

Three Christmas Reminders

Three timely Christmas lessons hidden in Jesus' parable.

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In the early part of the 20th century, John D. Rockefeller, was the richest man in the world. His businesses accounted for one of every \$30 generated in the entire U.S. economy. In today's currency that would be equal to a fortune ten times greater than Bill Gates. Rockefeller died in 1937. A newspaper artist drew a cartoon, which posed the question: "How much did he leave?" The answer was in the next panel and said simply, "He left it all." So it is with each of us—we leave it all.

In Luke 16, we find a familiar story. The story is about a steward who is accused by his master of wasting the goods entrusted to him. As Jesus talked, the disciples listened. They realized that he was applying this story to them. As we approach the holiday season, we too must take note of the powerful reminders from the lips of our Lord.

This story is about a 'foolish steward.' A steward is someone who manages another's wealth. He or she does not own the wealth—they just manage it. The most important quality of the steward is faithfulness. When the trustee looks at the riches, it must be remembered that they belong to the owner.

During this special season, we find three Christmas reminders hidden in this parable:

First, we find someone who has been loaned something; someone else is the owner. The person mentioned in this story forgot that. This person began to act as if it was his. However, before we judge too quickly, let's personalize it and ask how we would have responded. How do we respond with what God has entrusted to us today?

Second, we are reminded that since God is the owner of all things, we are the trustees of what we are, what we have, and what we can become. How aware are we that God is the owner of all things? This parable reminds us that we are only the 'trustee' of what we are, what we have and what we can become.

Third, we are told that we must give an account of our privileges and opportunities. We are managers of a trust. Each day is an opportunity for service and stewardship. Money is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, how will you be trustworthy with true riches? No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Luke 16:10–13).

During these troubled economic times, especially during this Christmas season, we need these reminders, don’t we? Two helpful books that give biblical principles of stewardship are:

- *The 33 Laws of Stewardship*, Dave Sutherland and Kirk Norwery, Camarillo, CA: Spire Resources, Inc., 2003
- *The Stewardship of Life*, Dave Sutherland, Camarillo, CA: Spire Resources, Inc., 2004

In his book, *The Joys of Successful Aging*, George Sweeting titled a chapter, “Do Your Giving While You’re Living.” I like that idea. Sweeting says, “Giving is an essential part of being alive. Dead things may accumulate but they cannot grow. Only living things grow.” How true that is. He goes on to write, “William Gladstone, the brilliant British statesman, said concerning giving, ‘There is no merit in a man leaving money in his will; he has simply got to leave it. The time to administer your trust ... is while you are still living.’” (*The Joys of Successful Aging*, George Sweeting, Chicago, Northfield Publishing: 2002, page 105.)

To think about during this Christmas season:

- Share things joyfully, not reluctantly—give as the Lord has given to you.
- Spend reasonably and realistic; stay within your budget.
- Little gifts can make a big difference.
- We will all give account to God one day.
- Most of all share God’s love to your extended family and become a “world changer.”

“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2).