

Parables of Relationships: Our Friends (Luke 16:1–18)

Jesus's parable of the Unjust Manager is one of his most puzzling and is followed by verses that people often treat as disconnected. Together the parable and the following verses challenge us not to be taken in by the deceit of money and to think about preparing for eternity.

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I. Setting

- A. A story told to the disciples (16:1)
- B. A story told in the hearing of the Pharisees (16:14–15)
- C. A story without obvious Old Testament connection
- D. A story followed by verses about money (16:10–13)
 - i. 16:1–13 a single paragraph in earliest manuscript
 - ii. 16:10–13 continue theme of servant
 - iii. About being faithful/dishonest
 - iv. About handling what belongs to another
 - v. About not being able to serve two masters
- E. Pharisees mock (16:14)
- F. Jesus addresses 4 verses to them
 - i. You're virtue signaling (16:15)
 - ii. What humans value highly (e.g. money, pride) is actually an abomination (= super-unclean)
 - iii. No pen stroke from the law will pass, but things changed when John the Baptist came alone. Now everyone is crowding in. (16:16–17)
 - iv. While we're at it, we should think about your casual attitude to divorce, which is deeply connected with money (16:18)
- G. Nearby stories cover: brother, father, children, friends, servant, master
 - i. 16:18 covers the missing relationship: wife
- H. A story connected with the surrounding stories

Links between Luke 15:11–32, 16:1–9, and 16:19–31

Link	15:11–32	16:1–9	16:19–31
use of address ‘father’ (3x)	15:12, 18, 21		16:24, 27, 30
‘wasting’ possessions	15:13	16:1	
‘longed to be filled’	15:16		16:21
‘how many’ / ‘how much’	15:17	16:5, 7	
self-address	15:17–19	16:3–4	
‘far off’ + ‘see’	15:20		16:23
command + ‘quickly’	15:22	16:6	
‘celebrate’	15:24, 29, 32		16:19
‘calling one’ of a group	15:26	16:5	
‘friends’	15:29	16:9	
addressed as ‘child’	15:31		16:25
‘There was a rich man’		16:1	16:19

Conclusion:

- A. we should understand these stories in the light of each other
- B. The setting highlights 3 themes: family, money, hypocrisy

II. Authenticity

5 hallmarks of coming from the land of Jesus:

- A. *bath* – a Palestinian liquid measure
- B. *cor* – a Palestinian dry measure
- C. ‘sons of light’ – a phrase in the title of one of the Dead Sea Scrolls (*The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*)
- D. ‘wealth of unrighteousness’ – a phrase found in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls
- E. Mammon – Aramaic word for money

III. The Story

- A. 16:1 ‘rich man’ connects with 16:19
- B. ‘waste’ connects with 15:13
- C. The Rich Man sacks the manager
- D. He has a notice period
- E. 100 baths of oil = 2,200 liters of olive oil, coming from >500 trees
- F. He’s changing the owner’s own version of the contract, in his own handwriting, so it’s legally binding
- G. 16:8 is a difficult verse: Lord/Master commended Unjust Manager
 - i. The Master seems to be admiring his shrewdness

IV. Significance

It doesn't say

- (1) To be unjust
- (2) To be selfish
- (3) That you can be accepted in heaven based on how you spend money

It does say

- (1) We're managers, not owners
- (2) Our time will run out soon
- (3) We have a window of opportunity