

We don't often spend 2 weeks on the one passage... But I am convinced, that this time, it's crucial for us to do 'the double-up'. (and I'll tell you why)

The teaching Jesus gives, on the specific application of the parable of the dishonest servant, is so dominant, and so clear, that, if that is where we had of begun, we would have missed the significance of the spiritual principal **behind** the application.

And so last week, we sorta 'held off' from getting into the specific application, to give us a chance to grasp the spiritual insight that Jesus is giving. BTW, if you haven't yet listened to last week's message, I really encourage you to do so, because the insight that Jesus gives us, is crucial for Kingdom-living, in every area of our lives.

So, I'm **not** going to explain it (a 2nd time), but I will begin by **stating** what the spiritual principle is.

The Kingdom of God has come. Things are different now. Disciples of Jesus no longer try to please God, by keeping a whole heap of rules and regulations. But that does not mean that the Law has passed away. How could it?

The written Law of the Old Testament codified (wrote down/tried to spell out) the nature of God (It attempted to express His: Justice; Love; Mercy). And if that's what The Law did, how could the ministry of Jesus possibly have taken that away???

The Kingdom has come.

From now on, Disciples of Jesus, (the citizens of the Kingdom of God), are a people who take on the very nature of God. The Holy Spirit (living within), transforms; renews; purifies; sanctifies; makes holy/righteous... He changes us, so that the character of God, becomes our character.

Do you know what I'm talking about? Paul referred to this miracle of transformation, as "The fruit of the Spirit". (Love; Joy; Peace; Patience; Kindness; Goodness; Faithfulness; Gentleness; Self-control)

You know: Sometimes I find myself shaking my head. A common teaching in churches at the moment, is "How to be the best version of you/yourself"... What a load of rot... That ain't the Gospel... The Gospel, is about the putting to death of "self", and coming alive in Christ. I can never teach you, how to be the best version of yourself, because "self" has no place in the Kingdom of God.

It is **not** the Kingdom of Self – it's the Kingdom of **God**.

The Lord comes alive in a church, when the people of God, put to death "self", and allow the Lord to reign in their them.... First,, and foremost,, God, No.1.

Righto, so that's the insight... The Kingdom of God has come. The new thing, is 'Kingdom Living'..

Last week, I mentioned how we preachers find it tempting to stay away from the tough stuff in Scripture, because when people squirm in their seats this week, they may not front-up for another dose next week.... And when I asked the question, nobody put up their hand last week, to admit that they are happy for the preacher to make them squirm in their seats...

Now the thing is, out of all of the topics, that will make a person “squirm”, in this passage, Jesus nailed 2 of the most squirmysome (is that a word? My spell checker said it wasn't. But let's coin a new word “squirmysome”).

Last week, we talked about marriage and divorce. But the main “specific lesson” that Jesus is bringing out in this parable, is about “money”. Now, that's something, that's certain to make us squirm.

I heard a preacher say once, “The last part of some to be saved, is their hip-pocket”. Why is that? I reckon it's because “What I do with money”, is a litmus test of what I truly believe. And it reveals what my focus is...

Am I focused:

- on **this** life; or on eternity?
- on present comfort and security; or on glory to come?

Now, as I said last week, the dishonest manager wasn't commended for his dishonesty. He was commended for noticing a change was coming, and preparing **for** that change.

And Jesus said: ⁹ **And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.**

So, to make sense of this, let's begin by identifying a few spiritual truths that Jesus reveals:

1.
Firstly, who's money is it anyway?

BTW, whenever I use the word "money", think: "money; possessions; assets; investments; superannuation nest-eggs; stuff).

Who's money is it?

In the Parable of the dishonest manager, it **wasn't** his own money he was playing with – it was his Master's money.

And V12 clarifies this: ¹² **... if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?**

*What I have, does not belong to me. Who does it belong to?
"Robyn", right. It doesn't belong to Robyn. Who does it*

belong to? When I became a Christian, everything I am, I surrendered to God – That’s what “Total Submission” is.

I hand over:

- my self. I am not my own. I am His;
- my future. My fate is His;
- family. They are in **His** hands;
- will... “Not my will, but Your will be done”; and
- money; things; investments; stuff...

They do not belong to me. In fact, they never did...

Everything you own, you do **not** own. It belongs to God.

We are stewards/managers. What God has given to us, is not for ourselves – it is for us to manage, on His behalf...

*I’m currently on the executive of the Pistol Club, and so I am a signatory to the bank account. I am able to withdraw money, and transfer money. But I **cannot** spend it on myself. Why not? Because I am managing what is not mine. It belongs to the club. And so, I manage those funds, for the purposes of the Club.*

BTW I don’t want to get that wrong, because the Club is a bunch of (mainly) blokes, who are well armed, and shoot straight...

But, do you get what I’m talking about here?

....

We don't take up an offering here, but there is a box on the smoko table (in case you haven't noticed)... Most people give by direct debit ... But when we give (by making an offering) (no matter what method we use to do it), it is not a case of me magnanimously giving to God, from what is mine (*and BTW, God should be thankful for my contribution*)... It belongs to God in the first-place....

When we give in the offering, it is a recognition, that everything I have, belongs to God, and this ministry, is something that God is using to build His Kingdom, and so I don't even have to think about it... It already is God's money, and we become the conduit to direct what is already His, to be used for the building of His Kingdom.

So, that's the first spiritual truth. It already belongs to God.

2.

Jesus draws the distinction between “unrighteous wealth” and “true riches”...

BTW, it's not a case of “laundering money for the Mob” Vs “an honest day's wage” – it's much broader than that. In this context, “unrighteous wealth” is “worldly stuff”.

How much money is going to be in Heaven? Not a skerrick.

The only things that will endure, are those things that are “righteous”, which isn't much. In 2 Peter, we're given an image of how even the heavenly bodies (sun; moon; stars) will be burned up.

Which brings us to the 3rd point.

3.

Money fails.

This made me think about Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe dollar became a laughing-stock for the rest of the world.

At the moment, I think the US dollar is their main currency, and that's because of the collapse of the Zimbabwe \$. 3 or 4 times they re-valued it and resurrected it. At one stage, Z\$300Trillion =1\$US). They had \$100 000 000 bank notes. It's crazy...

Money fails.

But ultimately, even the best managed currencies, and even precious metals (safe-haven) like gold and silver, will be utterly worthless. They will cease to exist.

Money fails. “You cannot take it with you when you die” – And you know that's true... Some folk want to “live on” by having a foundation named after them, or by passing their money on to their children, so they can carry on the family legacy... But you know what? That's just delaying the inevitable.

But when one has a Kingdom of God perspective, it causes us to look, not just beyond this life, and not just beyond the grave,,, ... We recognise that every physical thing on this earth, will be vapourised... Every physical thing, is temporary... That's what Jesus meant when He said, “Money fails”.

4.

We are all slaves to something.

Jesus said:

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 money."

So, we're all slaves to something. What are you a slave to? Some of us are subject to God; Some of us are subject to money...

It's strange isn't it, one of the catch-phrases of the wealth-generation industry, is for you *to have financial freedom*... And people run after this "financial freedom", completely oblivious to the fact, that in doing so, they are enslaving themselves.

And I would have to say, that most people who **are** enslaved by money, are completely naïve to their enslavement.

- Some who have wealth, are consumed by managing what they have.
- Some who **don't** have wealth, are consumed by trying to get it.
- Some who **do** have wealth, become the personal body-guard of their wealth. And they are enslaved by trying to protect it.

- Some who **don't** have wealth, are enslaved by envy – craving what the other person has.
- Some who do have wealth, might believe their wealth is serving them, as they
 - enjoy their extended holidays;
 - play with their expensive toys;
 - pursue their pastimes:
 - consuming experiences; and
 - treating themselves to things that most others cannot afford

But their wealth is **not** serving them – it is enslaving them with worldly pleasure.

- While some who do **not** have wealth are enslaved by their lack of faith, that says “I can't afford to serve God in the way that He's calling me”.

But you know what: When I realise, “that any money I think I have, or any money I **aspire** to have: – When I realise that:

- it's not mine; and
- it belongs to God; and
- I manage it for Him.”

That's when I am set free from enslavement to money.

And so:

- I **don't** strive to accumulate it; and
- If God blesses me with money, I **don't** strive to protect it and hold on to it. It is **His**, and it is for His purposes.
- And I don't envy it. If I don't have wealth, that's OK, because God has given me gifts greater than money – gifts to use for the building of His Kingdom.

- And I certainly don't let the trappings of wealth, divert my time; or my attention from serving the One who owns it.; and
- I don't ever allow the **lack** of money, prevent me from serving the Lord.

5.

We are to be **faithful** in managing what belongs to The Father.

Jesus said:

¹⁰ "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

When we understand that "What I have, is not mine, and that it belongs to the Father", that has enormous implications for how I therefore manage money. If I am rich, it is **not** so that I can spend it on myself and on my own pleasure. It is so that I can spend it (bountifully) for The Father, and for The Father's pleasure.

Many of you will have heard the saying "Blessed to be a blessing"... That principle is **very true**. The problem is, most people who say that about themselves, pour most of the blessing out on themselves.

Let me tell you,

- "If those who are rich,

- were to live by the same standard of living as their average Joe-Blow Brother or Sister in Christ; and
- if they were to deploy what would otherwise be spent on their own pleasures, for the purposes of our Heavenly Father,

The Christian church would never have to run a fundraiser ever again;

- And if we were to serve our Lord, rather than serving money, the Gospel workforce would never be short of manpower;
- And if we were to be faithful, with this little thing we call “money”, The Father will bless us with “true riches”, which are out of this world. The riches of the Kingdom of God, never fade away.

You see, “dishonest spending” isn’t only things like:

- Gambling; or
- Using the proceeds of Crime; or
- Pornography...

“Dishonest spending” is spending what belongs to the Father, on projects that are not His.

6.

One’s attitude toward money, is a matter of the heart.

The Pharisees, ... were lovers of money. And they ridiculed Jesus for what He taught about money. And Jesus

said, “You lot, **justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.**

Now, I’m going to be really blunt:

The message being proclaimed today, by some of the biggest; most popular; and fastest growing churches, is an **abomination** in the sight of God.

- It is being preached by many;
- It is being proclaimed by some of the best-known, high-profile church leaders.
- It is a Gospel designed to appeal to Lovers of money;
- It is used to justify:
 - Greed;
 - Selfishness;
 - enslavement, to the service of money. ; And

- It is an attempt to spiritualise fleshly desires

It’s what’s known as “the prosperity gospel” – that message that says:

- God wants to make you rich;
- You want a new car? Pray, and believe, and it will be yours;
- God wants to make you prosper.
Put some money into the offering today, and God will give you back 10 times that much in return;

- Claim it! Claim it in the Name of Jesus, and it will be yours;

They will tell you about the power of words:

- Speak positive, and positive things will happen;
- Speak blessings, and God will bless you beyond your wildest dreams;

The Word-Faith movement will say “Speak it; have faith; and it is yours”

And because this message has become so popular, it no longer dwells on the fringes of Christianity, where heresies persist – It’s now becoming more and more “main-stream”...

It is an abomination. It’s just as well Jesus rose from the grave, otherwise He’d turn in it.

Wealth, is a craving of the flesh. The seeking and craving of money and things, is normal for this world. It is **exalted among men**... And that is why the prosperity Gospel has been so readily accepted... But it is an abomination to God.

7.
The Law is fulfilled. It is not void.

When it comes to money, the Law and the Prophets have a lot to say about what we do with it.

In regard to the service of the Temple and the support of the ministry team, It began with the tithe – a giving of 1/10th of gross production.

When it came to generosity, it commanded God's people to provide for the widow and the orphan; the poor and the alien... It's all there in the Law of God (expressing the justice/love/mercy of God).

And let me tell you, “Kingdom Living” (or should I say “Kingdom Giving”), is far, far greater than the Law... Because remember, as Disciples of Jesus, the very character of God, becomes our character, and therefore the generosity of God, becomes our generosity.

The Law: It set a boundary. Not the upper boundary of generosity – the **lower** boundary.

Which brings us to the final point (which is where we began):

8.
Managing the funds that belong to God.

The elders of Bush Disciples, have been entrusted with managing the funds of this church. Now, how would you feel, if Michael, Jake and Bruce, made their report to our next Congregational Meeting (Oct),,, And you noticed in our report, that BD funds had been used to send the Elders and their families to a luxury resort for a week?

You wouldn't be happy, would you? Why? Because it's not our money. The money is supposed to be spent for the purposes of BD.

Who's money are you managing? Is God going to be happy with how you manage it?

How would the Lord have us use His money?

- Yes, to provide for our daily needs;
- Yes, to provide for food; shelter; health needs...
- Yes, probably even to buy a car (but probably not a Ferrari)

But what if I can afford a Ferrari? You can't afford a Ferrari – it's God's money... No Christian can afford a Ferrari.

How else would the Lord have us spend his money?

Jesus said: ⁹ **And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.**

He's talking about funding:

- the preaching of the Gospel;
- evangelism;
- ministry and mission;

Supporting:

- the work of missionaries;
- the local church and its ministry and mission

- those who give up their livelihood, to go out and proclaim the Gospel.

You see, not every person, is gifted as an evangelist/pastor/missionary/teacher... But that doesn't mean that the rest of us have no part in proclaiming the Gospel. And it doesn't mean that there is "no reward" for those who are not gifted in those areas.

make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

"Unrighteous wealth" is just "money". It's a worldly thing. It will pass away. And what Jesus is saying, is: "Use it now", to make friends who will welcome you into eternity.

Many of your friends, you probably won't even meet them, this side of eternity...

But when you die (or when Jesus returns), you'll be met at that gate, by friends. And they'll say: "Thankyou".

- Over the years, you provided tens of thousands of dollars to support that missionary in a land that you never visited. But that missionary came to my village, and introduced me to Jesus... I am saved because of him. I am saved, because you used God's money for His purposes.

- Another will say: Thankyou.
You bought a steer and donated it to chaplaincy. And that chaplain was the face of Jesus to me. He loved me when nobody else did. And a few years later, I became a Christian... Welcome to your eternal dwelling;
- And another says: Thankyou.
You tithed regularly to the local church, and that funded ministry in the town.

And when there was a special need, you sold investments, to free up money, to deploy hundreds of thousands of dollars, to meet a ministry need... And you didn't know at the time, but that led to me hearing the Gospel, and I was saved.

What a blessing...

Money; possessions; assets; investments; nest-eggs; luxuries... It's all only temporary; and they are **not** on the list, of our Heavenly Father's key priorities.

I am convinced, that if the Christian church (and that's not an organisation BTW – that's you and me) – if the Disciples of Jesus began to manage what belongs to God, in accordance with His purposes:

- The church would never have to hold a fund-raiser ever again.

We would never have to call a church meeting to say, “How are we going to pay our bills?” The topic at the church meeting, will be, “What mission needs can we support this year?”

Now, I’ve been talking about this on a personal level, but given that we’ve been praying about whether we buy or build a church; and how we go about that, and how we fund it, I want us to consider this:

Is spending money on a building, in line with the purposes of God?

Well that depends on what our motivation is, and I was so pleased to see this come out in our meeting a few weeks ago, when we discussed this.

If our motivation is:

- “So we don’t freeze on a cold winter’s day in the school hall”, that would not be money well spent; or
- To have more comfy seats; or
- To save the work of setting up and packing up each week; or
- To build a beautiful building to leave a legacy, so we will be remembered

Not the purposes of God.

But if our motivation is a facility:

- To enable the elderly and infirmed, to fellowship;

- To have a known location and presence, so that an unbeliever is more likely to find us and to hear the Gospel;
- To open up ministry opportunities we don't currently have:
 - kids clubs;
 - youth groups;
 - other ministries

All, so that the Gospel has every chance to be proclaimed; and heard; and understood

Well, that absolutely fits the purpose of God.

I had a thought-bubble this week:

Robyn and I received our electricity bill. In it, was a bribe. The Qld Government are dishing-out, to every household \$1000 credit on their electricity bill. Essentially, it is a bribe to get us to vote for them, later this year. (The State cannot afford it BTW).

If ever there is an example of “unrighteous money”, that’s a good one. And it occurred to me, what a difference it would make to the Christian church in QLD, if every Christian, passed on their \$1000 credit to their local church, to be used for Kingdom purposes...

And then I thought a bit further. What if an appeal could be made... What if we could get the word out through our contacts? What if 400 Queenslanders agreed that building a church (as a place of worship/outreach) in a rural town in QLD, was a Godly use for unrighteous money???

We wouldn't even have to be distracted from ministry by asking for donations.

But then again, there are Christians, who manage significant funds for our Lord and who are well able, to deploy God's money (that they manage), and fund the whole thing... Food for thought...

I told you, the topic today might make us squirm...

But I'm actually hoping, that you're not squirming. My prayer, is that our shifting in our seats isn't a reaction to "Oh no, I have to do what I don't want to do"... Because that would be a sign of "living by the Law"... That's the old way of doing things.

Something new is here: The Kingdom has come.

Living by the spirit, isn't a squirm of discomfort – it's a squirm of anticipation: "What can I do for God? I'm excited to manage **His** funds for **His** purposes."

And I pray, that's the excitement we have.