**The World or Your Soul?**

Based on [Luke 16:1-13](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk16.1-13)

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Jack Benny once had a skit on his radio program where a mugger comes up to him with gun and says to him, “**You’re money or your life**.” There was a long awkward pause. Mugger repeats, “**Look bud. I said, your money or your life.**” Benny says, “**I’m thinking it over**!”

The joke is the man’s indecision…of course no one would choose the money. Jesus said once, “**For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul**.” Most of us would like to have both, money and our life; the world and our soul. But you cannot serve two masters. What happens when you are forced to choose? Are you aware of who you really serve? Or if suddenly you find yourself in a crisis, are you going to need a long awkward pause to scratch your head to decide what’s more important…your money or your life; the world or your soul?

Jesus tells a story about a manager who was wasteful with his master’s possessions. And when his master hears about it, he fires him. Soon to be jobless, he considers what he—(a man fired for incompetence)--will likely end up doing for a living. **He figures he’s destined for heavy labor or begging, and he considers himself unfit for these things. So he devises a plan.** Still having his master’s ledger, he goes to his clients and cancels a portion of their debts. He does this for two reasons, (1) to put his master in a bind and at the same time (2) to make friends who might hire him later. By forgiving their debt he gains their friendship, while at the same time ensuring the master cannot take action against him without appearing stingy, uncharitable, harming his business and his reputation.

Like Jack Benny, the man is in a crisis. But unlike Benny, it doesn’t take the manager too long to come to a decision**. He may have worked for the rich man once, but that was only while the rich man helped him serve his true master…money which is wordly security**. Once the rich man fired him he found a new way to use the rich man; by fraudulently using his money to make friends in the world.

Jesus commends the dishonest manager for his shrewdness, and says that such shrewdness is what’s lacking in his disciples. The serpent in the garden was called shrewd, and Jesus says to his disciples “**Be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.”** So there is a type of shrewdness that is not dishonest or malicious; but is a virtue for Christians in this life.

We usually associate shrewdness with dishonesty or trickery, but that’s not it at all. A shrewd person is one who is capable of making decisions that will achieve their long-term goals. **They are prudent, pragmatic, efficient, decisive, and none of these qualities require dishonesty**. A shrewd person knows what they want and how to get it. Their loyalties are not mixed, and they do not try to serve multiple masters. They know who their master is, and how best to serve him, and how to quickly cast aside anything that hinders that service. Your money or your life: my life…no contest. A prudent person doesn’t put his hand to the plow and look back; but has no regrets in casting aside anything in order to protect and preserve one thing.

St. Paul famously said, “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ **9**and be found in him.” Paul was a famous Jew, a Benjamite who was raised in the traditions of his fathers. **Then Christ came to him and said that he must leave his accomplishments, honor, and prestige of the Pharisees behind to follow him.**  Paul shed not a tear; he didn’t sulk over having lost the ambition of his life. Once he realized that his zeal in persecuting Christians was not in service to the Lord, but against Him…he switched sides, revealing that he wasn’t a hypocrite who served God for the glory of men; but who served men for the Glory of God.

Now someone might say, and some have said that this is a very fine teaching because, my husband (or wife) is getting the way of me worshipping God. I should cut them out of my life, and so I can devote myself to God. **Some women might say, “I want to serve God with my life, but I have to finish my degree and a baby will get just get in the way. I’d better just get an abortion, but it’s okay because I’m doing it for God.**” Someone might say, “I look like a man, but I feel like a woman, and until I can dress and act like one, I’ll only resent God for the way he made me. If I can just change my gender identity, I’ll be happier and more self-actualized and be able to love people and serve God better.

By no means. That’s not how it works. Lip service to God is not service to God. **Abandoning your family, killing your child in the womb, denying the gender God gave you are all sins; and sin is never done in service to God.** The Law of God tells you what pleases him, his Word reveals his heart; and God hates divorce; God will avenge the innocent; God abhors sexual immorality. Those who do these things will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Like the shrewd manager, you shrewd Christians also have one master Jesus Christ he bought your soul and redeemed it, and you belong to him. And like the shrewd manager you have one goal: Just as his one goal was to live his life without losing worldly security, yours is to live your life without losing your soul, and your life will be better or worse based on your ability to keep that goal clear in your mind and weigh all your decisions with reference to it. You have one master, Jesus Christ. You have one goal, to live your life without losing your soul. Jesus teaches one means to do this, use your worldly possessions in service to your master.

Jesus says, “Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into eternal dwellings.” Jesus says this right before telling the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man. In that account, the rich man used his unrighteous wealth to make friends with the world. And when the rich man died, Lazarus was in heaven but did not receive him there, but was consigned to hell.

God is preparing you for a weight of glory beyond all comparison. That is your goal; that is your prize; that is what you live for and if you would be shrewd; you need not panic in a crisis. The world can take your family, your money and possessions, your good name; but they cannot take from you your share in the eternal life bought and paid for by your Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

Many Christians will sell this birthright for what amounts to a mess of porridge. **Others will retain it, but like Jack Benny will mull over the decision with regret and hesitation, making an already difficult life harder than it has to be.** “Your money or your life”…its an easy decision. Lord Jesus is your life. You are not strong enough to save yourself; and you are too proud to play political games in the world. Cast all your anxieties on Christ, and live humbly in his service. Walk by faith, not by sight. Fear God, not men.

When once asked what is the greatest commandment, Jesus replied, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. the second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** Love covers a multitude of sins. Love keeps no record of wrongs. You have one master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and **he would have you owe no one anything, except this: to love each other. The one who loves another has fulfilled the law of the master** which says, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him *only* shall you serve.” He requires your undivided attention; even as he has given you his undeserved love.