

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #211

Jesus' Ministry in Perea Jesus' Parable of the Shrewd Manager LK 16.1-13 (Repeated Text: MT 6.24)

1 Jesus told his disciples: *"There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his assets. 2 So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I am hearing about you? I command you to give me an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'*

3 *"The manager said to himself, 'What am I going to do now? My master is firing me. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm too proud to beg-- 4 I know what I'll do-- so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their homes.'*

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 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 of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'*

8 *"The master ended up commending 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 and connections 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."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Somewhere in Perea
Timeline	January or February (Months 36 & 37)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VII: Jesus' Ministry in Perea
	A. Jesus' Ministers Throughout Perea
Title	10. Jesus' Parable of the Shrewd Manager

COMMENT:

In today's reading Jesus returned to the theme of faithfulness as the criteria for effectiveness in serving him as a manager of his resources. He had addressed the importance of faithfulness several months earlier during his time

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in Judea (DJN #187). Now he added another parable regarding faithfulness to his teaching on the subject.

It is important to note at the outset that Jesus was not commending the practice of embezzlement through this parable. Jesus never agreed with committing any sin. Never. Then what did he intend to teach with this story?

Jesus went to the heart of faithfulness in his concluding observation (LK 16.13). It requires an undivided heart with an unshakable priority: the reign of God. It is impossible to serve two different masters simultaneously (God and "money") because they have different agendas that remain in conflict. A faithful servant serves God alone. Single-mindedness service is the key.

Jesus also said that faithfulness opens the door to more responsibility, and greater opportunities for service (16.10-11). The lowest level of responsibility is management of the "things" that belong to Jesus that are under our management. If we do not take care of Jesus' material things, beginning with money, for HIS purposes rather than our own, we disqualify ourselves from gaining more responsibility for spiritual things.

Jesus also noted that people who do not follow him are more shrewd in dealing with material things for their own interests than disciples of Jesus are in managing Kingdom resources for his sake (16.8).

If we believe that our possessions truly belong to us, then using them for our maximum benefit is shrewd indeed. However, if we say we believe that we are bond-slaves of King Jesus, who owns everything we possess, then a wise or shrewd disciple will do their utmost to manage his assets for his benefit, not our own.

The shrewd manager in the parable believed his stewardship was about to end. Therefore, he used his Master's assets in a way that would benefit him after his employment was terminated. Jesus was not saying that such misuse of his Master's property was commendable. His point was that people in this world are shrewd in mismanaging what actually belongs to God for their own benefit.

Disciples should be equally shrewd in managing what belongs to God for his eternal purposes, and thereby gain both greater responsibility in this life, and eternal reward in the next. This is faithfulness in service, and it should be a no-brainer. However, too many followers of Jesus are foolish, and manage his resources for their own benefit.

APPLICATION:

Is your loyalty divided between Jesus, and money, or things?

Who is receiving the benefit from your management: the kingdom of God, or yourself?

What kind of eternal fruit is the kingdom gaining through your stewardship?

What can you specifically do to be a wiser manager of Jesus' wealth? When will you do that?