

## ***LIVING BEYOND MY DOT, LUKE 16:1-15***

The Treasure Principle #2

◆ **Intro:** In the film *Fun with Dick and Jane*, Dick (Jim Carey) works for the Globodyne corporation that goes under because the owner has been altering the company's stock reports, all the while dumping all his stocks. He ends up filthy rich while the employees are jobless, and selling off their furniture just to eat. (Have you seen the film?) This film was made as a reflection on the financial atrocities of such events as the Enron scandal. Enron achieved infamy at the end of 2001, when it was revealed that its reported financial condition was sustained mostly by institutionalized, systematic, and creatively planned accounting fraud. Its European operations filed for bankruptcy on November 30, 2001, and it sought Chapter 11 protection in the U.S. two days later on December 2. At the time, it was the biggest bankruptcy in U.S. history, and it cost 4,000 employees their jobs.

◆ Enron's CEO, Ken Lay was one of America's highest-paid CEOs, earning a \$42.4 million compensation package in 1999. He dumped large amounts of his Enron stock in September and October of 2001 as its price fell, while encouraging employees to buy more stock, telling them the company would rebound. Lay liquidated more than \$300 million in Enron stock from 1989 to 2001, mostly in stock options. Found guilty and facing up to 30 years in prison, Lay died of a heart attack just months before his sentencing.

◆ The story scandalized Americans, and probably for several reasons; We see unmitigated greed by people who already have more than most. We feel the suffering of the common employee. We feel the fleeting nature of money and wealth. No matter how much you have, when you die, it all stays here without you. All these things frustrate us.

## ***LIVING BEYOND MY DOT, LUKE 16:1-15***

The Treasure Principle #2

◆ Now I'm gonna spoil it for you. In the film, Dick is the PR man for the company, who is made to look the fool as well as lose his source of income when the company goes under. But he hatches a plan, steals the owner's signature, causing the bank to dump \$400 million of the owner's personal cash into the almost bankrupt employee pension fund. Then he calls a press conference to announce the owner's "good deed" to the world. He saves the employee's pension, sticks it to the owner by making him look generous in such an amazing way that he can hardly do anything else but lose the money and unwillingly accept the gratitude of the desperate, jobless employees.

◆ Dick is credited with saving the day. The owner looks better than ever. The employees are partially relieved from their impoverished states. It's all strikingly similar to a story in the Bible, with some marked differences.

[read text]

◆ 1. Background

◆ **A.** How do we make sense of what many consider the most problematic of Jesus' parables. It appears as if Jesus is commending selfish dishonesty! Let's dig into the details:

◆ 1) How could someone owe 800 gallons of oil, you ask? That's a lot of trips to the neighbor for emergency baking ingredients! In actuality, this would be a fixed part of the crop due to the land owner as the payment for use of the land. According to the Mishna (the authoritative collection of Jewish Oral Law), the "house or estate manager" was paid a fee by the land renters to draw up a contract with the land owner.

## **LIVING BEYOND MY DOT, LUKE 16:1-15**

The Treasure Principle #2

◆ The contract and records were a matter of public record. So everything looks right on the balance sheet. The manager acted with the authority of the owner himself. But apparently he wasn't dealing well with the owners side of things, at least enough for people to notice. So here's a manager living large, high on the hog, on the company expense account in some way.

◆ cf v1 "wasting". The term means to squander. Check 15:13 and the Prodigal Son!

◆ 2) In mid-east culture the fact that he doesn't argue is an admission of guilt. So he's caught. And he's fired on the spot. v2b means "turn in the books." But, although he legally owes the losses, and though he normally would be slapped in jail immediately, he is not even scolded! This oriental master is being merciful and generous even to a dishonest manager. (Unlike the owner in of Globodyne in Dick & Jane). His first break!

◆ Now he needs to think fast. No job means no future. He needs friends for the future. So hatches a plan. Acting as though he is still the "estate manager" and before he even cleans out his desk, he calls in the clients, knocks off huge chunks off what they will owe when the harvest comes in later, making it look like he has talked the owner into generosity for the employee pension plan!

◆ The master commends him. The manager has made the owner look real good, and himself look real good. Just like in Dick and Jane, the press will get a hold of this and already be celebrating how compassionate the Master is. But unlike Dick and Jane, this owner

## **LIVING BEYOND MY DOT, LUKE 16:1-15**

The Treasure Principle #2

really is compassionate, and the manager has banked everything on that fact.

◆**B.** So, Jesus is not commending dishonesty . He is commending two things: 1) planning for beyond today (v9) 2) banking on the merciful nature of the owner. Jesus uses the rabbinic teaching pattern of “from the lesser to the greater.” If worldly people are 1) shrewd (planning), how much more should be people of the light. If the worldly master is 2) merciful, how much more the master of eternal places.

◆**1. Treasure Chest key #1: Live for the line, not the dot.**

◆**A.** The dot, as Randy Alcorn puts it in his book, is life now. But we were made for eternity. We were created to live forever. The line is our life from here on into eternity.

◆ There’s an interesting word in v9. “When it is gone” in the greek language is “when it is *eclipsed*”. Eclipse means to obscure or darken, as in a solar eclipse when something bigger gets in the way. Another meaning is to surpass, outshine! Here’s the point. There is more coming than just your temporal existence on this earth. Hadn’t we better think about that?

◆ [As an aside, I think we understand this deep down especially in tragedy. When your house is flooded, or your prize car is suddenly totalled you can freak out, or you can realize that stuff does not make life. Life is more than the dot.]

◆**B.** We know planning ahead is smart. You don’t drink if you’re going to have to drive home. You buy insurance because you will likely get sick in the future, or you live in a flood plain. You put money away for when Junior

## **LIVING BEYOND MY DOT, LUKE 16:1-15**

The Treasure Principle #2

gets college age. How much more ought we to be thinking about life after this one? Have you ever known anyone whose stuff left the earth when they died? Over and over Jesus teaches in the Bible that there will be reward in heaven based on things we do here.

◆v10 This verse so much as tells us that our worldly wealth is a test that will affect our future.

◆*“But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”* Luke 14:13, 14, NIV.

◆*“Jesus answered, “...go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.”* Matthew 19:21, NIV.

◆*“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”* Matthew 10:42, NIV. (Where? Heaven!)

◆Are you making any deposits into your heavenly account? If we were to analyze your checkbook here this morning (sorry, people don't use those ol' things anymore. I mean, your “online account summary”), would **it** reveal that you were living for the dot or for the line? Alcorn makes a great point in his book when he says, “If your treasures are all on earth, that means each day brings you closer to losing your treasures.” Millions of people, easily fall into the trap of spending their lives collecting things they cannot keep.

◆-Buying the latest HDTV. After all, what's 50” these days? They're up to 80” now! We must have what is out there, mustn't we? (For our

## **LIVING BEYOND MY DOT, LUKE 16:1-15**

The Treasure Principle #2

first 25 years together my wife and I had a 19" television! And we though we were happenin'!

◆-Never questioning the logic that you should trade in your car on a yearly basis.

◆-Believing that just because you can have all your tunes, all your movies, all your phone calls, all your internet, all in your pocket at the same time -that you should.

◆-Buying high-speed internet, because it's fast, and we can! Think about it: Sure we have access to 1Gb downloads speeds not. For about \$100 a month! Now you can download a whole blue-ray movie in 25 seconds! But you can stream a blue-ray from the internet with no more than 3 mbps download speed. So you're paying for 1000 mbps when you only need 3! just because you can? That's \$1200 a year you could be doing something good with!

◆-Being sucked in by the ludicrous advertisement that we can "record 4 shows while watching a 5th one live! ExCUSE me? If you have time to watch 5 different shows you're recording then perhaps you can cancel Netflix, Hulu Plus. And don't be surprised when your kids grow up insecure, over-achieving, and easily addicted for lack of attention and interaction with you! Listen, just because we are able does not make something good to do. (Personally, I find it hard to explain that I should be able to stream TV to all my devices. When you are with friends, there are healthier ways of behaving that watching a show on your phone. When you are hunting in the woods, you will do better leaving your TV shows off. And need I mention that

## LIVING BEYOND MY DOT, LUKE 16:1-15

The Treasure Principle #2

“studies have surely shown” that it may be hazardous to be watching movies while operating a motor vehicle! We don’t need this ability and what’s more, it is probably not healthy for culture! But we can... so many times we do without boundaries or thought.

◆C. Many folks living as I’ve just described are Christians that assume that when we all get to heaven, it won’t matter what we did here. We will all have equal wealth and joy there, they think. There are at least 2-3 problems with this thinking:

◆1) The Bible promises rewards based on what we’ve done here.

Bear in mind, such promises have no connection to the concept of salvation. Salvation is all gift. Rewards are not contrary to the gift of salvation. A reward is at the giver’s discretion. If Jesus thanks us, it is because he is generous and giving, not because I deserve it in any way. And still, Jesus clearly promises rewards.

◆Read HC.62-63

◆2) The Bible tells us that our lack of building here, can cause us to loss there. cf *“his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”* 1

*Corinthians 3:13-15, NIV.*

◆Depending on your actions, your reasons, your motive, your love -the things you do here can also yield gain or loss in heaven. This is a sobering thought. I do not mean us to think we will live in regret, or misery because

## **LIVING BEYOND MY DOT, LUKE 16:1-15**

The Treasure Principle #2

our mansions in heaven are smaller than someone else's. The Bible tells us there will be no sadness, tears, or pain. Furthermore, mansions and things are not the prizes God followers care about on earth or in heaven.

◆ I wonder if the loss isn't in our capacity to enjoy the blessings of God. For example, Hell could very well have all the physical things of heaven: Eating, labor, variety of nature -but because of the absence of God, nobody there is happy or satisfied. Plenty of people in this world who have plenty, but are lonely, or whose marriages are empty, describe it as a living hell.

◆ On the other side, if you have memorized a piece of music, maybe even played it, or analyzed it's themes, when you go to a concert and listen to that same composition, we could argue that you receive much more joy than the person next to you who came because she had nothing else to do that night. Maybe our loss in heaven is like the loss of not being able to complete a marathon because we haven't trained for it. We enjoy the Turkey Trot just fine, but we could have enjoyed so much more.

◆ 3) We are mistaken to think that all the blessings of heaven only come after we die.

◆ *"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no-one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life." Mark 10:29,30, NIV.*



## **LIVING BEYOND MY DOT, LUKE 16:1-15**

The Treasure Principle #2

◆ Often, mistaken Christians figure “I can live however selfishly I want to because my destiny in heaven is secure.” They don’t stop to think that what God blesses in this life also has to do with their obedience to him in this life. You see, living for the line affects the line, and even the dot. You and I can do eternal things with our resources! You and I can materialize eternal things in this life with wise use of our material. Things like love, joy, community that many are missing. We can create these with our resources. What, if anything, are you doing to produce eternal impact in this world with your temporary resources?

### ◆ **2. Treasure Chest Key #2: bank on the mercy of the master.**

◆ The manager saw that the owner, by not slapping him in jail, has a merciful streak. He banked everything on that characteristic: “if I make him look good, even to my advantage, in his mercy he may let me succeed in it.” And so it was.

◆ Jesus’s point is, how much more merciful is your Lord in heaven? If an earthly owner would commend wise efforts, how much more will the heavenly owner commend those who bank on him?! See friends, it is not that God doesn’t want to bless your life. The God who sent his son here to compel us to heaven is clearly a God *on our side in this life as well*. Don’t doubt it. He does not plan misery for you. Even when he allows us suffering, it is because he wants us to be deeper people who are fully convinced of his love and provision. And if the owner will grant you mercy (not giving what you deserve), do not doubt he will notice your efforts to honor him and give you grace in addition (giving you what you don’t deserve.)

## ***LIVING BEYOND MY DOT, LUKE 16:1-15***

The Treasure Principle #2

◆ **Conclusion:** Remember the over all Treasure Principle: you can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead. (repeat together)

◆ Back to Dick & Jane. Unlike the film, the real Owner in Jesus' parable, and the owner in Heaven, IS generous and merciful. Unlike Dick, we are COMMANDED to use his money to benefit other people. In fact he wants us to do just that! Unlike Dick and Jane, we really have much MORE to live for than a house in the burbs and a big screen TV. We are citizens of a better country.

◆ *"But our citizenship is in heaven. Philippians 3:20, NIV.*

◆ Jim Elliot, A missionary who died trying to contact the Auca indians once said, "He is not fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Jim Carey's character in Dick and Jane, does precisely what the Bible says should characterize a Christian in the same situation; he uses worldly wealth to care for and provide goodness to people. He is not busy piling up millions in bonuses. He's storing up treasure in heaven AND honoring God as he changes the world here. He's living for more than the dot.