

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Remembering What Lasts Forever

Lesson: Luke 16:1-13

16 Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' ³ "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— ⁴ I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' ⁵ "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶ "'Nine hundred gallons[Ⓛ] of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.' ⁷ "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' "'A thousand bushels[Ⓛ] of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' ⁸ "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. ¹⁰ "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. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? ¹³ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

One of the favorite words companies use in advertising their products or services is "unlimited." Words like "endless," "never-ending," or "limitless" make us feel good somehow. I once saw a car dealer highlight this line: "Million-mile warranty at no cost to you." How does it sound when you hear something like that? It makes us feel good, doesn't it? Whether we actually use that service for a lifetime or not is another matter. What matters is that such words touch our deep longing for eternity.

I enjoy sushi. Some special sushi restaurants offer an "All-You-Can-Eat" option. You pay a fixed price, and then you can order as much sushi as you want. About seven years ago, I went to such a place with my parents-in-law. Since I love salmon, I ordered forty pieces of salmon sushi, plus many other kinds. At that time, there were six adults, including myself, so I thought if everyone ate just six or seven pieces, we could easily finish it all. But things

did not go the way I thought. Others couldn't eat that much, so I had to eat like a food fighter. In the end, I could not finish it and felt embarrassed.

In this way, we long for "unlimited," and sometimes we even live as if we will live forever. But the truth is, our lives have limits. Our time, our energy, and all our possessions are limited.

My life changed a lot after I got married and had a child. Even before marriage, I didn't like filling my room with too many things. After marriage, we still believed "simple is the best" and bought only a few pieces of furniture. But when our son was born, everything changed. Soon our house was filled with diapers, a crib, a humidifier, a changing table, a diaper pail, a wipe warmer, a baby mobile, a bouncer, a jumper, and many toys we had never imagined before. Now we don't use diapers or a crib anymore, but our living room is filled with toy cars, Legos, and Hot Wheels. And they are not just in the living room—they are everywhere: on the couch, in the sink, on the dining table, under the table, and even on the kitchen floor.

Sometimes I step on them or almost trip over them. At those moments, I sometimes shout, "Evan!" in frustration. But later, after I calm down, I regret being upset and remind myself: *"These days will not last forever. He is growing so quickly. One day I may miss the time when his toys were scattered all over the house."*

Because our lives are limited, we all long for eternity. We know that our life will not last forever, but we often do not really feel it. Many times we even forget it. That is why we sometimes live under the illusion that our present situation will last forever. When life is good, we think it will always stay that way. When life is difficult, we also think it will never change. But the truth is that nothing on this earth lasts forever. Times of joy and times of sorrow come and go. Only God is eternal.

In Luke 16, Jesus tells a story about a rich man and his manager. The rich man had so much wealth that his manager had many things to oversee. But over time, the manager began to think of his master's wealth as his own. He lived as if his good situation would last forever. He also tried to use his master's wealth to increase his own fortune. The master was generous and

willing to lend to those in need. For example, if someone borrowed fifty gallons of olive oil, the manager should have given that amount and written it down. But instead, he added extra interest and fees, and he recorded one hundred gallons, keeping the extra fifty for himself. When someone borrowed eight hundred bushels of wheat, he recorded one thousand, so he could keep two hundred for himself.

For a long time, the manager enriched himself this way. But as the saying goes, “In the long run, crime doesn’t pay.” His dishonesty was finally reported to his master. The master called him in, rebuked him, and told him he could no longer be manager. For the manager, this was shocking news. He had been a manager for so long that he had no skill or courage to do other work. He didn’t want to do hard labor like younger men. And after living proudly as a manager, he did not want to beg for a living.

So before the news spread, he tried to make the situation work for him. He decided to give up the dishonest profit he had been making. He took the account books and went to those who owed his master. He reduced the debt of the man who owed one hundred gallons of oil to fifty. He reduced the debt of the one who owed one thousand bushels of wheat to eight hundred. For the debtors, this manager became their benefactor. Later, if he needed help, they would not be able to refuse him.

When the master heard about this, he actually praised the manager. Not for his dishonesty, but because he acted quickly and wisely to prepare for his future.

Friends, we are often like this manager. I am not saying we are dishonest like him. But the truth is, everything in this world belongs to God, the Creator of all things. Still, we often live as if what we have is truly ours, as if we earned it only by our own strength.

Friends, our life on this earth is not eternal. A new house and a new car may feel secure, but as time goes on the paint peels, cracks appear, and they begin to squeak. Our lives are the same. The roles we hold in this world feel permanent, but one day, like actors removing their makeup after a play, we will lay them down and go to our eternal home.

Today many churches seem to be fighting against secularization. People everywhere still long for eternity, because we are spiritual beings. In the past, many people came to church to satisfy this longing. But today, many from the Millennial generation, Gen Z, and others are turning away from the church and looking elsewhere to satisfy their spiritual hunger.

That is why we must remember the old saying *Memento Mori*. In Latin it means, “Remember that you will die.” Just as we brought nothing into this world when we were born, we will take nothing with us when we leave for our eternal home. What matters most is this: through Jesus Christ we receive salvation, new life, and the gift of becoming children of God.

Beloved, we must learn from the wisdom of the dishonest manager. He used what he was about to lose to prepare for the future. In the same way, all that we have in this world—our wealth, our time, our talents, even our very lives—are only temporary gifts entrusted to us by God. We often live as if we will never die, but we must remember that one day it will all end.

So let us not spend our lives chasing after what will not last. Let us not try to satisfy our spiritual hunger apart from God. Instead, let us be wise stewards who invest our lives in what is eternal. When we use our limited resources to serve God’s people, to share the gospel, and to love our neighbors, we are storing up treasures in heaven. When we love God with all that we have and serve our neighbors with all our hearts, one day we will hear the Lord say to us: “*Well done, good and faithful servant.*” Amen.