

Luke 16:1-9. 9/21/25

Many argue that the Christian Church has a unique cause of saving souls and to do its work should confine itself to only Christian resources. It should rely on the Bible and the experiences of churches in doing its work, but should not turn to the secular world for help. Do you agree? Should a church, for example, not use marketing skills from a business in getting its name in front of the community? Or can it?

If you think this topic is out of place for a sermon, give attention again to the words of our Lord in Luke 16. He teaches us an important lesson on making friends for eternity from a man who used shrewd business tactics to provide for himself friends. From the story of this man Jesus gives this valuable lesson to us: **“Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”**

A rich man had a business and hired a manager to run it, but the manager was wasting his resources. The owner told the manager he was getting the axe. Immediately the manager recognized his situation and knew he was in big trouble. “I might have to dig ditches...ouch! Or beg...no!” He came up with a plan so that when he lost his job “people would welcome him into their houses;” he’d be alright.

He called in two men who owed the business and reduced the debt. One man owed 900 hundreds gallons of olive oil and the manager reduced his debt in half to 450 gallons. Another man owed 1000 bushels of wheat to the boss. The manager dropped the amount to 800 bushels. The owner observed all this and he commended the manager because he had acted cleverly. He cut deals with debtors and in the process turned them into his friends; they liked the manager for giving them sweet deals; they were now his friends and would take care of him when he lost his job. Pretty smart, thought the owner.

Jesus then said to his disciples, “For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.” A general observation, that people focused on things of this world are very wise in handling money and people for their good.

In 2017 I bought a car from a Hyundai dealership. Every year since they send me a Happy Birthday card! Two years ago I took the car to the service shop for some repairs. The service agent drove me home so I didn’t have to call Uber. I like them. They’ve made me a loyal customer. I went to McDonalds, got a coffee and shake, then downloaded their app; they continually send me notices of great deals! And I keep going back! The people involved in secular pursuits – selling cars or fries – are wise at developing relationships.

Jesus drew a comparison between people of this world and people of the light. Who are they? Believers in the Lord.

Ephesians 5:8 says of us, “You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” We were darkness. Our lives were marked by shameful desires, hatred as bad as the devil’s, a know-it-all attitude; oh, the darkness of sin ruled us. So did the darkness of guilt; it hovered over us like a storm cloud, made us fear the coming wrath of God; we were going to die and face a darkness so thick every moment would be pure hell. That is where we were. Every day our sinful nature shows its dark side and takes us back there.

But light shines on us, the light of Jesus Christ the Son of God! Our sins were laid on him; he carried them to the cross. There the suffering we deserved he faced for us and all sinners. We cannot imagine the horror of it for him. He did it for you and me! On the third day he rose from the dead, shining on this world, “Your sins have been dealt with. Paid for, forgiven, all of them!” In baptism the risen Christ shined into your heart the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit to believe it. Light shines into every moment of your life. On every moment of your past, present, and future shines Jesus with his cross of forgiveness and love. Your grave will not be dark but light; your body will be surrounded by the promise of Jesus, “You will rise to live with me!”

You are people of the light! This affects how you live. Your goal is to remain in Christ through the Word. Your goal is also to bring the Word to those still in spiritual darkness so they turn to light and receive forgiveness of sins and are eternally saved.

Back to what Jesus said earlier: “People of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are people of the light.” The manager about to lose his job was very resourceful in handling money matters for his good. He reduced the debt of two men and in this way made them his friends who welcomed him into their homes. Jesus followed with this statement to the disciples: **“I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”**

The Lord beautifully shapes our attitude toward wealth. It is a gift of our heavenly Father to use for the highest good; for our eternity and that of others. He says, “Be resourceful and wise in handling earthly wealth to make friends for me.” Our wealth will one day be gone. Naked we came into the world and naked we leave. Jesus tells us to use it now to gain friends, “so that when it is gone you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” Believers will not die homeless. Christ promises to open the door to the Father’s house in heaven to you.

No work of ours, no charity of ours obtains eternal dwellings. That is ours only through faith in Jesus Christ. At the same time Jesus in our Scripture highlights a fruit of faith: using wealth to bless the lives of others. Numerous Scriptures bring this out. When the Lord brought salvation to a tax collector named Zacchaeus, the convert responded, “Half of my

wealth I give to the poor.” Earlier we heard I Timothy 6:18, “Be generous and willing to share.” A strong trait of believers is that we use wealth to bless people.

A wall plaque reads, “Only one life, will soon be passed. Only what’s done for Christ will last. For me to live is Christ.” That’s what this text is about. Live for Christ. On the last day the Lord will say, “You fed the hungry and clothed the naked. You did it for me.” What’s done for Christ will last.

Of the church in Jerusalem, Acts 2:44 says, “All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. They continued to meet in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.” The first Christians used their wealth to take care of each other. Neighbors reacted favorably. “You treat each other well. You welcome each other into your homes!” Deep are the bonds we make with our church family, right? We are friends forever in Christ.

What happens when you give a portion of your wealth to the Church’s work of proclaiming Christ? I have here a picture of one of the missions of our church body, Branch Lutheran Schools in Haiti. Here are children sitting at wooden school desks, learning how to read and write, and of Jesus Christ. Many are orphans – gang violence and earthquakes have devastated the country; many have no parent. Yet they smile because the Word you’ve brought to them has poured into their hearts the Father’s love. They are your friends in Christ; with a big smile they will greet you one day. Your wealth can do more than buy a dozen eggs, pay for tv streaming, or the rent. It can do this!

“Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” Amen.