master knew that the manager was dishonest, bringing great loss to him, but still he spoke well of him, and commended him, because he had acted shrewdly in preparing his future place. Jesus' point is not that we should be dishonest with our boss and deceive him; rather, his point is that we, believers, his disciples must be shrewd in securing

our future place like this manager. If you prepare your future place successfully, then, you will be commended by Jesus as a shrewd manager.

In verse 8b, Jesus says, "For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light." Like this manager, people in the world are very shrewd in securing their future. They analyze the future job market, choose the best major possible, and then, sincerely and wholeheartedly pursue it, studying hard, reducing sleep hours, working two or even three jobs. Then, they become lawyers, doctors, and CEOs; they figure out the best way to invest their money; they purchase stocks, mutual fund, and life insurance; they invest on 401K, IRA, and Roth IRA – in this way, they become successful in securing their future. As a result, they enjoy security, convenience, and luxury for about 40 or 50 years. People in the world are really shrewd and wholehearted in securing their future.

But in Jesus' eyes, the people of the light, the believers are not as shrewd as the people in the world in the matter of securing the place to go. Just for their 50 years or 60 years' security in the world, people are so wholehearted, but the children of the light, believers, Christians have no concern about securing their place to go where they will spend eternity. Simply, they take everything for granted, saying, "Yeah, I believe in Jesus," "Yeah, I go to church." They say, "I will reign with Jesus forever." How? They don't care; simply, they like that expression. While the people in the world struggle hard to secure their future of just 40 or 50 years, the believers do not make any effort even for their eternal security. When Jesus sees these Christians, he is simply embarrassed. This is the reason why Jesus gives this parable to his disciples, his believers so that they may shrewdly prepare their eternal dwellings very successfully. How then, should and can the believers, Christians prepare their future place very well? How can we be shrewd in this matter? Look at verse 9. Let's read this verse together:

<sup>9</sup>I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

"Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves." This is a secret. Securing your place in heaven to spend eternity is all up to how you use your "worldly wealth." Here, "worldly wealth" refers to everything we take possession of while we live here on earth, such as our time about 50 or 60 years as Jesus' disciples, our youth, God-given talent, good health, knowledge and skills such as computer skills, and also all our material possessions such as money, computers, cars, bikes, etc. All these are the resources we can use during our time here on earth. We came into the world empty-handed, and we leave the world empty-handed; we just enjoy the time of taking possession of these things for a while. The true owner of what we have is God; he is the real boss, and we are managers who take care of the owner's possessions. Also, the expression, "when it is gone," indicates that there will be time when we no

longer take possession of these things – it is the time when we have to leave this world – when our life span is over. So, before it is gone, while we have a chance, we must use this worldly wealth, all resources we have, shrewdly, and secure a place in heaven, so that when it is gone, we may be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

Remember that Jesus is giving this message not to unbelieving people, but to his disciples, his believers, Christians. How should we Christians use this worldly wealth so that we can secure our eternal future very well? Jesus specifically instructs us about it, saying, "Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."

We must use worldly wealth to gain friends - we must use our time and energy, our money and cars, our talents and life to gain friends, to establish friendship with many people; we must use this worldly wealth to help them and support them and make many friends just like the shrewd manager who made friends, so that, when our worldly wealth is gone, they may welcome us into their houses. By the way, what kind of friends are these? They are not ordinary friends; they are not worldly friends; instead, they are friends who, when you go to heaven, will welcome you into their eternal dwellings happily. So, they are the ones who have secured their eternal dwellings in heaven very successfully; they are the ones who have kept their faith in Jesus to the end overcoming all kinds of temptations; they are the ones who have secured their eternal dwellings in heaven successfully by obeying Jesus' instruction; they are steadfast and loyal to Jesus Christ - real disciples of Jesus Christ. And it was you who helped them believe in Jesus Christ; it was you who helped them dedicate themselves to God's mission; it was you who, by using your worldly wealth, encouraged and strengthened them to remain faithful to Jesus Christ. While others were just pursuing their own success and happy life pouring out all the resources they have for themselves, you used all your worldly wealth to help people and support them in their life of faith. After finishing your life on earth, when you go to heaven, all these people who are eternally thankful to you, are so happy to see you in heaven and they are overjoyed to enjoy time with you; they are more than willing to welcome you into their houses in heaven. In this way, when this life is gone, you have a place to go and enjoy your eternity. How happy you must be that you have many loyal friends in heaven. Simply, when you come to heaven, you find yourself already so famous. This is the way Jesus wants all his believers to live their life, using their worldly wealth, all their assets to gain friends who will secure their eternal dwellings in heaven very successfully and welcome them into their eternal dwellings happily. Simply, Jesus encourages us to pour out all our time and energy, our talent and potential in saving many souls and establishing them as fully committed disciples who will live as disciples of Jesus and thereby secure their eternal dwellings in heaven. This is how Jesus wants us, his believers to live our life here on earth.

Don't waste your worldly wealth for your fleeting pleasures; don't misuse your worldly wealth for a comfortable or luxurious life; instead, use your worldly wealth to save souls and establish them as disciples of Jesus so that they can secure their eternal dwellings in heaven successfully; help them live as shrewd managers who secure their eternal dwellings in heaven very successfully. When you do so, you are shrewd managers and Jesus will commend you greatly. This is how you can truly live for yourselves.

Look at verses 10 through 12. Let's read these verses together:

<sup>10</sup>"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.<sup>11</sup>So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?<sup>12</sup>And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"

Christians naively say "I will reign with Jesus forever." That's all believers' dream. But among so many, who will be chosen to be rulers in God's kingdom? Here Jesus shows us about it. God is giving every Christian, every believer a chance to prove his or her true quality, and based on how each person proves himself or herself, God will treat them accordingly - if you do well in this life, God will give you a lot in the life to come, but if you don't do well in this life, God will not give you anything. One life we have is a God-given chance, and Jesus calls it, what is "very little," in verse 10, "worldly wealth," in verse 11, and "someone else's property" in verse 12. This is what our life is about. It is something that is very little; it is worldly wealth; and it is someone else's property. Sometimes, we think that our life is so important, my own dream is so precious, and my own desire is so valuable that, we, often, refuse to let go of our dreams or desires or future hopes; because of their own dreams for sweet home or a convenient life with a good career, many believers reject God's will upon their life. They are stupid. Jesus says that our life is something that is very little. We often think that we are the center of the world, but that's not true. We are just one of 7 billion people in the world; even if we lose our job or die, no one cares, and nothing changes - still the world will go in the same way, and people will be busy with their own business. Our life time of 70 or 80 years is nothing compared to eternity God is going to give us. Surely, this worldly wealth we have now, our life here on earth, is something that is very little.

But amazingly, if you prove yourself trustworthy with this very little, if you prove your quality in this small matter of managing your own life as Jesus' disciples, God is going to give you much, true riches. Right now, you are a manager, taking care of someone else's property. But when you prove yourself trustworthy with this very little, God is going to give you the property of your

own. What does "the property of your own" mean? In this life, whatever you have is not actually yours even if you take possession of it - your talent, your fame, your position and title; when the time comes, you have to give up on everything. But when you are assigned as a governor for 10 cities or 5 cities, that position, that authority and power, honor and fame are all yours to keep continually; you will never go through reelection campaign; your position and title will never be taken away from you; such power and authority, such honor and glory will be yours to keep forever; it will be indeed the property of your own - you will have true riches, which will be really much.

But not all believers prove themselves trustworthy in this life; instead of using their worldly wealth to gain friends, they waste it by using their worldly wealth for their own fleeting pleasures or for their own comfy life, or for their own success in the world. God gives them a chance to prove themselves for 50 years as his believers, but they don't care. Then, when their life is over, should God hire them again in heaven? No. They have fully proved themselves as unfaithful, disloyal, and uncommitted during their life time on earth. So, God will fire them, because those who are untrustworthy with what is little, will be untrustworthy with much. This is how God will deal with each and every believer. In the resurrection, when Jesus comes again, God will judge and reward every believer according to what each person has done during their life time here on earth. God so graciously has given us this chance to prove ourselves. Usually, big companies such as Google or Apple does not give us a chance to prove ourselves - even, an internship position is very hard to get. How will you do, if Google gives you a chance - maybe, 6 months' probation? Of course, you will work really hard. But, sadly, no chance from Google. But God has given us a chance to prove ourselves, even with the possibility of becoming the CEO of his company. Isn't this amazing grace and blessing? This blessing has been given to all Christians, because they believe in Jesus, his Son. And based on how we prove ourselves, God will treat us accordingly. This is the position of all believers in this life.

So what shall we do? Yes, prove yourself trustworthy by using your worldly wealth to gain many friends and securing your eternal dwellings very shrewdly. Offer your life to God for His purpose, and use this worldly wealth to save souls, establish disciples and you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings; then, God will say to you, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Take charge of ten cities!" This one life we have as Jesus' disciples - about 50 or 60 years, is like a probation period at work; every believer has the same chance, and surely, 50 or 60 years are long enough for God to see who each of us really is. How do you live your life before God? As shrewd and trustworthy managers? Or, are you just abusing or misusing your life? Jesus says in the book of Revelation, "Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Rev 2:10) I pray that all of us may prove ourselves as trustworthy and shrewd managers before God. I pray that we all may receive property of our own in the kingdom of God.

**Second, "You cannot serve both God and Money" (13-18).** Look at verse 13. Let's read this verse together:

No servant can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money.

Here, Jesus shows the disciples one thing that hinders them from using their worldly wealth to gain friends, that is, the love of money. Because of the love of money, believers, instead of using their worldly wealth to gain friends for their eternal dwellings, use it to make money for a more comfortable or luxurious life; instead of pouring out their strength, time and talent for God's kingdom work, they pursue money in the name of success or in the name of a secured and comfortable life; thus, because of the love of money, many believers fail to secure their eternal dwellings. It is many people's idealistic desire to enjoy both God and money - they live as Jesus' disciples, securing their eternal dwellings in heaven and at the same time, become rich and enjoy good things of this world. But Jesus specifies here that no one can serve two masters; no one can serve both God and money; it is impossible for anyone to serve God and at the same time, pursue money. So, what shall we do? We must choose to love God alone and serve Him only; we must put our hope in the kingdom of God and pursue our eternal dwellings in heaven by using all the resources we have here on earth to serve God's soul saving business and to establish disciples of Jesus. At that time, as the Bible testifies, we will see God providing us with everything we need even materially. Don't pursue money, but pursue your eternal dwellings in heaven; don't pursue security on earth with a career or business, but pursue God's kingdom work; serve God alone.

Look at verses 14 and 15. At this teaching, some Pharisees who loved money, sneered at Jesus. It is very shocking to see that these fully religious people, Pharisees, loved money; their attitude of rejecting and despising Jesus' teaching about God and money shows that, in those days, the trend was that they pursued money in religion. Jesus pointed out their fault saying, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight." They loved money and didn't want to give up their desire for money, for a more convenient or pleasant or luxurious life; they didn't want to deny their desire for better cars, or bigger houses, or better foods. So, what did they do? They came up with many Bible passages and developed a certain theology that supported their desires for riches, saying, "Abraham was rich; Isaac was rich; Jacob was rich; Job was rich; David was rich." They said, "God promised in Deuteronomy that if we obey his commands, God will make us the head, not the tail and we will be creditors, not debtors." What they said sounded reasonable and understandable. But why did they come up with all those Bible passages and reasoning? Not to show what the Bible was really talking about, but to justify

their own action of loving money. Even though they could deceive humans with many Bible passages and some clever theories, surely, they could not deceive God. Jesus says, "But God knows your hearts." What a scary statement it is! We must live before God alone.

Look at verse 16. Let's read this verse together:

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

Here, Jesus divides all human history into two segments - the Old Testament Period and the New Testament Period, and shows us their difference. The Law and the Prophets refer to the Old Testament, and the key characteristics of the era of the Old Testament is that, during this time, God's laws and the Prophets were proclaimed; during this time, what we should do and what we should not do, and what God was going to do and how the world would go were being preached; it was the time of preparation and waiting. After that, from John the Baptist began the era of the New Testament. The key characteristics of the New Testament Period is that, during this time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached. What is the good news of the kingdom of God? The good news of the kingdom of God is about how good the kingdom of God is, and especially, how near it is to us, and how we can enter it and enjoy it; what happens once it is planted in a man, and what kind of life you can have in the kingdom of God, even the life as governors for 10 cities or 5 cities only if you prove yourself trustworthy in this life. When people hear the good news of the kingdom of God, they are so excited, happy and fascinated about it that everyone is forcing his way into it.

Here, the expression, "everyone is forcing his way into it," shows how enthusiastically and wholeheartedly everyone makes all possible efforts to enter into it. Maybe, some people have a little difficulty to enter it, because they have great wealth in the world; some people may have a very promising future in the world; some people have friends and family members who want them to stay with them and live with them happily ever after. But instead of being pulled away by these things, they force themselves to go forward and enter into the kingdom of God, making all possible efforts, denying themselves and giving up everything in the world; they are really like little children responding to the good news of the kingdom of God so wholeheartedly - these people secure their dwellings in the kingdom of God very successfully. In the New Testament Period, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and all believers respond to it so enthusiastically, forcing their way into it wholeheartedly - this is the key characteristics of the Christian life in the New Testament period. So, what do they do to enter into the kingdom of God? Yes, they use all their worldly wealth, all their resources to enter and secure their eternal dwellings in the kingdom of God, pouring out everything they have for

God. No longer endless authentic looking ceremonies in the temple or in a gorgeous building, but wholehearted struggling to enter into it by using their every ounce of strength and time for God's kingdom work. "The good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it." This is how all believers, all disciples, all Christians live their lives. Don't be deceived by those people who do not force their way into it. In Jesus' eyes, believers in the New Testament period are forcing their way into it. Are you one of them? Are you forcing your way into the kingdom of God?

In verse 17, Jesus says, "It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law." We live in the New Testament Period when the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached - God's prophecies have been fulfilled and God's salvation plan is completed. We enjoy our life as real children of God loving God and serving His purpose. But even in this blessed era of the New Testament Period, still God's Laws stand firm, because they are the words of God and they show what God wants - God's will and His standard. What is Jesus talking about by this? He is talking about another stumbling block that hinders Christians, disciples from using their worldly wealth to gain friends and secure their eternal dwellings in the kingdom of God, which is, marriage matter, or relationship matter, or simply lust - one of the Laws of the Old Testament. Marriage is a big matter, and often, many Christians fail to use their worldly wealth to gain friends, because, instead of seeking their eternal dwellings in heaven, they seek their marriage dream, or seek their relationship matter. When one couple divorces, legally, they are separate individuals - not related at all. But in God's eyes, they are still one, because through marriage, they become one until death separates them. So, anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. In the life of Christians, there is no word such as "divorce," because there is no divorce in God's eyes. All believers have these two challenges - money and lust. Those who remain faithful to God by using their worldly wealth to gain friends prove their trustworthiness in their life; they receive a rich welcome in to the kingdom of God, and God will give them true riches, property of their own, and they will reign with Jesus forever.

**One Word: Prepare Your Eternal Dwellings Successfully!**