

=THE PARABLES=

Lesson 11

Mistakes of the Unjust Steward

Objects to have:

A picture of a loveable dog  
A picture of a bicycle  
A facsimile of an invoice or a bill  
Your Bible.

Introducing the lesson:

The Master Storyteller was telling another story. The Master Storyteller is Jesus. When Jesus told stories, He was teaching lessons. So, what were the stories called that Jesus told? Yes—parables.

Jesus, being the Son of God, was, of course, wiser than anybody else on earth. Wisdom comes from God. So, Jesus knew all about life and knows all about life. Anybody who listened to Him and anybody who listens to His Word now gets wisdom. Jesus' best friends were gathered around Him to hear what He had to say. Let's hear what Jesus had to say. Let's listen to another parable.

Telling the story:

Jesus said, "There was a certain rich man...." A rich man has a lot to do. A rich man could own a lot of land. A rich man must decide what he wants to do with this land. He could have a lot of houses built on the land—that would mean that he has to work with lots of men who build houses. The rich man could not build all the houses all by himself. He could not dig the holes that would be the foundations for the houses. He could not pour the concrete that needs to go into those holes all by himself. He could not pound all the boards together that would make the framework of the houses. He could not lay all the brick or all the stone or pound together all the boards that it would take to make the outside walls of the houses. He could not put up the roofs of the houses all by himself. Don't you see, a rich man who would decide to build a lot of houses on his land would have to have a lot of people working for him. He could not be the one boss over all those people, either. He would have to have a lot of people to be bosses over the other people to see to it that everything is done just right and that everybody knows what to do.

The rich man, on all the land that he owns, could decide to have some cows. He would have to have help buying the cows, bringing the cows to the land, getting the feed for the cows, and taking them back to market to sell them so that people would have meat to eat. That's a big job for one man. He would have to hire people to help him do the job.

The rich man could say to somebody, "Will you be in charge of all those people who work for me? When someone sells something for me, would you please collect the money? Would you take it to the bank, and would you write it all down? When they need something while they are doing the job, would you give them the money that they need, and write that down? Please keep track of how much money I have and of how much I need to spend. See to it that none of my money is wasted or lost."

The man who was put in charge of everything for the rich man was very happy to have this job. It was an important job, and he liked doing it. He was called the steward. The rich man trusted the steward—he trusted him to do a good job, to work hard, and not to waste anything. He trusted him not to let anything get broken, or if it was broken, to get it fixed. The rich man trusted his steward to take care of his things.

Jesus went on telling this story about the rich man and the man who was called the steward. Jesus told how someone went to the rich man and told the rich man what he needed to know. That someone said, “Mr. Rich Man, do you know that your steward is not doing right? He is wasting some of your things. He is letting a lot of the olives fall from the olive trees and is not instructing someone to get those olives and to make olive oil out of them. The olive oil could be sold for a lot of money, but the olives are rotting into the ground. Some of the olives could be sold for people to eat, but they are not being picked from the trees and taken to the market to be sold. He is not watching over the workers in the wheat fields. He is letting them be sloppy and lazy, because he is lazy. He does not go out every day when it is harvest time, and he is not making sure that the workers get all the wheat out of the field. There is a lot of wheat left behind, so your animals do not have enough to eat. There is not enough wheat to make bread and cereal, and there is not enough to sell to get more money for you. I thought I needed to tell you that your steward is not doing right—he is wasting your goods.”

The rich man was very grateful for this report. He had trusted his steward and had thought that the steward was doing a good job for him. So he decided to have a talk with the steward.

Someone came and told the steward, “The rich man wants you to come to see him.” I imagine the steward did not like to hear that message. He knew he was not doing a good job. He knew that he was losing money for his boss. He knew that he was wasting things, but he thought he could get by with it. His life was easier not having to work as hard as he should. He had a guilty conscience, and he did not exactly want to go see his boss, but he must obey.

When the steward came to the rich man’s office, the rich man probably said, “Sit down. We need to have a talk.” The steward sat down, no doubt afraid of what was going to be said next.

The rich man asked, “What is this that I am hearing about you? I hear that you are wasting the olives in the olive orchard. I hear that you are wasting the wheat in the wheat field. I hear that you are not taking good care of my animals. I hear that you are not getting money for me. You are not taking good care of my goods. Tell me what you have been doing.”

The steward sat there thinking to himself, “Oh, what am I going to do? I think my boss is telling me that I cannot have my job any longer. I don’t want to go out and get another job.” See, he was lazy. “What am I going to do without having this job? I don’t want to go out and beg money from people; I’m too ashamed to do that.”

The rich man was still talking while the steward was thinking. The rich man was saying, “And, besides, you have sold some things and you have not made the people pay.” (Hold up the invoice or the bill.) “See this? This says that a man owes me some olive oil. What have you done to get him to pay it? See this bill? This says that another man owes me some wheat. What have you done about collecting that wheat for me?”

The rich man said to the steward, “You may not work for me any longer. You are fired from your job.”

The steward left the rich man’s office. He decided that he could do something about getting some money for the man who had been his boss. He went to the man who owed the olive oil and he said, “How much do you owe the man who was my boss?”

The man told him, and the steward said, “Give him at least half of what you owe him.” The man who owed the oil gave half.

The steward went to the man who owed wheat. “How much do you owe?” That man told him how much he owed. The steward said to him, “Give the man who was my boss more than half of what you owe him. Will you do that?” And that man paid up more than half of what he owed.

Well, the rich man was glad to get what he did get. If the steward had done right in the first place, there would have been nothing wasted and nothing lost. If the steward had done right in the first place, he would not now be sad and the rich man would not be unhappy with him, either. Both were sad when both could have been happy.

Jesus said, “And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?”

Let’s pretend that we know a boy named Billy. The neighbors who live next door to Billy had the nicest dog! (Hold up the picture of the dog.) One day the man who lived next door came over to Billy’s house, and he had the dog on a leash with him. “Billy, is your daddy at home?”

Billy said, “He’s in the house. I’ll go call him.” Billy went to get his daddy from the kitchen. His daddy came to the door.

The man who lived next door asked, “May we leave our dog with you for the next two weeks? We are going on vacation, and we cannot take our dog with us. Do you suppose that Billy could look after our dog while we are gone?”

Billy’s daddy looked at Billy and he asked, “Well, Billy, what do you say? Do you think you could take care of Taffy for two weeks?”

“Oh, yes, Daddy, I really would like to do that. I could feed him, and I could take him for walks, and I could watch him to be sure he doesn’t get hurt.”

And so it was agreed that Billy would take care of their neighbor’s doggy for two weeks. It was really fun for the first couple of days. He knew exactly when he was supposed to eat, and he knew how much to feed him. He knew how to fill the bowl with water. He loved to take him for walks.

After a couple more days passed by, Taffy was acting kind of lazy. In fact, he acted like he was not feeling really well. Mother said to Billy, “Look at Taffy. Do you think something is wrong with him?”

Billy knew right away what was wrong with him. He said, “I forgot to feed Taffy, and his bowl of water is not fresh. I’m sorry. I’ll do better.” Billy knew he hadn’t been a very good steward of something that belonged to somebody else, and he was sorry and determined to do better. And he did do better.

“Hey, Tim, could I ride your bike?” asked Sam.

“If you won’t ride it off the high curbs and if you’ll ride it just down to the corner and come back again.”

Sam was happy to get to ride Tim’s bike. Sam didn’t own one of his own. Maybe someday his parents would have enough money to buy one, but not right now. He decided he would take good care of Tim’s bike. He would do just as Tim told him to do with his bike. And, he would turn around when he got to the corner and not ride it any further than what Tim said he should. He was being a good steward of something that did not belong to him.

Sam’s father and mother were looking out the window as he rode Tim’s bike. “Mom,” said Sam’s daddy, “see how well Sam is handling Tim’s bike. I believe we could buy Sam a bike pretty soon, and I would be glad to do it, too, because he would take good care of it. I can see that he would not tear it up.” It wasn’t long until Sam got his own bike. He promised he would take good care of it, and he did.

What do you have to take care of that God has given you? You have a good, healthy body. Always be sure that you treat it right, that you eat right, that you go to sleep when you are supposed to, that you exercise, that you never smoke cigarettes or take dope or drink liquor. Be a good steward of the body that God has given you. God has given you something else—He has given you time. Each day that you get up in the morning is a day that God has given you. If there is work to do, don’t be lazy. If you don’t know what to do, learn how to make your bed, pick up your clothes, help set the table, watch Baby for Mother, and any other thing you could do to be a good steward of the time that God has given you. There are those who need to know about Jesus. Be a good steward of the Gospel. Don’t be like the unjust steward that Jesus told about—be a good steward.