

Luke 16:1-13  
Sept. 18, 2022

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Who is sick of hearing me talk about the first commandment? I know. I think I've hit it every week this summer, but it's not my fault. It's Luke's fault. Luke is always talking about it, so I have to talk about it too.

So, by now, you know what the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment is. I like to short hand it as – God's God and you are not. This week Luke expands on it to God is God and you're not, and nothing else is either, including wealth.

What we are missing here in the English is that the word used for wealth in English is actually Mammon in the Greek. Who has heard that word before? Mammon. Now, who knows what that word means?

Well... Here's the interesting thing about Mammon that makes it more obvious that Jesus is talking about idolatry and ergo the first commandment here. Mammon was the Syrian god of wealth. Sacrifice was made to Mammon so that he would give wealth back in return. That's idolatry. That's turning from God. That's breaking the first commandment.

So, we have to remember here that God created everything that exists and gives everything freely to God's beloved creation. God is generous, so God gives. We don't have to give to God, because everything is God's already.

Mammon, the Syrian god, on the other hand, is greedy. Mammon demands to be paid first and then, if he feels like it, he will give wealth to the devotee. That's a problem, especially considering what is being offered is God's gift given to creation. You can see here how God is a jealous God. It really ticks God off when we give what was a gift to us to a false god. You can see that right?

God is generous to us so that we can be generous to others, not so that we can use what has been given to us to try and get more. Sacrificing to Mammon is basic greed. It's saying to God, "God, your gift isn't enough. I want more! So, I'm going to go over there and try to get Mammon to double what you have given me by given him what you gave me."

Kind of backwards, right?

And so is the manager in today's parable. What he is doing is all sorts of backwards, but the master commends him for being shrewd. What? You'd think that he would get fired right then and there, but he wasn't. He was praised, because the master realized that he was held over the barrel.

There is no way the master could get what was actually owed him, because the people in debt would just show him what the manager had done, and he'd be out. So, the master is banking on the good report the manager now has with these people that are indebted to him.

Granted, the manager was self-serving, because he didn't want to dig or beg on the street, but he was also being generous with his master's goods. Granted, they weren't his goods, but he was generous with them to others. He wasn't doing the master any good at all, but the others were benefitting from it.

So, let's go back to the fact that God is generous. God gives everything to us. Mammon is greedy and takes first in order to give back. The manager gives to all of the debtors and then hopes he will still have a job. The master comes back and laughs and says – good one! You got me. And then Jesus says – we should be more like the manager, giving away the master's possession – joining into God's generosity.

God is generous, and we call that grace, right? God gives us everything first. In a sense, the manager was generous with his master's goods, some may call it squandering, but when it comes to our relationship with God, that's exactly what we should be doing.

We should be squandering God's grace. We should be giving it out freely wherever we go. When it comes to God's grace, we should be like the manager. We should give grace to everyone, because we already have it. It's already ours! We don't have to pay off God to get it. We are in possession of God's greatest gift right now!

We are in charge of dispersing God's grace. We are the managers of God's grace, and we should be squandering it everywhere we go.

And so, as you know, all of the other 9 commandments fall off of the first, which means that we squander grace by loving our neighbor as God loves us.

So, we should squander God's grace by resting so that others can rest, by taking care of our parents and honoring them, by making sure our neighbors have what they need to live, by doing what we can to help others keep the covenants they have made, by helping our neighbors keep and improve what they have, by assuming the best about others, and by celebrating with those who celebrate and weeping with those who weep.

God's grace is not for us to keep, but it is for us to give away. Just like when a hug or a smile is shared, the gift is ours and the other person's as well, grace is never ending. It is eternal. It's not a physical thing, but a spiritual thing that can never run out. Our cup overflows with it! (point to chalice) Literally.

And so, we are to squander it. To give it away freely. Our master, God, has given grace to us to manage and we manage it best when we squander it. Give it away, because that is what's supposed to happen to it.

And our example that is set before us is Jesus Christ our Lord who gave his entire being, the gift that he was from God, in order to ransom us. To set us free. To squander God's wealth on us.

God squanders God's greatest gift on us, and then asks us to go squander him with others.

So, how might you squander grace today? How might you be extravagant with God's grace? Can you imagine the biggest thing you could do with God's grace? Who could you set free? Whose debt could you forgive?

Remember, and never forget, it's not your grace, it's God's, and God is super generous, beyond our own comprehension. And for that we say, "Thanks be to God!" Amen.