

Sunday, August 22, 2021
"Stories of Kingdom Grace"
Summary of the Parable of the Unjust Steward
Luke 16:1-13
Wayne Shelton

There is no parable with as many enticing dead-end possibilities as this one. We can go astray down any one of them and miss the main point. Yet, it shouldn't be that difficult. Can't we conceive that it's possible for someone to commend a specific action or particular aspect of what a person does or is, without approving all his actions or endorsing his entire character? Approval of part does not mean endorsement of all. In this strange story about a steward or estate manager who wastes his master's resources is required by the master to turn over the books. Since he's both lazy and proud, he eliminates two future options (3). Then he has his 'eureka!' moment (4). He calls in each one of his master's debtors (5a) – and has them doctor the bills. It's because of this practice of lowering the amount owed that the estate-manager is called 'unrighteous' (8a). And we shouldn't be worried about the master's commendation (8), for he clearly is not praising his *integrity* but his *ingenuity*. The concern, then, behind the parable is how Jesus' disciples (1) should use 'unrighteous mammon' (9), or what we might call secular wealth.

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