**LUKE 15-16 AND MAKING FRIENDS WITH MAMMON OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS**

**BASIC OVERVIEW OF LUKE 15-16**

Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him. 2But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “**This man welcomes sinners and eats with them**.” [Luk 15:1-2]

The above verses are key to understanding the words of Jesus in Luke 15 and 16. Basically, Jesus’ words in Luke 15 and 16 is a response to the Pharisees. The Pharisees were condemning Jesus for welcoming and eating with the “tax collectors and ‘sinners’” who were gathering round Jesus to listen to him.

Luke 15-16 and Making Friends with Mammon of Unrighteousness

**FIRST ISSUE JESUS ADDRESSES**

First, Jesus addresses the resentment of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law at his welcoming and eating with the tax collectors and sinners. He points out to them that giving attention to the tax collectors and sinners was the natural and proper thing to do and that this brought great joy to God and the angels in heaven.

He demonstrated this with illustrations showing that it was natural and proper to give attention to ‘what is lost’ rather than ‘what is not lost.’ He demonstrated this with the following parables,

1. The parable of the lost sheep [Luk 15:3,4-7]
2. The parable of the lost silver coin [Luk 15:8-10]
3. The parable of the lost son [Luk 15:10-32]

All the parables combined teach the following

1. Anyone, whether man or woman, who loses what is precious to him will go after it and will not rest till he has found it.
2. In searching for that precious thing that was lost, he or she will give much less attention, if any, to his other precious things.
3. When he or she finds that which was lost, he is joyful and celebrates it.
4. *The first two parables demonstrate that this preferential treatment of the lost over those that are not lost is natural for both men and women.*

Jesus also points out that there is rejoicing in heaven over every sinner that repents. Please pay attention to the two groups in heaven: the angels of God and God the Father, in whose presence the angels rejoice over the repentant sinner. From the parable of the prodigal son, the Father, whose servants the angels are, is responsible for the rejoicing for he is the one who calls for the celebration.

*Also, by repeatedly pointing out that there is joy in heaven among the angels in God’s presence, Jesus is also saying that he is trying to bring joy to God and the angels by seeking to bring sinners to repentance. Jesus is, therefore, by his actions, seeking to make friends with heaven.*

**SECOND ISSUE JESUS ADDRESSES**

Next, Jesus points out to the Pharisees*(and teachers of the Law)* that even they too were sinners and needed repentance. He did this by pointing out one of their sins in particular, their love of money *(expressed in their stinginess and refusal to be generous towards the poor)*. Everyone needs to be saved from the coming wrath and judgment of God.

1. Jesus pointed out that they had mismanaged worldly wealth. Their mismanagement of worldly wealth was in their stinginess, not being kind and generous to the poor. They loved money more than God and had not used it in a manner pleasing to him. [Luk 16:1-8]
2. He pointed out one of their false doctrines, the doctrine that divorce was okay [Luk 16:8-14]. This is among other false doctrines of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law [Mat 23], which lead their followers, unknowingly into sin, making their converts twice sons of Gehenna [Mat 23:15].
3. He pointed out to them, with the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus [Luk 16:19-31], that, on account of their stinginess and love of money, they were going to find themselves in torment in Hades after their death.
4. Jesus also points out in this story that stinginess was contrary to the Law of Moses and to the doctrine of the of the prophets [Luk 16:31].

**THE COMING JUDGEMENT AND SECURING A GOOD FUTURE AFTER IT**

Like the shrewd manger’s master who was going to settle accounts with him, all men, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law inclusive, are about to be judged by God who is the master of all. Please, take note that the whole world is going to be destroyed, so it’s not like any human being will be so righteous his own dwelling will be secure. This age is going to come to an end, the earth is going to be destroyed, everyone is going to lose our common dwelling—the earth. Like the shrewd manager, anyone who is wise, would take appropriate steps to ensure he fares well after the judgment, and this can only be accomplished by making the right friends.

As worldly people know how to deal with their *sinful*kind, the righteous, those who claim to belong to God, should know how to deal with God and heaven. For the shrewd manager, in view of his master’s judgment, he could make friends with sinful men like himself to secure a safe future. This, of course, is how friendship is made in the world, but, certainly, not in the Kingdom of God. With regards to God’s coming judgment, however, there is no sinful friend to make that will save you. So, the question is, how do we make friends with God so that after the judgment of this world, after all men lose this world, which is our common dwelling, we will be welcomed into the kingdom.

Generally, it is to do that which pleases God to the best of one’s ability. However, the particular focus for Jesus here was the use of worldly wealth.

Apparently, Jesus’ view is that worldly wealth is from God and is to be used in his service, i.e., in a manner consistent with his will. The service in focus, as we may note from the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus, is using worldly wealth to help or care for the poor. So, by using worldly wealth in a manner pleasing to God, in a manner God would consider responsible, one makes friends with God and after the judgment and destruction of our present world, he would be welcomed into eternal dwellings of the Kingdom of God.

This, as a matter of fact, starts right after death for Lazarus was welcomed into Abraham’s bosom.

**SUMMARY**

What does it mean to make friends with ungodly mammon?

It is to have a good standing before God through the faithful use of earthly wealth. God is the one with the eternal dwellings and to be a friend of God, one has to serve him faithfully and hate the world. Abraham was a friend of God because of his faith and obedience. Those who love the world are enemies of God. Those who walk in unrighteousness are enemies of God for sin is enmity towards God.

To win someone’s friendship, to have favor with him, you must do what pleases him. The people of this world have their own way of making friends. If you want God to be your friend, you must know how to win his friendship and favor.

The wealth of this world is temporal and very little compared to that of the kingdom. In the kingdom, God will give us true riches and they will be ours *(this worlds wealth is not ours because, one way or another, we will one day part ways)*. Our wealth is a test from God. One of the ways to use it right is to help the poor, especially, the poor in the Lord with it. We are also to support those who minister the gospel and their ministry. This is how we lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven.

**QUICK POINTS**

1. What does it mean to make friends with (or using) ungodly mammon?
2. It is to use money to make friends. It is to use money to win favor.
3. Who is the friend we are to make with ungodly mammon?
4. God is the one we are to use money to befriend
5. How do we use money to make friends? How do we use money to make God our friend?
6. We use money to make God our friend by using it righteously. By using money to help the poor which the rich man failed to do with poor Lazarus.
7. Why do we need to make friends with ungodly mammon, i.e., money? Why do we need to make God our friend?
8. It is to secure a good future for us after they are gone.
9. All the wealth of this world will soon be destroyed making all men, however, great and wealthy, extremely poor. This world is going to be destroyed and will come under the ownership of a new master making every man automatically homeless.
10. To fair well after this world and all its wealth passes, we need to befriend the owner of the age to come

**APPENDIX**

**SOME OTHER POINTS FROM THE STORY OF THE RICH MAN AND POOR LAZARUS**

* The sin of the rich man, why he was in torment in Hades was that he did not care for poor Lazarus. He did not so much as give him the crumbs that fell from his table *(the rich man was so stingy he made sure nothing fell)*. The rich man did not take care of Lazarus’ wounds. Unlike the rich man however, the dogs *(unbelievers)*tried to help Lazarus by licking his wounds *(as they do theirs)*.
* It is important to note that Lazarus was a Jew and ought to have had the pity of his fellow Jew. The Law teaches the rich to let “crumbs fall from their tables” for the poor among them [Lev 19:9-10; Deut 24:19-21; Ruth 2:2,15]. Even poor foreigners were to be given this privilege.
* And what Abraham said proved true for, though they knew from the soldiers who guarded Jesus’ tomb that he had risen, they did not believe but instead even sowed the seed ensuring that future generations of the Jews would not believe and repent either.

**MAKING FRIENDS WITH GOD**

* Loving the world is enmity towards God [1Jo 2:15-18]. To be a friend of God, you must be an enemy of the world. Failure to be an enemy of the world and thus a friend of God will cause a man to pass away with the world.
* Abraham was a friend of God because he had faith in God and obeyed [Jam 2:21-23]. To be a friend of God, a man must have faith in God. Faith in God is however not all it takes to be a friend of God, to be a friend of God, one must be obedient to him.
* God hates the proud [Jam 4:6], therefore, the proud cannot be God’s friends. To be God’s friend, a man must be humble.
* God is opposed to those who are not generous towards him [Luk 12:16-21]. You cannot be God’s friend if you are greedy and only think of yourself with regard to your wealth and increase.
* It is because of their love of money, clearly exemplified in the rich young ruler, that Jesus said, “it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” [Mat 19:16-25].

**ABRAHAM’S PROPHECY**

“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, 28for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’   
29“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’   
30“‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’   
31“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’” [Luk 16:31]

The words of Abraham have proven true for, though the Pharisees and teachers of the Law learned from the soldiers who guarded Jesus’ tomb that he had risen, they did not believe. What they instead did, a disservice to countless generations of the Jews, was that they sowed the seed of a lie [Mat 28:11-15]. By this wicked act they ensured that future generations of the Jews would not believe in Christ and turn to him in repentance.

Thus, sadly, like Jesus said, not only were they not willing to go in, but they even hindered others from entering the kingdom [Mat 23:13].

**REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, THE ‘ETERNAL DWELLINGS’**

* Your righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law [Mat 5:20]. What Jesus describes in Mat 5,6&7 is how our righteousness is to surpass that of the Pharisees. This includes being peacemakers, loving our neighbors as ourselves, loving our enemies, not divorcing *(which the Pharisees and teachers of the Law permitted)*, forgiving those who offend us, seeking the forgiveness of our brothers who have hurt against us, laying up treasures in heaven and not loving money, etc.
* To enter the Kingdom of Heaven we must do the will of God our Father in heaven [Mat 7:21]
* One must be like little children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven [Mat 18:3-4; Mar 10:15]
* We must ensure not to mislead anyone [Mat 18:6-9]
* We must obey the commandments, “‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’” [Mat 19:17-19]
* We must be generous to the poor to enter the Kingdom of Heaven [Mat 19:20-21]

**DICTIONARY OF SYMBOLISMS IN LUKE 15 & 16**

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| ***Symbol*** | ***Meaning*** |
| *i. One lost sheep and one lost coin* | Tax collectors and sinners |
| *ii. One lost sheep out of a hundred and one lost coin out of ten* | Jesus describes one out of many to show how important one lost soul is compared to many that are not lost.  He is not saying there are many more righteous than the unrighteous. |
| *iii. The 99 sheep that were not lost and the 9 silver coins that were not lost* | The righteous or those who considered themselves righteous, even if they were not, that needed not to be saved |
| *iv. The prodigal son* | The tax collectors and sinners |
| *v. The faithful elder brother* | The Pharisees and teachers of the Law |
| *vi. Father of the two sons* | God the Father |
| *vii. Ring on the hand of the lost son* | Acceptance as a son  Authority |
| *viii. Best robe put on the lost son* | Righteousness and immortality |
| *ix. The fattened calf killed for him* | The atonement of Christ |
| *x. The elder brother refusing to enter the house* | The Pharisees and teachers of the Law refusing to believe on Jesus because of their resentment and because he did not fulfill their expectation of a preferential treatment by him. |
| *xi. The master of the shrewd manager* | God the Father. He is the owner of everything |
| *xii. The account the shrewd and unfaithful manager was to give to his master* | The coming judgment |
| *xiii. The shrewd manager* | Men who realize that the world is about to be destroyed for its many sins and who make adequate preparations to fare well after its destruction. |
| *xiv. The dwelling the shrewd manager was about to lose* | The world is the common dwelling of all men and it is about to be destroyed. |
| *xv. The eternal dwellings* | This is the Kingdom of God. The key dwelling place in the Kingdom is the New Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the whole world, then under the authority of Christ, will be the eternal dwelling. |
| *xvi. Making friends with ungodly mammon* | We make friends with God with money by using it responsibly as his word has taught us too. In these chapters *(Luk 15 & 16)*, the particular way to make friends is to be generous towards God especially by being generous towards the poor. |
| *xvii. The story of the rich man and Lazarus is not a parable. Jesus used this parable to warn the Pharisees of where they were headed on account of their stinginess and love of money—torment in Hades. If this was a parable, then Jesus was warning them with a lie.*  *If the message of Jesus in this story did not have actual specifics such as the punishment and Abraham’s statement to the rich man in torment in Hades, it would fit for a parable.*  *The parables of lost sheep, lost silver coin and prodigal son don’t have to be real to pass across the message. They all demonstrate what people do when they lose something precious to them. A fictitious story, as long as it is coherent in its demonstration of reality, is true and teaches truth. However, when it starts stating fictitious, yet specific rewards or punishments as encouragement or warnings as exact consequences for one’s actions, it is a lie.*  *Warning the Pharisees that they will end up in torment in Hades like the rich man is false if torment in Hades is not a reality. And if Jesus intended torment in Hades as a symbol of something, it is not a warning and is totally pointless because whatever he was telling them would then be out of context and, again, meaningless.*  *Interpreting in context, which is the primary proper way to interpret, one knows that this story was to warn the Pharisees against their love of money. The warning of father Abraham was that the Pharisees and all others were to follow the Laws of Moses.*  *Now, as with practically all the real stories in the Bible, this story, though real, carries other meanings apart from its primary meaning.* | |
| *xviii. All the characters in the story of the rich man and Lazarus* | All characters in this story, including the dogs, are real |
| *xix. The dogs licking the wound* | Although the dogs are real, they can morally be taken to represent the most unlikely helpers. If dogs, animals, can, in their own way, care for the poor Lazarus, then the rich man was truly condemned for not caring at all for this poor man. |
| *xx. The crumbs from the table that Lazarus never got to eat* | This points to the rich man’s stinginess and is an example of the stinginess of those who so ensure that nothing reaches the hands of the poor except what they have worked for. This is contrary to the Law of Moses which teaches that we should, in fact, deliberately make sure the poor have something from our harvests. |