

1. A Wicked Manager
 - a. What is a Manager?
 - i. One who is given authority to conduct business on behalf of another for the express purpose of benefitting the house to whom the goods actually belong
 - b. **Why was he labelled by Jesus as “unrighteous”?**
 - i. Mismanaged the books
 - ii. **Didn’t care for the master**
 - c. What were his fears?
 - i. Not having basic needs
 - ii. Not having his usual standard of living
 - d. For what did he live?
 - i. Too lazy to do manual labor
 1. **He does not say that he is “not able” to dig, but rather that he is “not powerful enough”**
 - ii. Too proud to beg
2. A Praiseworthy Boldness
 - a. Devises a bold, daring, well-thought out plan to answer his fears and address his “needs”
 - i. He gave a discount to all the debtors who owed his master
 1. By doing this, he gained favor in each of their eyes
 2. He hoped that this favor would come into great use when his master threw him out of the house
 - ii. This was dishonest robbery of his master and very self-serving
 1. Note how he uses **the word “quickly write down”**
 2. He not only is doing something dishonest, but he knows it
 3. There is no way in which this manager is doing something righteous at all
 - b. His master praises him *for his shrewdness*
 - i. **Shrewdness is the word often translated as “wisdom”**
 1. It is the plan, the thoughtful consideration, strategizing, and planning for the future
 2. Imagine what he could have done for the master with this kind of effort used rightly!
 - ii. He is not praised for his dishonesty
 1. **The master doesn’t praise him (or give him his job back, for he is untrustworthy) for robbing him, but his ingenuity and boldness is impressive**
 2. **“Catch Me if You Can”** – Frank Abagnale, Jr. was a counterfeiter who assumed at least eight false identities between the ages of 19-21 and scammed millions of dollars from various airlines, banks, and other institutions, even fooling the justice system by prosecuting a case. He was imprisoned for 5 years before beginning a consulting career for the federal government and currently lectures at the FBI academy and training offices and runs a financial fraud security consulting firm out of Washington, D.C.
 - a. **It isn’t a justification of what Frank did in his cons that makes you enjoy the movie, but the incredible boldness and brilliance by which he did them.**
 3. Neither is the master praising him for being selfish or for looking out for this own best interests, but rather is praising him for being so boldly active and thoughtful...*shrewd*
 - c. We should be just as bold, daring, and thoughtful in devising plans that work toward the eternal things
 - i. **This is a serious statement, because Jesus introduces it with that phrase, “I say to you”**
 1. This usually expands or contradicts what is taught by others, in this case, what the world values
 2. Jesus is teaching about what is truly valuable in the eyes of God and therefore how we should live in this world
 - ii. **Jesus wants us to invest this world’s wealth to the salvation and wholeness of other people, not ourselves**
 1. **“make friends”**
 - a. *Philos* – devoted love, one whom you value and who values you, i.e. friend

- b. Using our power because we value persons above goods, eternal souls above temporal pleasures
 - c. What Jesus is really teaching here is that wealth is temporary, but people are eternal and using our unrighteous wealth for the spiritual and physical good of others (evangelism, gospel deeds of mercy) leads others to be grateful for the part that you play in their eternal destiny
 - i. We ought to be investing in the eternal things, the Kingdom of God, the eternal Kingdom, the realities of condemnation and salvation, gnashing of teeth and glorious song
 - ii. We ought to boldly and daringly spend every wealth that we have on this earth: economic, social influence, imagination, creativity, knowledge, for the sake of others and not for our own security
2. “by means of unrighteous **wealth**” – wealth in this world
- a. **Wealth, or “Mammon”, is not merely financial strength, but also can denote a wealth of anything: social power, financial power, creative strength, abilities of any kind which can be used for the good of another**
 - b. Jesus wants us to be creative, *imaginative*, bold, and daring in our use of this **world’s goods, but not for personal gain, but for the sake of others**
 - c. Wealth is only a means, never an end – **the question for us is: “To what end am I using this means? Am I daringly and boldly working for what will last?”**
3. “**eternal dwellings**”
- a. Eternal is not merely a duration of time, but rather always refers to the nature **of something that lasts, of the “age to come” rather than “this present age”**
 - b. The idea that some things will be shaken and collapse, be burned up, etc. compared to the things that cannot be shaken, will be purified by the fire, etc.
 - c. So, Jesus is emphasizing that we ought to boldly and shrewdly invest ourselves in the things that God has revealed will last because everything else will fail
- iii. **The reason that this is right is not merely because it’s a moral imperative or because it is righteous** – rather, it is righteous because it is like Jesus
- 1. Jesus invested His spiritual wealth (and material wealth!) not for his own sake, but for **the Father’s honor** and for our good
 - 2. He poured out his life, he thoughtfully and boldly planned with the Father and the Spirit to accomplish our redemption at the cost of His own blood
 - 3. His work was not thoughtless or impulsive or accidental

3. A Comparison of Authorities

- a. “**No man can serve two masters**”
 - i. **Note that Jesus doesn’t leave the option of “not serving” on the table**
 - 1. We all serve something or someone, for we are contingent creatures made to worship
 - ii. The investing of our wealth is tied to what we submit to as an authority
 - iii. Thus, Moral and Ethical Values are tied strongly to whom we submit as the Moral Authority
- b. In any given moment, we can only be trusting one thing to authoritatively define the value of the elements of that particular moment
 - i. In other words, what do we ultimately rely upon to determine the Truth and Goodness of something?
 - ii. The reality is that in every moment God IS the authority on what is True, Right, and Good and therefore into what we should invest ourselves and our management are his values
 - 1. There is only One Eternal King: Jesus
 - 2. **Yet, there are Prince John’s everywhere around us, claiming authority and to which we often submit**
 - iii. However, we are prone to fragment our value systems, to functionally trust in authorities other than God through His revealed word and base our definitions of True, Right, and Good for those areas upon some other valuation
 - 1. We are like the frog in the pot of **water in our society, our society’s values have permeated our psyche and our hearts much more than we think**

- a. **This is evidenced when we talk about God's sovereign election**
 - b. Why do we have such a repulsion to the idea that we are absolutely wicked (as opposed to "wicked, but not that wicked"), **under God's condemnation** (apart from Christ only), and completely incapable of bettering ourselves?
 - c. It is because we are very influence by the Western idea that Man is the captain of his own soul and can create Utopia on earth if given a better education/knowledge.
 - d. **Thus, in the evangelical church the effort has been to get "decisions" in any way possible, usually using marketing strategies to make the gospel appeal to the idols of our hearts rather confront us with our depravity and absolute need for regeneration**
2. The Church has swallowed the values of the world in a way that is unseen and **unnoticed, theology has been replaced by methodology to bettering one's own life**
 - a. This is why I used to get a lot of requests to preach on "**how to be a better...(parent, husband, boss, budgeter, etc.)**"
 - b. Theology informs us that we must be transformed by the Holy Spirit of God, apart from methodology, through repentance and faith in Jesus alone
 - c. **That's too pessimistic about human nature** and too exclusive for the average American and sadly the average person in the evangelical church
- iv. The result of this move toward man-centeredness is a fragmentation of our lives, a case of shifting moral authorities away from the Word of God alone to two primary means of defining what is Good: subjective feelings of the individual and a turning to various experts and professionals *to confirm my feelings that Humanity is good and capable of glory*
 1. **Subjective Feelings: "I know it's true/right/good because I feel it in my heart."**
 - a. **Religion is "feelings and acts associated with being oriented to the divine, however the individual may experience that to be."** – William James, Principles of Psychology (1910)
 - b. Thus, the language of theology has disappeared from the modern church in deference to the language of man-centered theology: sin becomes illness, salvation becomes healing, repentance becomes self-esteem, dependence becomes positive self-talk
 - c. The authoritative Word of God has been questioned as being unknowable, thus we hear "**What this passage means to me**" rather than "**This is what the Lord has said.**"
 2. A Plethora of Experts:
 - a. **We trust psychological experts instead of God's Word to give moral authority and understanding for our "Mental Health"** (used to be called "soul care" by the Puritans and was the realm of the clergy)
 - i. What is a healthy soul? Healthy relationship? Who decides?
 - ii. What should we do with suffering? According to whom?
 - b. **We trust financial experts instead of God's Word for our financial planning,** who concern themselves with retirement rather than the Kingdom of God
 - i. Is this wealth mine? According to whose goals do we plan?
 - c. We trust political and social experts rather than the Word of God to define what "**good society**" and what justifies law and moral order
 - i. What is right or wrong? What is love?
 - ii. What is the goal of social systems, government, education?
 - d. We have scientific experts that we turn to for *moral authority on life issues* making scientists the modern priests of our day
- v. The result of this fragmentation is that our society is hollow in the middle and our souls are hollow in the middle and the ultimate authority for our values, morality, and ethics ends up being the individual person
 1. **If it's one expert for this area and another expert for this other area, but they don't agree on ultimate values, where does that leave us?**

2. It leaves us confused in our souls, fragmented, and ultimately with instability of soul because we are untethered from anything lasting and eternal having only the emptiness and numbness of my own fragile soul screaming into the chaos
 - c. **“He will love the one and hate the other”**
 - i. Again, this is the language of priority, not exclusion.
 - ii. The reality is that we cannot love God and love the world as an authority of what is Right, True, and Good
 1. We are either submitting ourselves to the values and revelation of God or we are submitting ourselves to the values of something else *in that moment*
 2. We cannot serve both God and Wealth, or God and Self, or God and Country, or God and Family, or God and Anything, because one must come first and be subservient to the other.
4. What Are We to Do?
- a. If Jesus is Whom He Says That He Is: We Need to See Jesus!
 - i. Pray that he would reveal himself to you rightly, that you would know him
 1. This is how the apostle prayed for the Church: Eph 3:14-19 **“Spirit-strength to know the love of Christ”**
 - ii. He is the Life, the Truth, and the Way: His values are Eternal
 1. What God has revealed in Jesus, the Word of God, is the foundational Reality of all things, in their proper order, with their proper relationships
 - a. What does God reveal in His Word to be His values?
 - b. How do these values give us a moral order in line with His revealed character, particularly in Christ Jesus?
 2. How does he say that we should address every relationship in our lives?
 - a. Do I see my Self as God has revealed me to be, or am I listening to my own soul as the authority?
 - b. Do I see my Family as God has revealed it to be, or am I listening to cultural determinations?
 - c. Do I see my Work as God as revealed it to be, or am I listening to Charles Schwab and Home Living Magazine?
 - b. Recognize that you cannot trust in God for your values AND trust in anything else for your values
 - i. **It’s the Creator OR the Created, but never both**
 - c. Learn to identify what Master you are serving in a given moment (**it’s a process**): Who are you truly depending upon to define and determine what is True, Right, and Good:
 - i. Is it what God has revealed in His Word or is it what I feel?
 - ii. Is it **how the world defines “love” or the way God defines “love”**?
 - d. How has that Master proven its care for you?
 - i. His Love far supersedes any affective person, thought, or mantra
 - ii. Communion – the Proclamation of the Love of God in Christ Jesus
 1. You were dead in your sins, fully wicked and worthy of condemnation, by nature children of wrath
 2. Even when you were pursuing enmity with God, God sent His Son to bear the curse for your sin because His love for you is that great.
 3. Jesus humiliated himself, shed his comforts, willingly entered abuse and suffering, that he would set his enemies free and make them sons of God

Jesus leaves us with two questions: “Who is worthy of defining for me what is truly valuable, good, and right? Shall I invest with bold creativity and daring imagination in others **to his ends and for his glory?**”