

Grace & Shrewdness

Scripture used: [Luke 16:1-9 \(NIV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Tilden preached a wonderful message on the power of shrewdness. This is based on the parable told by Jesus immediately after the Prodigal Son, which was the topic of our last sermon series. That parable taught us about grace, and now we're turning to the question of how we live in a fallen world where we are tempted to focus on temporary, fake wealth instead of eternal, authentic wealth. Pastor Tilden used the example of the game Monopoly. None of us would trade real money for Monopoly money, not even \$1.00 for thousands of monopoly dollars! That's because we know it is a game. The value is all based on the game itself. When the game is over, the "dollars" are worthless. That is also true of this world, as we learn in the parable of the Shrewd Manager. He got used to a lifestyle based on his master's wealth, then had to figure out what to do once he knew that was all coming to an end. The manager quickly forgave the debts of others, ensuring that those people felt obliged to help him in return. When the master found out, he was impressed rather than angry! He saw how that manager had been shrewd in a way that blessed others. By helping people experience God's grace in the world, the shrewd manager opened them up to the possibility of a deeper relationship with God. That is what we should all be doing with the wealth we've been given.

KEY POINTS

1. **God has blessed all of us with wealth.** We may not see it that way, but it's true. There are many forms of wealth. First, there is our time. We get to choose how we spend each day on earth. Second, there is our talent. We get to choose how we develop and use our talents. Third, there are our resources. We often point to money and possessions as the obvious indicators of wealth, but they don't have to be.
2. **God wants us to be shrewd wealth managers.** This parable can be confusing to some people because it starts out by saying the manager had been dishonest with his master's wealth. But that is true about all of us to some degree. We have all fallen short of perfection in our behavior. We can look at this manager as an example of how to behave, acknowledging that God can use anyone. That is part of his unconditional love and amazing grace that we learned about in the last sermon series.
3. **There is an end date to our term as managers.** The wealth that we enjoy does not matter after this life is over. It is temporarily important. Like the shrewd manager in the story, we too will have to figure out what to do once we lose this wealth. Jesus used this parable to show us a way to build relationships in a way that blesses others and draws more people toward God.
4. **Shrewd managers give what they cannot keep to gain what they cannot lose.** This principle, the ability to transform temporary resources into permanent blessings, changes how we view the parable of the Prodigal Son. There, we see the father using temporary resources (both as the son departs with the inheritance, and as the son returns home) to win the heart of his son. And once his son realized what truly mattered, the father now had his son back for eternity.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Jesus is talking to us about our wealth, how to think about it, and how to use it during our limited time on earth to make a difference in eternity. Do you feel wealthy? What do you think about time, talent, and resources as measures of wealth?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - The parable of the shrewd manager comes immediately after the parable of the Prodigal Son. Jesus is trying to connect these two parables in our minds. The first parable shows us what grace looks like, as practiced by the father (who represents God). The second parable shows us what shrewdness looks like, as practiced by the manager (who represents us). We cannot take any of our wealth with us, but we make decisions and set priorities as if worldly treasure is all that matters. Instead we should focus on the "eternal dwellings" that Jesus mentions in [Luke 16:9 \(NIV\)](#). This is the house of God, and our wealth should be used to make friends and draw them toward that house. Where do you see opportunities to draw others toward God through your wealth?
- 3) **DO** - NBCC is full of opportunities to share your wealth. Remember this is a combination of time, talent, and resources. We tend to focus on the third but that's not necessarily what matters. Ask God what opportunities He is giving you this week to make wise choices with your wealth. Pray to maintain a perspective that keeps eternity in mind as you seek for the way your joy connects with the joy of others!