

“It’s Not About The Money”

September 22, 2013

Luke 16: 1-13

¹ He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. ² And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.' ³ And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship 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 people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.' 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.' And 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 steward 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 mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations. ¹⁰ "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹ If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, 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 mammon."

“You can not serve God and Money.” Words to live by right? This passage is out of Luke and one thing to be aware of in the Gospel of Luke is Luke’s particular attention to the poor and oppressed peoples. Most scripture was written for a particular audience and Luke is no exception. Luke wrote for the gentile church so his perception of the life of Jesus takes on a particular understanding with the Gentile audience in mind. Luke’s Gospel calls us to focus on the world and how Jesus as the Christ came for the world not just for the Judaic peoples. Almost all of the stories in Luke that deal with money have a particular bent towards restoring people their due or restoring them as human even though they are in need. You see, those who have a need were viewed as less than by others. We are aware of this even today in our very different socio economic understanding. We see it in the disparity between wealthy, middle, and poor. Money still talks.

I want you to watch this clip. What you will see is just one part of a song originally performed by Jessie J and adapted for use during the movie Pitch Perfect which is where this clip originates.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mn2qfC32SRo> (Stop after about the 1st Minute)

Reciprocation is a common practice right? We live in this you scratch my back and I will scratch yours society. One of my all time favorite Christmas Movies “White Christmas” has Bing Crosby in his role as Bob Wallace, negating Betty White’s character’s, Betty Haynes, claim that there was no angle to her sister’s scheme that “everyone’s got an angle and there is no shame in that”.

We see that angle in our scripture today. The manager was dishonest and knew he was caught so he called everyone who owed his master money in to his corner office and forgave them a portion of their debt to build up their good will. This was his plan, his angle. He did this so that “when he was dismissed others might still welcome him into their homes.”

Then he is considered a shrewd manager and retains his position. It has always baffled me why this is so. Maybe it was an attempt of the Boss to keep the goodwill of all the customers since that is what the manager had gained with his dealings.

Remember what we just watched...We're paying with love tonight/It's not about the money, money, money/we just want to make the world dance/ forget about the price tag.

Forget about the price tag. Little difficult right? I know I am an avid couponer and price checker. I sit there and look at what things cost; I compare and dwell on how much they cost, will they go on sale soon, is it necessary or not, how can I get the best bang for my buck? We are in a world where the price tag influences us every single day.

Yet, this song is asking us to pay with love. It is actually asking us in a more direct way to do what the scripture is asking us to do. In the end it was not about the money that the manager owed, or the money that the manager saved the rich man by his dealings, the manager was perhaps shrewd because he built relationships, he built goodwill and he did it without money.

Money is only one form of currency. In our world today perhaps we give too much credence to it. We put too much emphasis on it and we are the ones who give it power.

While we very intentionally did not hear more of the song earlier I do want to share with you some more of its lyrics.

"Why is everybody so obsessed?/ Money can't buy us happiness/can we all slow down and enjoy right now/ Guarantee we'll be feeling alright"

It is our struggle is it not? We get so caught up in living in our world today that we forget to "stop for a minute and just smile". We do not slow down. We push ahead and so often we keep this goal of success in the back of our minds. That success often equates with a monetary success. Now while I will not deny that lack of money worries is beneficial because it does give us some measure of freedom. It is not everything.

Jesus puts it so aptly. "We can not serve God and Money." We have to consider. Actually it is more that considering we have to serve God first. While everyone might very well have an angle that angle does not always have to be for personal gain like in the case of the Shrewd Manager. That angle might just be for God. It might just be when we pay with love we pay out of God's love and forget about any and all price tags attached. Amen.