

The Divine Evaluation Of Life.

Text: Luke 16:10-17

Suggested Hymns:

489, 488, 486, 290, 492

- 1) Is Made On The Basis Of Faithful Stewardship
- 2) Is Continued By Christ On The Basis Of Allegiance
- 3) Is According To The Immutable Standard Of The Eternal Word

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 16:10-17, ¹⁰ *“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.* ¹¹ *“Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? ¹² “And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own? ¹³ “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”*

¹⁴ *Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. ¹⁵ And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. ¹⁶ “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. ¹⁷ “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The conscience, that divinely implanted faculty of judging, becomes particularly active at times of transition from something old to something new. It brings all things under its careful scrutiny for a thorough examination, for it must judge. We hear its voice, and we accept its evaluation, whether it be true or false. Our happiness, even our health, depends upon its decisions.

In its operation and function it becomes a representative of God, imperfect though it may be, and thus reminds us of the great and perfect judgment of Jesus Christ who shall come *“to judge the living and the dead.”*

Our conscience is particularly active at a time like this, the closing days of another church year, and rightly so. Our thoughts are turned towards the end of all things, when the final Judgment of God will take place.

In these closing days of a year of grace we have, then, an appropriate occasion to ponder that great reckoning in which all things will come under the just and impartial appraisal of the all-knowing Judge. Our Saviour tells us of that event, pointing out that the lives of all will be opened as a book, and sentence will be passed. His voice will be heard, *“inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”*¹

Therefore as we meditate on the Last Day and its reckoning, we begin to feel a certain uneasiness within. Questions arise to disturb us. We ask, *“Am I worthy to stand before the throne of the Lord? Will I be among those to whom Jesus will say, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”*

It is good that the Church has chosen these last Sundays of the Church Year for the consideration of these important issues of our eternal destiny. To help us be prepared and ready, our Lord has given us excellent instruction. Our text contains some directions which help us evaluate our lives and helps us in preparing ourselves for the end of the world and the final Judgment. Let us look at the divine evaluation of Life. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. God’s Evaluation Of Life Is Made On The Basis Of Faithful Stewardship

Our Lord had given instructions in the words just preceding this text concerning the stewardship of life. He had pointed out that all people are stewards of the gifts that God has given to them and that all people must answer for them in a final accounting. Jesus had pointed out the shrewdness of the unjust steward, who, although he was unjust, was wise in his concern for himself. It is then that He presents the true evaluation of life and tells of the proper attitude towards the gifts and talents of life.

The Lord states a universal fundamental principle, which is true in all human relations and activities and is an important factor in the proper evaluation of the stewardship of life. ***“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much,”*** says the Lord.

This means that faithfulness is required in the use of all that God has given us. Faithfulness is clearly not a matter of degree, but of principle. It applies not only to some categories of life, but to all. Some people may feel that it is necessary to be honest and just in matters of great value and importance, but in little things it is not of such a great consequence. Thus people often have a double standard of faithfulness.

God requires a total honesty in the use of His gifts. All things that we have are the Lord’s, and whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God. Hence faithfulness applies not only to the use of certain things, but to the use of all things. The person who is neglectful of temporal gifts will be neglectful of spiritual. He who is selfish and unfaithful in the stewardship of money, time, and talents cannot be classified as a faithful child of God and a true steward of the great spiritual mysteries of God.

The unfaithfulness in the use of the lesser temporal things implies unfaithfulness also in the greater spiritual riches of God. Christ puts it this way. ***“He who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.”*** Our Lord thus argues “from the lesser to the greater.” Then He asks another question, ***“Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”*** That is, the spiritual.

The Lord now changes the argument by shifting the emphasis. He stresses faithfulness and unfaithfulness in the use of the property of another person as an indication of our use of and reaction to that which is our own. He says, ***“And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?”***

Here our Lord gives indication again that everything which we have is given to us by God. It is the property of another, namely God’s, which has been entrusted to our rightful use and care. God’s will concerning all this entrusted wealth demands faithfulness of use.

It is foreign property which is ours only for a time, during which time we are responsible for a faithful discharge and use of what is loaned to us by God. God's ownership of everything that we have is here clearly implied and taken for granted. This fact is so often overlooked. Many people do not live as God would have them live, as faithful stewards, but squander and misuse God's gifts and entrusted blessings, becoming unjust in the use of the property which God has entrusted to them. In fact, they are dishonourable enough to misuse that which belongs to another person.

The deductions of the Lord are right that he who is dishonest with another man's wealth, he who thus disregards the wishes of the owner who has made him a steward, can hardly be considered fit to receive wealth of his own.

A squanderer of another person's possessions is certainly unfit to receive any of his own. If he is dishonest and wasteful with that which belongs to his master, what will he do with that which he claims as his property? Unfaithfulness in that which God has given, the Lord Jesus points out, indicates unfaithfulness in everything.

This evaluation is an important factor in receiving the true riches of God. The Lord makes a very simple deduction from the above principle. It is stated like this, *who will give you what is your own?* Our faithfulness or unfaithfulness will be an important factor in our eternal happiness and abiding riches. How can God give us *"that which is our own"* if we can't even properly use that which is loaned us by God?

Unfaithfulness in the stewardship of life indicates surrender of all that which God has prepared for us. In Christ Jesus we are offered a great wealth. We have become heirs of the inheritance of life. There is reserved for us a place in the Father's house of many mansions. Christ has purchased our place in the kingdom of heaven. His blood is the ransom of our soul. We have been bought with a great price.

Our wealth is not that of gold or silver, but it is life and joy at the right hand of God forevermore. It is a sharing in the victory of Christ, who said, *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne."*² What a precious heritage and possession! It is this which we stand to lose by unfaithfulness in the stewardship of life.

Is our salvation, then, dependent on our works? Not at all. As in the story of the Last Judgment, our works, our stewardship, are merely indications of our faith and love for Jesus, who said, ***“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.”***³ Unfaithfulness or faithfulness, then, become, like the little deeds of kindness in the story of the last Judgment, the evidences of our faith or lack of faith. They are the fruits by which we are recognised as good or bad trees. They are merely the external recognition of internal conditions.

How important it is that we recognise this divine evaluation of life on the basis of a faithful stewardship! And how much more important that we be found faithful stewards so that the true eternal riches procured for us by Christ are not lost to us!

2. The Evaluation Of Life Is Continued By Christ On The Basis Of Allegiance

Having stated the importance of faithfulness in our stewardship, our Lord then hits the very heart of this consideration and touches on that which not only determines faithfulness and unfaithfulness, but decides the eternal destiny of all people. It is the climax of this text, which clearly divides all men, and the lives of all men, into two categories.

Firstly, there can be no divided allegiance. The Lord presents another obvious fundamental principal as an argument. ***“No servant can serve two masters”*** The term for “servant” in the original means ‘a house servant.’ No one listening would for a moment question the truth of such a self-evident statement. It is a physical impossibility to be a house servant to two different masters.

One or the other master will receive all the attention. Such a servant will find that he must ***“be loyal to the one and despise the other.”*** He will have to neglect one, for he cannot be fully and completely active in two separate households. It follows, then, without question that a servant who seeks to serve two masters will choose between them and ***will hate the one and love the other.***

The impossibility of serving two different and opposing masters will force a decision for one or the other. No one could for a moment question the obvious deduction of our Lord. However, that the applications and implications of this principle might be fully understood, Jesus summarises it like this, ***You cannot***

serve God and mammon. From the preceding we clearly recognise that these two represent opposites, the one the lesser and the other the greater possession and master.

By “*mammon*” is meant this world’s goods and possessions, the gifts bestowed on us in this world and for use in this world. It usually denotes that which is opposed to God compared to that which is spiritual. The service of “*mammon*” is a service of self, of the flesh, of that which is restricted to this world. Included in this term are money, wealth, pleasure, selfish prestige, and pride. These are the things which motivate the world, the unregenerate.

Satan, the “*prince of this world,*” is the master and guide of “*mammon.*” He inspires the hearts of people to seek after mammon, to spend their lives in its service. He leads people to believe the great lie that these things of the world are the real aims and objectives of life. He blinds people to misjudge the goals and thus misleads them into the slavery of “*mammon,*” into unfaithfulness, into rebellion against the true Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

The person who holds to this master must then despise the other, namely, God. *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him,* says the Apostle John.⁴ The person who loves and serves “*mammon*” cannot love and serve God. Yet God demands absolute and unconditional service. He will not share with anyone or anything the honour and glory that is due to Him.

Secondly, true allegiance is possible. The service of God, the allegiance to God, is, then, the decisive factor in evaluating a truly worth-while life. God has made it possible for man to serve Him. He has redeemed the world to Himself through Christ Jesus, “*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.*”⁵

The Lord Jesus graciously called all people to Himself and to the service of the Triune God when He said, “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” “*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*”³⁰ “*For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*”⁶

It is, of course, impossible to serve God without Christ Jesus, for He alone gives us the motive, the power, and the ability to serve God. Jesus said, “*Without Me you can do nothing,*”⁷ and again, “*He who abides in Me, and I in*

him, bears much fruit.” By faith in Christ we are made servants of God, to live gladly in His holy and blessed service.

He who holds thus to the Lord, and through Christ Jesus serves God, despises the other master of the minds and souls of men, “*mammon.*” The one excludes the other, and the service of the one makes the service of the other unthinkable. In evaluating our lives as Christ evaluates them, let us never forget this important factor of allegiance. Herein lies the real standard of judging, and herein, too, is the explanation of faithfulness and unfaithfulness in our stewardship of life.

3. The Evaluation Therefore Made By Christ Is According To The Immutable Standard Of The Eternal Word

The above evaluation is a clear one, but a hard one, particularly for those who seek to serve God and “*mammon.*” Of those who had gathered to hear Jesus were the Pharisees “*who were lovers of money.*” Their reaction to this divine evaluation of life was one of derision. They sneered at the Lord and added insulting remarks to their negative bearing and disapproving countenance.

The reaction is still no different today. When this clear-cut evaluation, with its demand for an exclusive allegiance, is presented, there are still those who say it isn’t so. They do not want to hear such words, for they would much rather hear of a compromise. Satan is the master of compromise and uses it frequently. Now, what answer did Jesus give His sneering critics of that day and of every day?

“You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts,” said Jesus. You, who think that you can serve two masters, who try to establish a standard of partial faithfulness, make the mistake of thinking that you can evaluate yourselves according to your own standard.

Forget not, however, God alone shall judge and establish what is right and what is wrong. What a clear and powerful reproof of the self-established standards of life! It should so clearly impress on us the folly of trying to condone a half-hearted service and stewardship to God.

It certainly condemns the many religions, sects of Christendom, and cults which, like these Pharisees, establish their own values and standards of life. At

the Last Day, when all things shall be made plain, then they shall see the folly of their own judgment; for Jesus says, ***“the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”***⁸

Finally, the Word of God is the standard for the right evaluation of life. Jesus said, ***“The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. ¹⁷ “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.***

Here the authority of the Word of God, the Old and the New Testament, is established as the standard by which God will evaluate and judge. The Pharisees were particularly intent upon the Law and the Prophets and the keeping of them.

But the Lord clearly indicates that by their actions of justifying their lives of covetousness and “mammon” service they did not at all judge rightly or observe the Law and the Prophets, the Old Testament. Furthermore, the New Testament, the kingdom of God in Christ, was preached since the days of John the Baptist, and multitudes heard and received that Word, but they did not believe it.

Jesus seems to imply that the Pharisees will continue in their self-established way of life, they will continue their own evaluation according to their own standards, but they must know that the judging will nevertheless come, and it will be according to the Word of God. Scripture says ***“it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.”***

Indeed, heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Word of the Lord abides forever. And this Word, which they despise, will judge them. So it is with all who judge themselves according to self-appointed standards.

It is good, then, for all of us to heed the Lord’s instruction about life and the stewardship of life. It is not our privilege to determine what is right and what is wrong, what is faithful and what is unfaithful, whom we should serve and whom we should not serve, how we should serve and how we should not serve, for all that has been established by God and by Christ in His unchangeable Word.

It is for us simply to understand the Word of God and by faith to live according to it. The evaluation that we make apart and separate from the Word of God is false and deceptive. Jesus Christ judges all according to the standard of the Word. It is wise for us to accept His evaluation.

May we through Christ and His Gospel be turned to the full and perfect allegiance to God, the allegiance of faith, and, living to Him wholly, and serving Him in holiness of living in everything faithfully. May we look forward to the day of Jesus appearing to judge the living and the dead, not being afraid, but confident that through Him, whom we love and serve, our redemption is drawing near. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 25:40

² Revelation 3:21

³ John 14:23

⁴ 1 John 2:15

⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:19

⁶ Matthew 11:28-30

⁷ John 15:5

⁸ John 12:48