

What Do You Believe About God?

Luke 16:1-13

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What do you believe about God? Do you believe that *EVERYTHING* about you is God's gift to you? Do you believe what you confess in the Creed? Do you believe that God is the almighty, Maker of heaven and earth?

If so, do you believe as you were taught to confess about that first article of the creed: That God has made you and all creatures; that He has given you your body and soul, eyes, ears, and all your members, your reason and all your senses, and still takes care of them.

That He also gives you clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all you have. That He richly and daily provides you with all that you need to support this body and life.

Do you believe all this to be true about God, and that He truly gives all the things to you? Do you truly believe that? Do you act like you truly believe that? Do you believe that you are only a steward of all that is yours? In other words, do you believe that everything about you is God's and He has entrusted you with being manager of all that you have, that they are truly His belongings, and therefore only gifts to you for this life?

Do you believe that He also takes care of these things, that He will provide all the things that you need for this life?

It would be easy to tell if you do or not. Simply look at your daily calendar for a whole year and your financial records for a whole year. Does your schedule revolve around God time? Does your being gathered with your brothers and sisters in Christ to receive God's gifts to you get the priority in your weekly schedule? In other words, no matter what happens each week, no matter where you go or where you might be, do you make sure that you will be gathered for Word and Sacrament, whether here or a congregation where you will be out of town?

Does your daily schedule include time with God? Time in His Word? Time in prayer? Time doing those things with God and family?

Do you fear, love, and trust in God above all things?

What about your finances? Do you plan your offerings? As God gives you "X" number of dollars to live on, *the first* "X" percentage is given **back** to God as your offering to Him? Or as you plan your budget, your offerings are the last thing, and depending on your other expenses, they are certainly not a percentage. Maybe your offering is the leftovers that just happen to be in your wallet during the service, no budgeted plan for offerings at all?

Jesus tells the parable about the dishonest manager, and comments that the master commends him. You see, the dishonest manager acted upon what he knew to be true about his master. He knew his master was merciful. He knew that because instead of throwing him in prison for embezzlement, his master simply fired him. He had forgiven him for his dishonesty. As he did not have him arrested, the manager knew that some more massaging of the books, cheating his master to gain favor with others, would not get him into any more trouble.

So, what do you believe about your master, your God?

Jesus talks about faithfulness in this Gospel lesson. He closes with these words. "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. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not

been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? 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 (Interestingly, the better translation here over the word money, is mammon. It is more than money being spoken about, but everything of this life that is passing away – money, possessions, all of it)."

What is it that is very little? What is unrighteous wealth? What is another's which has been entrusted to people? You got it, the things of this world, mammon. It is what has been entrusted to you.

Worldly possessions and wealth are only a very little. They are insignificant in comparison to the riches of the kingdom of heaven, for they do not last, and will soon pass away. Worldly possessions and wealth are called unrighteous wealth, for everybody has some, even unbelievers. Unrighteous wealth is the stuff which makes life in the world of the flesh happen, it is not necessarily tied to the things of holiness, righteousness, and eternity. Worldly possessions and wealth are also not the possessions of any mortal being, but are a gift from God for all mankind to use in this life. God gives us such things of His to use for the benefit of our neighbor and to the glory of God.

Unfortunately, we have not been 100% faithful as stewards of what God has entrusted to our care. What do you believe about your Master? What do you believe about God? What could He do to us for misusing His possessions? What might a boss's response be when he finds out that the employees used what He gave them to use to do a job for him for their own purposes?

How faithful to God have we been with what He has entrusted to us?

And yet, God is always faithful to you. What do you believe about your God? Think about this whole faithfulness question.

Dear friends, was Jesus faithful in a very little? Was Jesus faithful with unrighteous wealth? Was Jesus faithful with what is another's? In other words, was Jesus faithful in regard to worldly wealth? Was Jesus faithful in regard to the possessions and income entrusted to Him?

Dear friends, you are the wealth to which Jesus was faithful, even faithful unto death. You are the possession of the Father, and the Father entrusted you to the care of His only begotten Son, and that Son was faithful to redeem you. So it was that the Father gives you to His Son – His most prized possession – as His very own. And the Son gave Himself to purchase you with the price of His very own precious blood.

What do you believe about God? Do you believe what you confess in the 2nd Article of the Creed? Do you believe that God, in Christ Jesus, has redeemed you, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won you from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death?

Do you believe that He has done this so that you may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness?

Jesus came into the world, for it was and is worldly mammon which so easily ensnares us. He endured temptation, the very luring seductions of the things of this world, and the Son set His eyes only upon righteousness, the true wealth of eternal life – not for Himself, but for you. He did this in order that He might free you from that which ensnared you, and to give to you the true riches – eternal riches – the wealth of a heavenly kingdom.

Today, you are entrusted with true riches. What do you believe about God? What will you do with the true wealth?

What do you believe about God? He comes to build faith in you, He is the very Word of forgiveness proclaimed into your ears – the gift which gives you the wealth of the kingdom of heaven. Hear it! You are forgiven for your selfish preoccupation with a very little.

You are entrusted with true riches; you are given the very body of your Lord to eat and the very blood He shed, to drink, for the forgiveness of your sins and to grant you eternal life and salvation. What do you believe about God?

Dear friends, you are entrusted with true riches, for these are the wealthiest gifts ever purchased, paid for with the very life of the Son of God. Receive them, hear them, eat and drink them, that is the purpose for which they are given to you. They are yours, now and forevermore. Amen.