

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Amos 8:4-7

The Coming Day of Bitter Mourning

4 Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end, 5 saying, “When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances, 6 that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and sell the chaff of the wheat?” 7 The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: “Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

8:4-6 Another list of specific ways that the people—esp the wealthy—pervert justice and oppress the poor. Amos levels similar charges in 2:6-7; 5:11-12. (TLSB)

8:4 *hear this* – This is an attention-getting alert letting people know that important news is coming. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

trample – Means to totally crush. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Cf 2:7. A refrain in Amos’s prophecy. The covenant stipulated a very different treatment of the poor (Dt 15:7-11). (TLSB)

the poor – Those who are disadvantaged, poor, afflicted, weak, low in status, and thin like the emaciated cows in Gen 41:19. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Panting after the poor in their anxiety to destroy them and to grasp their property. (Kretzmann)

8:5 People obviously did not have their hearts in worship. (TLSB)

New Moon ... Sabbath. The official religious festivals, when commerce ceased (cf. Nu 28:9-15; 2Ki 4:23). (CSB)

First day of the lunar month was a regular festival. (TLSB)

This was a holy day (Num 28:11-15). Although work, including selling was forbidden on the Sabbath and major festivals, it was not expressly prohibited for the New Moon, but the pious may well have followed the spirit of the Torah by resting on it. Some of them obviously have been doing so in a hypocritical manner. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Sabbath means to finish, cease, do away with work. These people hypocritically cease work on the Sabbath, then during the rest of the week they make the poor cease to exist. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

wheat for sale – Means to open the wheat, that is, open the containers and display it for sale. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Opening their storehouses in order to make unjust gains. (Kretzmann)

false balances. See Lev 19:35-36; Dt 25:13-16; Pr 11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23. (CSB)

To make matters worse, these people habitually defrauded unsuspecting customers with dishonest weights, measures, and scales (Lv 19:35–36; Dt 25:13–15). (TLSB)

This means to make the bushel of wheat sold to the customer smaller and the make the shekel paid the customer be greater. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Scales of deceit. When the wheat was on one side of the balance, the dishonest merchant would put the lighter stone on the other side, but when the customer put his payment on the scale, the merchant would balance it with a heavier weight. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

8:6 *buy the poor...pair of sandals* – Apparently the merchants would force a person to be sold into slavery if they could not pay a debt as small as the price of sandals. Another interpretation is that “sandals” is an idiom for the legal transfer of land (Ruth 4:7-10); if so, the poor were sold either in order to be acquired as slaves or in order to acquire their land. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Some in Israel stooped to trafficking in slave trade. (TLSB)

chaff of the wheat – It was the custom as a directive of the Lord to round the corners, leaving some wheat standing for those who were poor and needed to have it for survival (Ruth 2:2-3). In this verse “the sweepings” were literally the refuse or husks, which were likely mixed in with the kernels when selling wheat to the poor. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

Some merchants were taking sweepings off the threshing floor and mixing them in with the grain in order to “bulk up” their bags of wheat. Beyond the dishonesty and price inflation involved, this was also an unhealthy practice. (TLSB)

8:7 *sworn by the Pride of Jacob*. Israel took pride in the fact that the Lord was her God. (CSB)

Land of Israel. Amos elsewhere depicts the Lord swearing by His holiness (4:2) and Himself (6:8). Swearing by a corrupt and idolatrous land is highly ironic. (TLSB)

This is a name the Lord gives himself and therefore swears by himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

EPISTLE – 1 Timothy 2:1-15

Pray for All People

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man[a] Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 9 likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. 11 Let

a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

Ch 2 Paul writes on organization and order for the public services of the churches. (TLSB)

2:1 *first of all* – Corporate prayer and worship were not only first among the practical issues raised by Paul in this Epistle, but they are also first (primary) importance for fulfilling the charge to Timothy outlined in chapter 1. (TLSB)

supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving – This includes the full range of prayers, spoken by God’s people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

Four synonyms for prayer, each with a different nuance. REQUESTS, SUPPLICATIONS IN ESV = Offered for specific benefits or needs. PRAYERS = A common NT term, denoting a wide array of petitions. INTERCESSION = Appeals for others made to God with boldness and childlike trust. THANKSGIVING = Expressions of gratitude for mercies received. These are always appropriate, even when earthly circumstances are difficult, because we are never separated from God’s love and mercy in Christ. (TLSB)

for all people – Inclusive; even unbelievers and enemies of the Church are included in the Church’s prayers. Cf Mt. 5:43-47.

2:2 *kings and all those in high positions*. See Jer 29:7. The notorious Roman emperor Nero (A.D. 54–68) was in power when Paul wrote these words. (CSB)

Paul does not exclude the notorious emperor Nero, ruler of the Roman Empire. All governing authorities are instituted by God, thus deserving of honor and respect (Rm 13:1–7). (TLSB)

Members of the congregation feared the Roman government. They were faced persecution because of their faith. Paul, however, invited them to pray for the government people as a part of their Christian practice. This is consistent with what he writes in Romans 13. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

high positions. All prominent public officials should be included in the Church’s prayers. (TLSB)

lead a peaceful and quiet life – God works through good government to provide a quiet life within us and a peaceful environment for his people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

A stable civil government allows Christians to carry out their vocations unhindered and without harassment. The uncommon prosperity and peace of the Roman Empire (the so-called *Pax Romana*) opened many doors for Paul to carry out his ministry throughout the Mediterranean world. Paul himself was a citizen of Rome (Ac 22:22–29). (TLSB)

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godly and dignified. A key word (along with “godly”) in the Pastorals, occurring eight times in 1 Timothy (here; 3:16; 4:7–8; 6:3, 5–6, 11), once in 2 Timothy (3:5) and once in Titus (1:1), but nowhere

else in the writings of Paul. It implies a good and holy life, with special emphasis on its source, a deep reverence for God. (CSB)

eusebia – The Spirit reshapes us in godliness by grace through the faith that is worked within us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

2:3 *this is good* – This praying is good because it is prompted by the God who saves and it results in people being saved. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

2:4 *who desires all men to be saved.*† God desires the salvation of all people. On the other hand, the Bible indicates that God chooses some (not all) people to be saved (e.g., 1Pe 1:2). Some interpreters incorrectly understand such passages to teach that God has chosen those whom he, in his foreknowledge, knew would believe when confronted with the gospel and enabled to believe. But, though human reasoning cannot resolve the seeming inconsistency, the Bible teaches both truths and thus there can be no actual contradiction. Certainly there is none in the mind of God. (CSB)

Cf Ezk 33:11, 2Pt 3:9. All people are not saved, however, because many reject the Word and resist the Holy Spirit (e.g., Hymenaeus and Alexander, who shipwrecked their faith; 1:19–20). Cf Mt 23:37; Ac 7:51. (TLSB)

pantras anthropous – God’s desire to rescue us from sin and death embraces everyone and excludes no one. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

knowledge of the truth – alatheias – This truth is the message about Jesus that saves.

2:5-6 “The Scriptures do not teach that we are to call on the saints or to ask the saints for help. Scripture sets before us the one Christ as the Mediator, Atoning Sacrifice, High Priest, and Intercessor [1 Timothy 2:5–6]. He is to be prayed to. He has promised that He will hear our prayer [John 14:13]” (AC XXI 2–3). (TLSB)

2:5 *there is one God.* The basic belief of Judaism (Dt 6:4), which every Jew confessed daily in the *Shema*. (CSB)

He saves both Jews and Gentiles through faith (Rm 3:29–30). (TLSB)

one mediator – mesitas – This not someone from the OT like Moses. It is not an angel someone divine like the Gnostics who claimed to possess superior knowledge. It is Jesus the only possible and perfect mediator. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

Jesus alone is the Savior from sin and death. (TLSB)

man. Jesus is both “true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary” (see SC, Second Article, p xxxvii). As a true man, His work of mediation was carried out on behalf of all human beings. (TLSB)

2:6 *ransom.* The price that must be paid to free captives. *for all.* Jesus willingly gave His life as the ransom for all held captive by sin and death (Mk 10:45). (TLSB)

antilutros – A ransom is the payment made to free, or redeem, someone from enslavement which in this case is caused by our sin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

Matthew 20:28 “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

testimony. The apostolic testimony that Christ gave himself as the ransom. (CSB)

Jesus’ act of self-giving testifies to the desire of the one God that all people be saved. Paul and the other apostles would also testify to Jesus’ mediating work, and their testimony continues through the time of the NT until Christ returns. (TLSB)

2:7 *for this.*† To testify that, through his death, Christ has bridged the gap between God and man and provides salvation for all. (CSB)

preacher. One who with authority makes a public proclamation. (CSB)

The good news concerning the self-giving, ransom-paying Savior is a message that must be proclaimed and taught. Paul had been appointed to carry out this task. In the first century, a preacher (or herald) was often used to make important public announcements. As a spokesman for kings and other authorities, the herald’s most important duty was to accurately announce the message that had been entrusted to him. (TLSB)

I am not lying. Paul affirms his apostleship, which was challenged in both Galatia and Corinth (Gal 1; 1Co 9). The comment could also emphasize the phrase that follows, namely, that Paul’s apostolic appointment was directed especially to the Gentiles (Ac 9:15; 26:17–18). The latter fact is deserving of emphasis especially here because God desires to save “all people” (v 4), the vast majority of whom are, in fact, Gentiles. (TLSB)

teacher of the Gentiles. Twelve other men had also been appointed as heralds and apostles, but only Paul was sent to preach primarily to the Gentiles. (TLSB)

2:8–14† Some maintain that Paul’s teaching about women here is historically conditioned, not universal and timeless. According to Lutheran tradition these verses are unaffected by the historical situation and therefore applicable to every age. (CSB)

2:8 *every place.* Where public worship was conducted; private prayer is not in view here. In older, more established congregations, the overseer (pastor) would be the one to lead the congregation in worship. Overseers were always male (v 12). (TLSB)

men. The Greek for this word does not refer to mankind (as in vv. 5–6) but to male as distinct from female. That women also prayed in public, however, seems evident from 1Co 11:5. (CSB)

Those who led prayers in public worship were to be males. (TLSB)

lifting holy hands. This posture captures both the outer and inner attitudes that should accompany prayer. It is an ancient prayer posture that shows the need and expectancy of the one who prays. Uplifted hands are also “holy” hands when all anger and quarreling is resolved through repentance and reconciliation before petitions are offered to God. (TLSB)

without anger or quarreling – Paul addresses his concern for orderly public worship. He urges that God’s people, cleaned by the forgiveness of Christ, continue to pray, devoting themselves to God’s work of salvation for all people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 4)

2:9 *respectable apparel*. Outward adornment should reflect the inner purity of those who profess faith in Christ. These directives hold true at all times, but especially as the congregation gathers for public worship. (TLSB)

self-control. Command over bodily passions and desires is here expressed through respectable apparel. (TLSB)

braided hair. Elaborate hairstyles and ornate jewelry in the first century were expressions of vanity and sexual promiscuity. (TLSB)

Not a total ban on the wearing of jewelry or braided hair. Rather, Paul was expressing caution in a society where such things were signs of extravagant luxury and proud personal display. (CSB)

costly attire. The finest garments could cost up to 7,000 denarii, at a time when the average worker was paid one denarius per day. Pearls, for instance, were considered three times more valuable than gold. Paul is not condemning braided hair, jewelry, or fine clothing per se, but rather the excess and immorality conveyed by these items. (TLSB)

2:10 See 1Pe 3:3–4. (CSB)

profess godliness. To lay claim to reverence and piety in an ongoing manner. (TLSB)

good works. The primary “adornment” for every Christian woman. This adornment should not only be outward but should match inner virtues. (TLSB)

2:12 *I do not permit a woman to teach*.† Some believe that Paul here prohibited teaching only by women not properly instructed, i.e., by the women at Ephesus. Such women tended to exercise authority over, i.e., to domineer, the men. According to Lutheran tradition Paul did not allow a woman to be an official teacher in the assembled church. This is indicated by the added restriction concerning exercising “authority over a man” (a male), i.e., functioning as an overseer. See also 1Co 14:33–35; Eph 5:22–24. (CSB)

God calls qualified men to teach and preach the Scriptures in the Church’s public services. Women may actively teach the Scriptures to other women (Ti 2:3–5), to children (2Tm 1:5), and in private conversations with other believers and unbelievers (Ac 18:24–26). (TLSB)

exercise authority over a man. Namely, the authority God gives to publicly preach and teach the Scriptures to the assembled congregation. (TLSB)

remain quiet – She was not to interrupt the sermons or doctrinal discussions in public services by questions or remarks of her own, she was in no way to interfere with, or take part in, the public teaching of the congregation as such. Her position is indeed, in many questions pertaining to the household, one of coordination, in the public

2:13–14† Paul based the restrictions on Ge 2–3. Some argue that “For” does not express the reason for woman’s silence and submission, but is used only as a connective word as in v. 5. The meaning, then, would be that Adam’s priority in creation illustrates the present situation of male priority in teaching at Ephesus, and Eve’s deception illustrates the deception of the untrained and aggressive Ephesian women involved in false teaching. Thus the prohibition is not universal and permanent but restricted to the church situation (see Introduction: Background and Purpose). Under different circumstances the restrictions

would not apply (e.g., 1Co 11:1–5). In Lutheran tradition the appeal to the creation account makes the restrictions universal and permanent: 1. (CSB)

2:13 *For.* What follows is an explanation for the prohibition given in vv 11–12. (TLSB)

God ordained the roles of men and women at creation. Adam was created first and given specific service (Gn 2:15). Eve was created as a worthy, compatible mate. This does not mean men are more important than women (Eph 5:22-33) but that God established different callings for them. The relationship between husbands and wives (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:23-24) set in place before the fall into sin, remains unchanged today. Thus the commands and prohibitions concerning men and women in this passage are not simply reflections of first-century Jewish culture or Paul’s personal opinions. Paul roots the practices of the Church in God’s created order. (TLSB)

Adam was formed first. Paul appeals to the priority of Adam in creation, which predates the fall. Thus he views the man-woman relationship set forth in this passage as grounded in creation. (CSB)

the woman was deceived. Paul appears to argue that since the woman was deceived (and then led Adam astray), she is not to be entrusted with the teaching function of an overseer (or elder) in the public worship services of the assembled church. (CSB)

2:14 *Adam was not deceived.* Gn 3 illustrates what happens when the respective roles of men and women, established by God at creation, are ignored. Adam’s sin and his role in the fall are not denied here or elsewhere by Paul (cf Rm 5:12–14, 1Co 15:21–22). The distinction is that Adam sinned willfully, while Eve was a victim of deception. Chryostom: “He transgressed, not captivated by appetite, but merely from the persuasion of his wife” (NPNF 1 13:436). Adam did not exercise his God-ordained headship. Eve did not exercise her God-ordained role as a helper and ally. The results were deadly. (TLSB)

transgressor. Lit, “one who steps over the boundary.” (TLSB)

2:15 *she ... they.* Paul’s argument shifts from the consideration of one woman’s (Eve’s) sin to the salvation provided for all women by the birth of a child, Jesus, who would defeat Satan on behalf of all women. (TLSB)

Three possible meanings of this verse are: (1) It speaks of the godly woman finding fulfillment in her role as wife and mother in the home; (2) it refers to women being saved spiritually through the most significant birth of all, the incarnation of Christ; or (3) it refers to women being kept physically safe in childbirth. (CSB)

Women are not saved by giving birth. Through faith in the child Jesus, women are saved as they live out their God-given vocations. Childbearing is an example of a most noble, exclusively feminine vocation. The Apology to the Augsburg Confession states, “ ‘She will be saved through childbearing,’ ...But what does St Paul mean? Let the reader observe that faith is added, and that domestic duties without faith are not praised. ‘If they continue,’ he says, ‘in faith.’ For he speaks of the whole class of mothers. Therefore he requires especially faith, through which a woman receives the forgiveness of sins and justification. Then he adds a particular work of calling, just as in every person a good work of a particular calling should follow faith...So the duties of the women please God because of faith, and the believing woman is saved who devoutly serves her calling in such duties.” (TLSB)

if. Carries the idea of expectancy.(TLSB)

faith ... self-control. Although these virtues apply to both sexes, Paul applies them specifically to women here. These qualities characterize the life of every Christian woman (vv 9–10). (TLSB)

Ch 2 The Gospel affirms the unique vocations God assigned to men and women at creation. Our sinful nature may sometimes bristle at the roles and responsibilities God has given us, causing us to fail to see that God has given us His divine design for male and female because He loves us and always wants what is best for us. We must always be on guard against this kind of sin, especially as we are gathered for public worship. Jesus faithfully fulfilled the divine role assigned to Him as the one mediator between God and all people. He willingly submitted Himself to death as the sacred substitute for sinners. Through faith in Him, we receive forgiveness of sins, and we rejoice to serve Him in earthly vocations characterized by thanksgiving, modesty, and self-control. • Blessed Savior, as we gather in Your name for worship, give voice to our prayers for all people. Lead us to delight in the roles and responsibilities You have so lovingly assigned us and to live out our vocations in submissiveness to You and to Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL Luke 16:1-15

The Parable of the Shrewd Manager

He also said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. 2 And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’ 3 And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4 I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’ 5 So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ 6 He said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ 7 Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ 8 The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. 9 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. 10 “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. 11 If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.”

Lk 16:1–31 opens with one story unique to Luke (the steward of unrighteousness) and closes with another (the rich man and Lazarus). In each story the disciple's attitude toward possessions is an important theme. While they are not labeled as parables, they are among many such illustrative stories that function in the same way as parables, and so they are commonly called parables (see textual notes on 4:23 and 8:4). Appended behind the first parable are words of application about serving God and mammon (16:9 [or 10] to 13). Inserted before the second parable are verses about the Pharisees' self-declared righteousness and attitude toward the Law and the Prophets—and the kingdom (16:14–18, cf. 16:31).

In the sayings appended to 16:1–9, the key connecting word might be “mammon.” Lk 16:13 has a parallel at Mt 6:24. In the sayings inserted in front of 16:19–31, the key connecting phrase might be “the Law [Moses] and the Prophets.” Lk 16:16 has a parallel at Mt 11:12–13; Lk 16:17 at Mt 5:18; and Lk 16:18 at Mt 19:9 (cf. 5:32). (CC p. 612)

That the Pharisees were “lovers of money” makes for the transition from 16:13 to 16:14. There is an overall flow to the thought: “Sons of light” are prudent about the coming of the kingdom, and the Pharisees would be too, if they heeded the witness of Moses and the Prophets to the kingdom and the King. (CC p. 612)

This unit represents the continuation of the discourse that is set in the scene opened at 14:25 and belongs in the narrower context of the parables and teachings of 14:25–17:10. It is most easily treated in three sections: 16:1–13; 16:14–18 (where the Pharisees become the addressees); and the concluding parable, 16:19–31. (CC p. 612)

It would appear that the parable found in 16:1–8 is difficult, for it has spawned many different interpretations. The following exposition will not rehash and dispute all the various interpretations. Rather, it aspires to offer one that is consistent with the surface meaning of the text and also provides a theological reading of the parable that places it within the flow of Jesus’ catechetical teachings. (CC p. 612)

At 16:1 the discourse continues, but the audience shifts from the tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, and scribes of Luke 15 to Jesus’ disciples. This shift from opponents to disciples has been a recurring Lukan pattern throughout his journey narrative. Jesus’ extended discourse began at 14:25 with great crowds journeying with him. It was interrupted by the Pharisees at 15:1–3, when they grumbled about the tax collectors and sinners drawing near to hear Jesus, and it will terminate at 17:10, after which Luke reports that Jesus is traveling between Samaria and Galilee. (CC p. 613)

Lk 16:1–31 is one of three major sections in the journey narrative discussing possessions. The others are 12:13–34 and 18:18–30. It serves to amplify Jesus’ saying near the beginning of this discourse: “Every one of you who does not take leave of all his own possessions, he is not able to be my disciple” (14:33). This discourse begins with a parable about the proper use of possessions (16:1–8). Next, some sayings give practical application of the truth of that parable (16:9–13). (CC p. 613)

Interpreters differ over this difficult parable, unlike the clearer symbolism of parables in ch 15. It seems impossible that the rich man can be commended for integrity while at the same time the manager is praised for self-interest. Instead of viewing elements of this parable symbolically, it is best to stress Jesus’ main point in v 9. (TLSB)

16:1 *said to his disciples* – ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ—“The δὲ καὶ is a favorite transitional device of St. Luke. Here the καὶ goes with ἔλεγεν to show that the parabolic discourse continues from the previous chapter. Actually, as we shall see, this parable is a continuation of the theme started by [the parables of] the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son” (M. Scharlemann, *Proclaiming the Parables* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1963] 83). (CC pp. 610-611)

If this were a secular story, the interpretation would be self-evident. Faced with a crisis, the steward is clever though dishonest in solving his problems. The apparent dilemma is that this is a parable of Jesus in which he seems to be commending dishonesty to his followers. A similar dilemma occurs in the parable of 18:1–8, where the unrighteous judge is the God figure, and in 19:12, where the severe king is the Christ figure. But this is a false dilemma, a problem only if one dwells on the steward and his dishonesty. This parable and the appended sayings are addressed to Jesus’ disciples. This is prime catechetical material. (Only later does the hearer find out [16:14] that the Pharisees are eavesdropping on this teaching.) This teaching will inform the disciples first and foremost about God, and only secondarily about their response to God. (CC p. 614)

If one considers the parable from the lord’s perspective, then the focus of the parable is *not* on the *dishonesty* of the steward, but on the *mercy* of the lord. This assumes that the lord is an honorable man, which seems to be the pattern of the households in Jesus’ parables. The rich lord’s mercy to the steward

who *squandered* the lord's estate (16:1; διασκορπίζων) is parallel to the father's mercy to the prodigal who *squandered* the father's inheritance (15:13; διεσκορπίσεν). The purpose of the parable, then, is to reveal the lord's mercy. (CC p. 614)

disciples. Perhaps more than just the Twelve (see 6:13; 10:1). (CSB)

a rich man – ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος—This opening phrase recurs at 16:19 and binds this parable to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The parable of the prodigal son also begins in a similar fashion (15:11—ἄνθρωπός τις εἶχεν). (CC p.611)

manager. A steward who handled all the business affairs of the owner. (CSB)

The owner's agent, entrusted with executive authority and independent in his stewardship. (TLSB)

οἰκονόμον—This is the same word that is used in 12:42 in the section on watchfulness at the coming of the Son of Man, where Jesus tells the parable of the faithful and wise steward. (CC p. 611)

The steward most likely is a salaried estate agent. The debtors in the parable probably rent property from the lord to grow crops, and the debt is a predetermined portion of the harvest, whether it be olive oil or wheat. When the report about wastefulness comes, the lord tells the steward he is fired, but he does *not* throw him into jail or punish him in any way. This would have been the lord's right, but he is a merciful man. *It is this mercy that the steward banks on in deciding upon the solution to his problem.* When one chooses to focus on the mercy of the lord, the question of the dishonesty of the steward in squandering the lord's possessions becomes a moot point. It also lessens the significance of the exact arrangements the steward made with the lord's debtors. K. Bailey is probably closest to reflecting the first-century context by describing the lord as an honorable man who shows his integrity and his concern for his estate. (CC p. 614)

wasting. He had squandered his master's possessions, just as the prodigal ("wasteful") son (15:13). (CSB)

διασκορπίζων—Luke provides a subtle link between this parable and the parable of the prodigal son (15:13) by means of this word. The steward wastes his lord's estate in a way that is similar to the prodigal's waste of his father's estate. Neither uses the possessions entrusted to him wisely. (CC p. 611)

16:2 *turn in an account* – Required either because the manager's employment is discontinued or for audit to see if the charges are true. (TLSB)

ἀπόδος τὸν λόγον τῆς οἰκονομίας σου—K. Bailey suggests that ἀπόδος should be translated "surrender" since the lord wants the steward to give him the books before he tampers with them further (*Poet and Peasant*, 97). M. Scharlemann notes that "λόγος is the official record or account kept by the manager for his master" (*Parables*, 84). (CC p. 611)

16:3 *What shall I do now?* The dishonest manager (v. 8) had no scruples against using his position for his own benefit, even if it meant cheating his master. Knowing he would lose his job, the manager planned for his future by discounting the debts owed to his master in order to obligate the debtors to himself. Interpreters disagree as to whether his procedure of discounting was in itself dishonest. Was he giving away what really belonged to his master, or was he forgoing interest payments his master did not have a right to charge? Originally the manager may have overcharged the debtors, a common way of circumventing the Mosaic law that prohibited taking interest from fellow Jews (Dt 23:19). So, to reduce the debts, he may have returned the figures to their initial amounts, which would both satisfy his master

and gain the good favor of the debtors. In any event, the point remains the same: He was shrewd enough to use the means at his disposal to plan for his future well-being. (CSB)

Weakness and shame narrow his choices. (TLSB)

τί ποιήσω—See comments at 12:17, where a similar question is asked by the rich fool. (CC p. 611)

When the steward hears of his firing, he does not protest but deliberates over his future. (This is prudence.) His first reaction is to approach the crisis from a human point of view. What can *he* do, humanly speaking, to extricate himself from this mess he has caused? He is so overwhelmed that he even contemplates two alternatives (digging or begging) that are in reality impossibilities. Like the prodigal son who desired to eat pig food, the unrighteous steward has hit the bottom and realizes that he can do nothing for himself. Humanly speaking, there is no escape from his crisis. (CC pp. 614-615)

my master – ὁ κύριος—Here and at 16:5, 8 “lord” refers to the rich man in the parable and not to Jesus, though the lord’s mercy does represent the grace of Jesus. (CC p. 611)

16:4 *I have decided what to do* – The steward had probably been over charging people. It was not uncommon at that time to do that. It was a way of getting around the Mosaic law the prohibited taking interest from fellow Jews. Now he would under charge them and win their favor.

Receive me into their houses – Weakness and shame narrow his choices. (TLSB)

16:5 *debtors* – Tenants or traders with unpaid accounts. (TLSB)

16:6-7 The debtors are likely sharecroppers. The generous reduction of the bills clearly favor the debtors, perhaps by removing interest on loans or property agreements. (TLSB)

16:6 *A hundred measures of olive oil*. The yield of about 450 olive trees. (CSB)

ἑκατὸν βάτους ἐλαίου—The Hebrew liquid measurement “bath” is about eight to nine gallons, and so a hundred baths would be eight hundred to nine hundred gallons of olive oil, a significant debt. The cost of a reduction of half would amount to five hundred denarii, as would the cost of the reduction in wheat, so that the value of both reductions would be the same (cf. G. B. Caird, *Luke*, 188; K. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 101). One denarius is typically a workman’s daily wage. (CC p. 611)

sit down quickly – καθίσας ταχέως γράψον—The participle καθίσας is subordinate to γράψον and so acts like an imperative. ταχέως, “quickly,” goes with both the sitting down and the writing, but the real focus is on “write,” the explicit imperative. (CC p. 611)

The steward’s great insight is to see that the solution must come from outside himself. His entire plan is based on his assumption that the lord is an honorable man who will respond in mercy, as he has done in the past. The steward trusts that the lord will allow a brief span of time, an opportunity to prepare for the imminent reckoning and reversal. The significance of the seemingly innocuous adverb “quickly” (ταχέως; 16:6) cannot be overemphasized. The steward must act in haste so that the lord’s debtors will think that the adjustments in the accounts stem from the lord’s mercy and not the steward’s desperation. The readiness of the debtors to accept the steward’s rewriting of their bills indicates that they believe this comes from the lord’s hand, perhaps under the gentle persuasion of the wise steward who is looking out for the renters. The community is dependent on the “generous and merciful” lord and has come to expect this sort of mercy from him, and the steward benefits in that he is an extension of the lord.

The Jewish *shaliach* was a subordinate who represented the one who sent him. In Jewish society it was common for such a representative to serve in many capacities. (CC p. 615)

The lord is a perfect example of Jesus' exhortations in the Sermon on the Plain to be generous and merciful: "Do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return" (6:35) and "Become merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (6:36). (CC p. 615)

16:7 *hundred measures of wheat.* The approximate yield of about 100 acres. (CSB)

ἑκατὸν κόρους σίτου—The Hebrew dry measurement "kor" may be as large as ten bushels, so that a hundred kor of wheat would be one thousand bushels, another significant amount. (CC p. 611)

16:8 *master commended* – Praise for shrewdness but not necessarily approval. (TLSB)

The lord could have had him thrown in jail or to be punished in some other way. Instead he shows mercy like the father to the prodigal son. Since the focus on the lord's mercy, the dishonesty of the steward becomes a moot point.

When the lord discovers what the steward has done, he is in a bind with two options. He can reverse the steward's decisions to adjust the accounts, but in doing so, he will receive wrath from his renters and force them to reassess whether he really is a "generous and merciful" lord. If he lets the adjustments stand, he has further secured the goodwill of his renters. That, then, is the obvious choice for the lord, if he is to be consistent with his own character. He must commend the steward for shrewdly managing his personal crisis since *the steward trusted the character of his lord and staked everything on the lord's mercy.* The steward was not disappointed. (CC p. 615)

Clearly Jesus is still narrating the parable in 16:8a. ὁ κύριος, "the lord," is the lord in the parable who, Jesus says, commends the steward for his prudence. But he is commending him as a "steward of unrighteousness" (16:8). To fully understand the significance of this commendation, "prudently" (φρονίμως), "unrighteousness" (ἀδικία), and "praised" (ἐπήνεσεν) must be carefully studied. (CC pp. 615-616)

"Prudently" may be understood from Hebrew and Septuagintal sources as bearing eschatological connotations, "cleverness and skill deployed in self-preservation." "Unrighteousness" (ἀδικία) and "unrighteous" (ἄδικος) are used throughout this section to describe mammon (16:9, 11) and a life of unrighteousness (16:10: "The one who is unrighteous in a very little is also unrighteous in much"). Various attempts have been made to nuance these words, e.g., to translate "dishonest" in 16:8a and 16:10 and "worldly" in 16:9 and 16:11. But both words mean essentially the same thing throughout the parable, namely, unrighteousness inherent in life in a wicked world. The word "praise" also opens the possibility of moving from the scene of the parable into the eschatological realm: (CC p. 616)

Thus the Greek word, on the level of the story itself, carries the meaning of simple approval of what the steward has done. At the same time, on a theological level this word provides additional evidence for interpreting the parable as being primarily concerned with eschatology. (CC p. 616)

These three words in the conclusion to the parable show the eschatological aspect and indicate that the steward is praised because when faced with a crisis of eschatological proportions (his very survival in the imminent day of reckoning), he cleverly uses resources available to him in a wicked world in the context of his trust that his lord will treat him with the same mercy that he had shown in the past. (CC p. 616)

Isaiah 40:1-2, “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.”

Not harshly, as rebels against the King of heaven and earth should expect, but in the tone of winsome pleading with which a lover seeks to touch the heart of a maiden he is courting (Gn 34:3; Jgs 19:3). Jerusalem did nothing to deserve tender words. Her redemption would be an act of divine mercy without any merit or worthiness on her part. (TLSB)

ESV has “warfare.” Destruction of the nation and subsequent Babylonian captivity (Is 43:14). God promised to cut short the time of “hard service” (14:3) in exile, even though justice required that suffering for sin should never end. (TLSB)

Penalty of her iniquity was paid, even though she could do nothing to make amends for the debt she incurred. She received from the Lord’s hand good things in double proportion to the punishment she deserved for her sins (61:7; Jb 11:6) (TLSB)

Double grace, that is, much grace, for God not only forgive her, but also exalted her. (CB)

sons of this world – People immersed in the ways of the world. (TLSB)

sons of the light. God’s people (Jn 12:36; Eph 5:8; 1Th 5:5). (CSB)

But this is not the only conclusion. There is an addendum that comments on this in a Christian context: “because the sons of this present age are more prudent in their own generation than the sons of light” (16:8b). This saying would be acute to the disciples, who are the audience for this parable (although the Pharisees also overheard these words). Jesus encourages his listeners to imitate the steward, but not by being unrighteous. “The sons of this present age” are “more prudent” in worldly matters because they know how to be unrighteous—to bend the rules, play the game, or beat the system—in order to accomplish their goals. But Jesus wants his disciples to be ignorant or unlearned in the practice of such unrighteousness, because it is advantageous only in “this present age” and actually is harmful for those whose hope is in the age to come. “The sons of light” are to be prudent by recognizing the eschatological moment and focusing carefully on where God’s mercy resides. (CC pp. 616-617)

For the disciples and the Pharisees, the inbreaking of God’s merciful kingdom has been clearly announced to them by Jesus, particularly through His person, His teaching, and His miracles. The sayings of Jesus in Luke 12, where Jesus told another parable about a steward, but a faithful one (12:41-48), should be ringing in the hearers’ ears. This is particularly true of Jesus’ pointed exhortation about the present time of His visitation: “You hypocrites, the face of the earth and of heaven you know how to examine, but how is it you do not know to examine this critical time?” (12:56) (CC p. 617)

16:9-16 The sayings that follow the parable of the prudent steward are almost as challenging as the parable itself. They are connected to the parable—but how? (CC p. 617)

The link between these two sections is in the theme of this chapter: the proper use of possessions. How shall the children of the light be prudent in this world? The steward was commended for using “mammon” wisely; now the disciples are instructed by Jesus on how they might use “mammon” wisely for the sake of the kingdom. This is catechetical material. There are echoes from Luke 12, where possessions were shown to be a real stumbling block for Christians (along with persecution that elicits hypocrisy). Possessions may tempt Christians to become distracted from the main focus of their salvation. Instead of looking to a merciful God in whom they can put their trust, they see in their possessions a

secure foundation that gives them certainty in an uncertain world. It becomes an alternate means of salvation. Note that possessions are not condemned, but the idolatrous use of them is. Already in Luke 12, Jesus has given clear instructions on how the Christian should view the possessions that God has given him: (CC pp. 617-618)

Seek his kingdom, and all these things will be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, because your Father graciously willed to give to you the kingdom.

Sell your possessions and give alms; make for yourselves purses that do not wear out, unfulfilling treasure in the heavens, where thief does not come near nor moth destroy; for where your treasure is, there also your heart will be (12:31–34). (CC p. 618)

16:9 *means of unrighteous wealth.* God’s people should be alert to make use of what God has given them. (CSB)

Although the wealth belongs in a fallen world, the disciple’s stewardship can follow higher principles. Aug: “Some, by a bad understanding of this, plunder the goods of others, and bestow some of that upon the poor.... I would not that you should so understand it. Give alms of your righteous labors: give out of that which you possess rightfully” (NPNF 1 6:450). (TLSB)

With this background from Luke 12, these three sayings may be related to the parable of the prudent steward. In the first teaching (16:9), Jesus commands his disciples to “make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon” (16:9a). A loan word from Aramaic, “mammon” refers to money or possessions. Jesus is exhorting the disciples to follow in the footsteps of the prudent steward, who used mammon generously to make friends for himself. If the mammon was used wisely, that is, if it was used to make friends, then when it is exhausted those friends may receive (δέξωνται) you into the eternal tents. This also mirrors the account of the prudent steward, even in some verbal parallels. At the center of the story, his great insight is that when his stewardship (the source of his unrighteous mammon) runs out, his new friends that he made by doctoring the accounts may receive (δέξωνται) him into their homes (εἰς τοὺς οἴκους αὐτῶν). In 16:9 the unrighteous mammon is also described as failing—a clear reference to death, when possessions become meaningless. But because unrighteous mammon was used to make friends, they may receive those who thus made use of the mammon into their eternal tents (εἰς τὰς αἰωνίουσ σκηνάς), even as the steward was hoping to be received into the homes of his friends. (CC p. 618)

make friends. By helping those in need, who in the future will show their gratitude when they welcome their benefactors into heaven (“eternal dwellings”). In this way worldly wealth may be wisely used to gain eternal benefit. (CSB)

δέξωνται—This third person impersonal plural is used for God and may be understood as a passive: you will be received *by God* into the eternal tents. See also 12:20, in the parable of the rich fool: “they demand back your soul,” meaning that your soul is demanded back (ἀπαίτοῦσιν) from you *by God*. (CC p. 611)

Making friends by means of unrighteous mammon no doubt refers to almsgiving in fulfillment of Jesus’ exhortation to “sell your possessions and give alms” (12:33). Those who receive the alms become your friends because you are merciful to them in times of want, even as the Father in heaven is merciful to you (6:36). Just as the lord in the parable was known as a man of mercy, the steward imitated his lord’s mercy in the settling of his accounts. He used mammon mercifully, and that is why he was praised as prudent. The reward for those who make such friends by sharing possessions is an eschatological one: instead of only being received into the homes of the friends, as in 16:4, they will be received into the eternal tents of the merciful Father. Jesus is not teaching works-righteousness here when he says “make.” Rather, he is

enjoining the display of merciful generosity by those who have been shown generous mercy by God. (CC pp. 618-619)

into eternal dwellings – Jesus is instructing them and us to use earthly gifts for the sake of the kingdom.

The steward wants only hospitality now, but Jesus points to eternal welcome. (TLSB)

εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς—M. Scharlemann notes that “dwelling in tents was a feature of the eschatological consummation (cf. Acts 15:16 and Mark 9:5)” (*Parables*, 86). In 16:22, the eschatological resting place of Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham. (CC p. 611)

16:10-13 This teaching is related to the theme of vv 1–9 but has moved to a new emphasis. (TLSB)

16:10 *faithful in much*. Cf. 19:17; Mt 25:21. Faithfulness is not determined by the amount entrusted but by the character of the person who uses it. (CSB)

Dependable. (TLSB)

In the second saying (16:10–12), “unrighteous mammon” is compared with “the true thing” (16:11). The issue is faithfulness. The section begins by describing both “faithfulness” and unfaithfulness (“unrighteousness”) in two general principles that are paralleled: if you are faithful in little things you will be faithful in big ones; if you are unrighteous in little things you will be unrighteous in big things (16:10). The unrighteous steward is an example of one who is unrighteous in both little and big things. But he is also faithful in little and big things, as was evidenced by his unswerving faith in his lord’s mercy (the big thing) and his faith that the debtors would trust that his changing the accounts (a little thing) was a reflection of his lord’s mercy. On the other side of the center of this passage, unrighteous mammon is described as “that belonging to another,” reflecting the biblical idea that the things of this world come from God and are not ours, and “the true thing” is described as “what is yours” (16:12). The language of faithfulness is used here as well, but first as an indictment of Jesus’ listeners that they might not have been faithful in “that belonging to another,” i.e., unrighteous mammon, and then as a question by Jesus whether their unfaithfulness in unrighteous mammon will lead to unfaithfulness in “what is yours,” i.e., “the true thing.” (CC p. 619)

16:11 *true riches*. The things of highest value, ultimately those of the spirit, the eternal. (CSB)

The Gospel’s lasting and substantial value surpasses any earthly thing (cf Php 3:8). (TLSB)

What becomes evident in this structure is that the interpretation depends on what “the true thing” represents. It might well be translated “the true riches” instead of “the true thing,” reminding us again of “treasure in the heavens” (12:33). The interpretation in Luke 12 suggested that Christ is the heavenly treasure, and heavenly treasures are those things that incorporate us into Christ, that is, catechesis, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. So, to be rich toward God is to be a member of Christ’s kingdom through catechesis, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. To be a faithful steward of “the true thing” is to be a faithful steward of the mysteries, i.e., of catechesis that leads toward Baptism and then invites to the Supper. This interpretation corresponds with the interpretation of the parable of the faithful steward, where stewardship of the Lord’s gifts was the theme. Jesus tells his disciples in no uncertain terms that how one administers the things of this world is parallel to how one will administer the things of God’s kingdom. (CC pp. 619-620)

M. Scharlemann, *Parables*, 91, supports this interpretation by describing “a large matter,” “the true (riches),” and “your own” in this way:

The latter [“a large matter,” “the true (riches),” “your own”] certainly refer to the knowledge of the way of life [catechesis], which makes the followers of Christ the children of light. Then the meaning of the last verses would be: “If, therefore, you were not faithful in the use of money, which is really not your own and a very transitory thing, who will trust you with the real thing, the knowledge of life?” Of course the answer is, “No one!” (CC p. 620)

16:12 *faithful* – Jesus tells his disciples in no uncertain terms that how one administers the things of this world is parallel to how one will administer the things of God’s kingdom. (CC p. 620)

We are stewards only of that which God loans to us. (TLSB)

16:13 no servant – οἰκέτης—Twenty-seven of the twenty-eight Greek words in Lk 16:13 are the same as in Mt 6:24; only this one is unique to Lk 16:13. (CC P. 612)

two masters. See Mt 6:24; cf. Jas 4:4. (CSB)

A household servant can give undivided loyalty to one master only. *devoted.* Lit, “hold on to.” *You cannot serve God and money.* For the servant of God, money may in turn be a servant of godly purposes, but money cannot become a master without threatening loyalty to God. (TLSB)

Jesus includes one final teaching (16:13), in chiasmic form (see the following diagram), that concludes with a well-known and well-used saying: “You are not able to serve God and mammon.” This sums up this entire section. Both the basic definition of mammon, i.e., “that in which one puts one’s trust,” and its meaning in this section as money or possessions apply in this final saying. The other side of the frame of this verse describes the dilemma: “No domestic servant is able to serve two lords.” This puts this question to the disciples: “Are you trusting in money/possessions or in God? Are you trying to serve them both?” Recall that this section began with unrighteous mammon as a means toward making friends so that one may be received into eternal tents (16:9). Mammon is not evil in itself but becomes evil when it becomes the object of one’s service, i.e., when one worships mammon instead of God. To serve (worship) both is impossible.

When Jesus poses these two stark alternatives, he gives wonderful pastoral advice. Anyone who tries to have it both ways will either hate one and love the other or be attached to one and despise the other. Love/attachment and hatred/despising stand at the center of the chiasm. (CC p. 620)

The steward was commended because he chose to serve his lord, who he trusted would be merciful. He used unrighteous mammon to achieve his goal, though he trusted not in the mammon, but in his merciful lord. (CC pp. 620-621)

C. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 155, puts it this way: “Christians need to answer the call to manifest a shrewdness in the use of wealth under their control. Affluence in the hands of disciples is to be used sacramentally as a means of expressing love, both to God and to other people who have needs. The church in Acts embodies a proper response to Jesus’ call.” (CC p. 620)

Luke 12 echoes again, “For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be” (12:34). Faithful disciples will be commended for seeing that Jesus is their treasure and for trusting in his mercy. (CC p. 620)

Cf. the conclusion of L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 248, whose doctoral thesis was on possessions in Luke: “The final saying shows the profound seriousness with which Luke regards this symbolic use of possessions. ‘Mammon’ in 16:13 is personified as an idol, the service of whom is the rejection of God. If giving away possessions in almsgiving secures a place with God, the worship of possessions and a clinging to them as ultimate means separation from God.” (CC p. 621)

The fact that Lk 16:14–18 does not immediately seem to fit into the flow of thought about possessions alerts one to the presence of a broader topic in the context of which the teaching about possessions takes place. This has to do with entry into the kingdom, the presence of the kingdom in Jesus, the hypocrisy (and “violence”) of self-justification, and the Christological character of the OT. (See the excursus “The OT Witness to Christ.”) One passing phrase calls the Pharisees “lovers of money” (16:14), but teachings about the Law and the Prophets and the kingdom predominate. Possessions are part of the temptation to hypocrisy, behavior not in accord with the true faith. (CC p. 623)

This view of the flow of thought, and the strong link of 16:14–18 to the following parable, is corroborated by the observation that the first part of the parable (16:19–26) is a commentary on the teachings about the kingdom and stewardship (avarice and self-righteousness; 16:14–15) and the second part of the parable (16:27–31) is an illustration of the teaching about the Law and the Prophets and the kingdom (the abiding validity of the OT as testimony to Jesus; 16:16–18). This helps make it clear that this section is not just teachings about the kingdom, but rather, teachings about the Torah [Law] since the testimony of the OT takes a prominent place in the final two sections. Jesus is announcing that, beginning with John the Baptist, the Good News of the preaching of the kingdom of God is now present. Jesus’ ministry is the fulfillment of the OT and the key to survival in the eschatological judgment. The Pharisees, in their hypocrisy, have opted for another way of reading the OT and trying to enter the kingdom (16:15). But the way of Jesus is the only way and is also the one way taught in the OT (16:18). (CC p. 623)

16:1–13 Guard against becoming enslaved to the pursuit of wealth. Instead, use money for godly and eternal purposes. God offers us lasting treasure in Christ, and so a true perspective on money and goods. • Deliver us, Father, from the love of money, but increase our love for you and for one another. Amen. (TLSB)

The Law and the Kingdom of God

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. 15 And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

16:14 *ridiculed him* – They tried to deflect Jesus’ criticism by sneering at Him and pointing out what they regarded as His faults. (TLSB)

ἠκούον ... ἐξεμυκτήριζον—The imperfect emphasizes the connection to Jesus’ teaching. L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 250, notes that “the verb ‘mock’ (*ekmykterizo*) is used of the righteous one reviled by enemies in LXX 21:8; 34:16 [ET 35:16], and recalls the scornful ‘laughter’ (*gelon*) of [Lk] 6:25.” The religious leaders will mock (ἐκμυκτηρίζω) Jesus again on the cross (23:35). (CC p. 622)

Luke introduces this section by noticing the change in audience from the disciples (16:1) to the Pharisees (16:14), who had been eavesdropping all along. The last time the Pharisees appeared with Jesus, they were grumbling that he welcomed tax collectors and sinners and ate with them (15:2). Now they are scoffing. (CC p. 623-624)

C. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 156, captures their reason for scoffing:

The Pharisees scoff at Jesus' statement, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (vs. 13). Given their assumptions, this was predictable. For them tragedy is a sign of God's displeasure; success (e.g., financial prosperity) is evidence of one's righteousness and of God's pleasure. It is no wonder they scoffed at Jesus' "either God or money" stance. ... Money for them was a sign, a sure sign, of God's favor and of their place in the kingdom. Their position had roots in their scriptures (e.g., Deut 28:12–13 where wealth and plenty are a sign of God's blessings). Jesus' response to their scoffing was to contrast their outer-public appearance with their inner-private reality (cf. 11:39–41; 18:9–14). (CC p. 624)

Scoffing is much more serious than grumbling. Their reaction indicates that they perceive that the parables of Luke 15 were directed against them (see 20:19). The Pharisees, who represent the Jewish religious establishment while Jesus is outside Jerusalem, reject Jesus. (CC pp. 623-624)

16:15 *justify yourselves* – *ικαιοῶντες*—The word has a forensic sense, "declare yourselves righteous." The Pharisees trumpet their righteousness before the world. Jesus has already warned the disciples, "Beware for yourselves of the leaven, which is hypocrisy, of the Pharisees" (12:1). (CC p. 622)

At Luke 12 Jesus warned the disciples about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Here this hypocrisy is manifested when the Pharisees "declare [themselves] righteous before men" (16:15). *Outwardly* they appear righteous, but *inwardly* their hearts are known by God. Their outward appearance of righteousness is earned by the use of their possessions, as the unrighteous steward appeared before his friends when he used the lord's wealth for his own advantage. But unlike the unrighteous steward, whose heart was dependent on the mercy of his master, the Pharisees' hearts are dedicated toward money. Jesus said it best when he told them, "You Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but the inside of you is full of rapaciousness and wickedness" (11:39). The hypocrisy of the Pharisees comes from fear—fear that Jesus is deposing their fabricated kingdom and fear that making an unpopular confession before the world—that the kingdom comes in Jesus—would lead to persecution. So they present a pious front *on the outside* (which they achieve by their use of possessions), while in their hearts they are corrupt. (CC p. 624)

Taken together, hypocrisy and the misuse of possessions represent for the Pharisees an alternate way into the kingdom. It is the way of self-righteousness; it stands outside of God's way of righteousness, which is taught in the OT and culminates in Jesus, and is the only way into God's kingdom. There are two ways, the way of life and the way of death, and the Pharisees have chosen the way of death (cf. Deut 30:15–20; Prov 14:12). To the world this way looks quite grand and would be considered "high among men" (Lk 16:15), especially if their possessions are used as a means of establishing this "kingdom." This is why the Pharisees scoff at Jesus. He is not in touch with what they would call the "reality of the world." (CC p. 624)

Some of Jesus' strongest criticisms in the gospel are directed at the Pharisees, and it is also so here. Loving money and using it to justify themselves may seem a lofty activity *in the eyes of people*, but it is a detestable thing *before God* (*βδέλυγμα ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ*). (CC pp. 624-625)

It is in the word *βδέλυγμα*, "detestable thing," that L. T. Johnson sees a unifying theme for these sayings about the kingdom (*The Gospel of Luke*, 250):

The contrast between what is "exalted" (*hypselos*) and "low" is typical of Luke, but in this case, the language is stronger: the "abomination" (*bdelygma*) occurs in Gen 43:32; Exod 8:26; Lev 5:2; 7:21; 11:10–42; Deut 17:1 as something utterly reprehensible or "unclean" in thing or act. In Deuteronomy, it is mainly associated, however, with *idolatry* (see Deut 7:25; 12:31; 18:12; 27:15; 29:17; 32:16), and that association is continued in Isaiah (2:8, 20; 17:8; 41:24; 44:19). In Dan

9:27; 11:31 and 12:11, the “abomination of desolation” is the supreme representation of idolatry (cf. also Mark 13:14 and Matt 24:15). The word choice by Luke, in short, corresponds to the portrayal of Mammon in L as an idol competing for human allegiance against God, which portrayal the Pharisees mock. In light of the sayings which follow, it is instructive to note that the term *bdelygma* is also used to designate sham outward worship (Isa 1:13 and 66:3), immoral financial dealings (Deut 25:16), and the remarrying of a divorced wife (Deut 24:4)! (Emphasis Johnson.) (CC p. 625)

For the love of money and self-justification are the way of death; they stink of death. Hypocrisy and possessions work hand in hand to create a form of idolatry that is detestable to God. This idolatry is completely opposed to the kingdom Jesus preaches. The Pharisees are fiercely opposed to the gifts that Jesus and his preaching bring, and so they have opted for mammon and unbelief. Theirs is a kingdom of unrighteousness. (CC p. 625)

Establish their righteousness among themselves. (TLSB)

exalted ... abomination. His ways are not our ways (Is 55:8–9), and so people value the very things that God despises. (TLSB)

Jesus’ next saying gives the Pharisees a lesson in salvation history and places them squarely within that history. Standing at the center of these three logia, 16:16–17 is the climax. Jesus announces here that in the ministry of John the Baptist and his own preaching of the Good News of the kingdom of God, a radical shift is taking place in the world. Everyone who depends on possessions and hypocrisy as a way into the kingdom is now being called to make a violent break from those means and enter into Jesus’ kingdom through faith in his mercy. (CC p. 625)

In step-parallel fashion, John the Baptist and Jesus have been compared within the economy of God’s plan of salvation (see Luke 1–2; 3:1–22; 7:18–35). The relationship between John and Jesus could be discerned in comparing their respective baptisms. John’s baptism was purificatory and preparatory for the coming of Jesus, cleansing people to make them ready to meet the Messiah when he came. John called people to repentance, and those who submitted to his baptism declared to the world that God’s plan of salvation was coming to pass in John and in his Successor (7:29). John preached the Good News (3:18) even though he himself didn’t bring the kingdom of God. In this way John’s ministry was catechetical and preparatory, that is, it was part of the Torah and the Prophets. (CC p. 625)