

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
22 September 2013  
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita  
Luke 16:1-15

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

Everyone dies.  
It's a reality we all must face.  
And after death, judgment.

Every birthday pushes you one day closer to death-day.  
There's no turning back.  
Day by day, hour by hour, every moment, we're dying.  
Even a cold is a reminder that one day our bodies will wear out.

Then there's the judgment seat of God.  
We'll appear before the One who knows everything, and from whom nothing is hidden.

Do you really think you can hide something, *anything*, from Him?

He who created the eye—  
has He not seen your every greedy gaze,  
every lustful look,  
what you've done when no one else was looking?

He who formed the ear—  
has He not listened to every lie  
and heard every hateful word you've spoken?

He who shaped the hands—  
do you think He doesn't know of thieving hands, lazy hands,  
hands bloody from violence and back-stabbing,  
hands always grabbing for more and more?

He knows all—not only the sins you remember and are ashamed of,  
but also those you've long forgotten, even those you never knew.

So on that day, what will you rely on?  
What will you say? What's your defense?

In human courts, the truly innocent rely on the evidence to prove their lack of guilt.  
But those truly guilty, though claiming innocence, rely on ambiguities in the evidence,  
the skill of their attorneys,  
loopholes in the law,  
and anything they can use to hear a verdict of “not guilty.”

But neither of these will stand before God's judgment.  
You're not innocent; you're guilty—  
and there's a mountain of indisputable evidence to prove it.  
There are no loopholes in His law;  
no “dream team” of lawyers to get you off the hook.

What will you do in that day?

You'll be like the unjust steward in today's parable.

He was caught red-handed wasting his master's goods.

Shortly he'd be out of a job.

*Too weak to dig, too ashamed to beg*, so he acted shrewdly to plan for his future.

Calling in his master's debtors, he reduced their bills—  
     from 100 to 50 measures of oil for one,  
     from 100 to 80 measures of wheat for another.

The idea was that these renters would be so pleased that, when the steward was fired, they'd receive him into their homes.

But what about the rich man—the master?

Once he discovered that his employee had messed with the books, couldn't he change them back?

Couldn't he have the steward arrested, tried, and jailed?

Of course he could've—but that's the point: *he didn't*.

In fact, he *commended* the steward because he acted shrewdly.

The unjust steward banked on the mercy of his master.

You see, in this plan of his, not only would the steward appear good, but also the master.

He'd be seen as gracious in the eyes of the renters for lowering the amount they owed.

And if he changed it, they'd find someone else to do business with.

When the steward was found guilty before his master, with nowhere else to turn,  
     the steward turned back to the master himself.

The master's mercy and generosity were his only hope.

*His judge became his savior.*

And so it is with you.

The stewardship given to you by the heavenly Master—

    your body and soul, money and property, vocation and family—

    all of these you've abused and misused—*squandered*, really.

You've turned the things your Master has given you into the master himself.

    And you've lied about it along the way.

There's only one hope for you when you stand before the almighty Judge;

    there's only one place to turn—to the Judge Himself.

And your Judge is also your Savior.

He Himself erased the debt, not just piecemeal or partway,

    but entirely, once and for all.

Your hope isn't that you're better than others;  
 it's not that God has been blind to your wrong-doing;  
 and it's not that your good deeds outweigh your bad—  
 your hope is in the One who sits in judgment.  
 For He's the One who was willingly nailed to the cross as the judged One for you.

He who created the eye and has seen all you've done—  
 His are the eyes that closed in death and opened three days later,  
 that they might look on you as the apple of His eye.

He who formed the ear and has heard all you've said—  
 His are the ears open to your cry, but closed to the accusations of the devil,  
 and deaf to any evil said of you.

He who made your hands—  
 His are the hands held in place by the nails, marked by the blood that poured from them.  
 It's these that now scoop up water to wash away your sin,  
 and place within your mouth His own flesh and blood,  
 forgiving all.

This Judge—*slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*—  
 this Judge knows everything.

And most importantly, He knows that you're His.  
 You are His steward; He is your Master, and there is no other.

And when you're His, who can bring any charge against you?  
 If our Judge is our advocate and intercessor, our Brother, Priest, Savior, and Friend,  
 we have nothing to fear at all!

Not medical bills, or care homes; college tuition, or paying for baseball uniforms;  
 we don't need to fear anything that mammon throws our way—  
 because we can't serve two masters.

And our Master is very generous Master,  
 Who doesn't want to be known for His sovereignty or His compulsion, but for His mercy.  
 Let us love Him, and hate the other!

The things of this world fade and wear out—they can't be your master for long.  
 And Jesus doesn't commend the sons of this world for *what* they love;  
 He commends them for *how zealously* they love.

Mimic this zeal, but don't be included among the sons of this world.  
 Don't be drawn away by mammon, or any of the stuff you've been given stewardship over.  
 It all wears out. Mammon ultimately fails.  
 It's a fad. It doesn't satisfy. It doesn't accomplish what it promises.  
*But our Lord and Master does!*

One day, everyone dies.

And after death, judgment.

But with judgment, for those who belong to this Master, come the words,

*“Welcome, blessed of My Father,*

*inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

*Welcome, unjust steward, justified by Me.” (Mt 25:34)<sup>1</sup>*

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

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<sup>1</sup> Much of this sermon is adapted from a sermon by Chad Bird, “The Unjust Steward and the Just Savior: A Sermon on Luke 16.” Posted on his blog: <http://birdchadlouis.wordpress.com/2013/09/18/the-unjust-steward-and-the-just-savior-a-sermon-on-luke-16/>. Posted 9/18/13.