19 year-old Joey was a typical teenager working at a local *Dairy Queen* in Hopkins, Minnesota, when one evening he came across a blind customer coming into his store. The blind customer had dropped a $20 bill on the floor but another elderly woman picked it up and decided to keep the $20 bill to herself, claiming that it was hers. Joey saw it while behind the counter and demanded that the elderly woman return the money back to the blind woman, or else he’ll call the police. Joey even refused to serve that elderly lady. After a long argument, she stormed out of the restaurant and walked away with the money. Joey decided to pull out his own money and gave it back to the blind customer. He didn’t really have to do that, but he did.

The surveillance video captured all of what this teenager did on tape and this teenager was commended for his act of courage and generosity, and for standing up for justice and for what he believed was the right thing to do.

This story drew the attention of the billionaire tycoon Warren Buffett, whose company happens to also own *Dairy Queen*. Buffett invited Joey as a special guest to attend his company’s Shareholder’s meeting in Omaha, Nebraska. No words though as to how Buffett will reward Joey for what he did, or will Joey get his $20 back. Something tells me that he would receive more than the $20. When asked about what Joey did, Buffet replied, *"Here's somebody who did something good for someone else and no one asked him to do it. It strikes a chord in a lot of people."*

Well, certainly we don’t get to hear this kind of story on the news every day. It just goes to show that there are still good people out there who are willing to help others in standing up for what is right. The $20 was irrelevant compared to the act of kindness and justice that was being served. When asked by the reporter of why he did what he did, Joey simply replied, *"I was just doing what I thought was right. I did it without even really thinking about it. ... Ninety-nine out of 100 people would've done the same thing as me."*

In the text that we read earlier, Jesus told a parable concerning one’s relationship with God and our God given earthly resources…in particular money! How are we managing our “spiritual wealth” and the resources that God has entrusted us with? **Our Spiritual Wealth defines our personal character, our integrity, and our trust in God.** Believe it or not, this is one of the most common subjects that comes up throughout Jesus’s ministry. How does one handle God-given resources of time, talent and money? How does one manage one’s spiritual wealth in a faithful and responsible manner?

Some translation gave our passage today the title - “the Parable of the Dishonest (or the Shrewd) Manager”. In our parable story today, the manager’s job was to make sure that he collects what was rightfully belonged to his master. He knew right off that he had failed to do his job by squandering what belongs to his master, perhaps he was simply too lazy or what not, we simply don’t know. But the manager did something that his master didn’t ask him to do. Hemade a series of deal reducing the amount of debt that was owed by many of his master’s debtors.

It appears that the manager was trying to manipulate whatever influence and power he might still have for his own personal gain, at the expense of those who can least afford. He was looking out for his own future knowing that he probably would soon be fired by his master, for his own failure. Now the debtors owe the manager a favor him because he reduced the amount of debt that they owed to the master.

So why was Jesus telling this rather complex and confusing parable to his followers? Well, to the tax-collectors, this parable really hit them right in the gut. They knew Jesus was addressing to them because that’s precisely what they do…they took advantage of the others by collecting more than they should while pocketing the extra for themselves. They served as the middle men while cheating those who could least afford. They’ve been doing that for years. Everybody knew.

To the Pharisees whom Luke labeled as the “***lovers of money***” in verse 14, as the leaders of God’s chosen people, keepers of the temple’s treasury, they too were like the dishonest manager who had forgotten their calling and lost the vision that God has entrusted them with. They were influenced by the worldly temptations of **power, status, and wealth** for their own personal gain. They had served themselves first before they served others. They had kept the best part for themselves instead of sharing it with those who needed it more. What is there for me to gain? Why should I bother?

How we manage our earthly resources stands as a testament of our faith. Each day, we ought to recount God’s blessings and in turn we share those blessings with others, instead of keeping them to ourselves. As the Psalmist reminded us, *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits.[[1]](#footnote-1)**O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. 2 Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

In the same way, the Apostle Paul wrote that, “*those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction****. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil,*** *and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. 11 But as for you, shun all [of] this;* ***pursue Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love, Endurance, [and] Gentleness****.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

These are the spiritual wealth that God has given to us all.

This passage was one of the most misinterpreted passages in the bible. Having money is not a sin, but how we appropriate our money, allocate our resources, may lead us to various sins and temptations…in the form of idolatry and pursuing of the wrong and ungodly things. In the same way, our worries in life about our future, our sustainability, about not having enough also demonstrates our lack of faith and trust that God has already provided for all that we need.

When our minds have become too occupied and indulged our lives obsessively with our earthly needs, we have in turn chosen the wrong master to serve and mismanaged our spiritual wealth. We have put other idols of worship above God. **“*No one can serve two masters, for a servant will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. We cannot serve God and wealth.”[[4]](#footnote-4)***

Jesus said, ***“It is more blessed to give than to receive****.”[[5]](#footnote-5)*By letting go of what we have in our possession, it gives us the freedom to trust in God’s providence and that God will bless us even more than what we have. *Let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven.[[6]](#footnote-6)*

As one theologian commented upon this passage wrote, *“somehow in the middle of our journey we stopped living for Christ. We stopped believing that Jesus died and was resurrected and that life was made new. Somewhere along the way it became easy to serve all those pressing demands: of people, of schedule, of money. Somewhere along the way, the vision for God’s call became cloudy and muddled. We stopped hearing God’s voice and joined the crazy survivor-takes-all mentality. Somewhere along the way, the challenges seemed so much bigger than the answers. So we huddled in an effort to save whatever was left and forgot about living for something greater. We [have] buried our treasures.”*

Friends, no one can serve two masters. God has given us all the resources that we ever need. Some have been revealed to us and some have yet to be discovered. God has also given us the responsibilities and opportunities to excel and to advance God’s Kingdom. Each day we are being challenged to make these important decisions that reflect our faith and our calling, as we strive *to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God?*[[7]](#footnote-7)  The choice is ours.

May we strive to seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness first, then all these things will be given to us.[[8]](#footnote-8) That’s the healthy approach that we should take when it comes to our spiritual wealth management.

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Psalm 103:2* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Psalm 105:1-2* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *1 Timothy 6:9-11* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Luke 16:13* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Acts 20:35* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Matthew 5:16* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Micah 6:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Matthew 6:33* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)