

“Time’s Up” // Luke 16:1–14 // *FIRST* 1.5 #1

SC UNITED (POST-VIDEO)

What an amazing story about a college student **just being obedient and putting God first after college.**

- Here at the Summit we ask **every college student to seriously consider giving the first 2 years** after they graduate to the mission of God and serving on one of our church plants. We say, ‘You have to get a job somewhere; why not get a job in a place that God is doing something strategic?’
- Which leads me to tell you about a **special event this Thursday night**. We are having an SC United where I will be joined by my good friend David Platt as we discuss how college students can be involved in the mission of God.
- We’re **hosting this event here at the BCC**, and **Lifeway will be simulcasting** it to thousands of college students all over the nation! Already about **200 different college ministries** have signed up to livestream it.
- It’s going to be a great night, so **if you are a college student or young professional**, and you have any interest in how to strategically prioritize mission in your future, I hope you’ll join us!

BTW (and this part is for everybody, not just college students) our **2 church plants for this year**, are Pittsburgh (led by Billy Judge) and

Works Consulted:

“Your Treasure Is Doomed” (Matthew 6:19–24), Josh Porter

“Treasure vs. Money” (Matthew 6:19–24), Tim Keller.

“God’s Greatest Competitor in Your Life” (Matthew 6:19–24), Bryan Loritts

What Jesus Demands from the World, John Piper

“Generosity,” The Bible Project

Treasure Verses Money” (Matthew 6:19–22), Tim Keller

Nashville (led by Derrick Delain)...and they will actually be hosting **Interest Meetings** this Monday night at BCC, as well.

INTRODUCTION

Luke 16 if you have your Bible. We’re going to take a short break from Romans. We’re going to come back to the last section of it in December.

- **You say**, “Are we going to finish it up by Dec 31?” No, finishing Romans will take us a few weeks into January.
- **And that’s a good thing**--let me tell you why: It seems like I’m always meeting people who brag, “Well, my pastor **preached through Romans** and it took him 18 years.” And I don’t want y’all to be embarrassed and have to hang your heads and say, “Well our pastor breezed through it in less than a year.” Because then they will look at you and say, “TSC is not serious about the Bible.” **Now you can say**, “Yeah, our pastor took over a year, too.”

But this weekend, we’re going to dive into something slightly different.

Something that has the potential to be **slightly awkward**.

- **Y’all know there ain’t no awkward moment** like an awkward moment in church.
- I’ve been a part of a number of them. I’ve **created** a lot of them. During one of my **summers in college** I was involved in a really small, but kind-of-formal church and one Sunday the pastor was up there and all the sudden it got really quiet--I think the pastor was looking for something--and I noticed my friend was not

paying any attention but when it got quiet he looked up and I said...

- **Bryan Lorrits**, who has preached here a lot, tells this story about his dad, **Crawford Lorrits, who has also preached here**, when his dad was a kid. **His dad grew up in church**, like I did, before they had kids' programs and children's church and planes hanging from the ceiling stuff and as a kid you were supposed to just sit through service and entertain yourself. I would count **tiles, toupees, and blue-hair wigs** in the congregation. I know some of y'all do that here. If I miss a belt loop I get like 3 emails on it. Well, Crawford said that he was a rambunctious kid ~~who had to start getting frisked at the doors of his church every weekend because he loved to bring his toy guns into the sanctuary and point them at people during service.~~ He said the most awkward one happened when I was 5 years old; 'One Sunday morning the preacher was up there preaching his heart out, and the whole time, I was consumed by one thought: **What would happen if I told the preacher to shut up?** My feet didn't even touch the ground in front of the pew but I couldn't get this thought out of my mind. I just kept thinking about it and thinking about it. Finally, he said, I just had to do it, so I just waited for a very somber moment in his message, and I belted out, "Aw, shut up." Crawford says that **pandemonium ensued.** Crawford said that everybody in the church thought it was hilarious, but his momma was sitting right next to him and in a very discreet way, just pinched a hunk of flesh and whispered in his ear, "Boy, when I get you home..." Crawford says, I can't say the rest, 'cause times have changed and I don't want y'all calling CPS on my mother." Crawford says, **"It was my most awkward moment in church."**

This morning, I want to create about a 40-minute awkward moment in church. Because I want to talk about... Wait, what? No. I heard a

¹ Following Bryan Lorrits, "God's Greatest Competitor in Your Life," stand-alone sermon, preached at Abundant Life Christian Fellowship.

lot of you just say 'sex.' No, we're going to talk about money. But don't worry; we'll get to sex in the spring." **Today, I want to talk about money!** Everyone's favorite sermon series.

Let me tell you **3 reasons I am NOT** preaching on this:

- **First, it's not because I'm passively-aggressively asking for a raise.** This church takes great care of me. I got no complaints.
- **Second, it's not because the church is behind budget and I've got to beat the bushes to make ends meet.** Thanks to your generosity, we're doing great. Sure, there are many things we believe God has for us and we want to do those; but we don't approach this subject like God needs us to raise money for him.
- **Third, I'm not doing this because I'm trying to get you to buy into a "you can live your best life now" church-Ponzi scheme** where you give here, **I get a private jet**, and I promise that the brand new Range Rover with the 26-in rims will materialize in your driveway and the fillings of your teeth will transmogrify to gold. **We don't give to get back from God.** If that's why you give, you're not giving to God, you're giving to yourself. Scripture does say he will often multiply our resources when we give, but he does so that we will have even more to give. We give to get back to give again.¹

So why do we do this? Because **one of our values** here at TSC is to make disciples, not just converts--to raise up a generation of fully committed disciples, not just gather a large group of attenders--and this is **one of the most crucial dimensions of discipleship.**

Did you know that **Jesus talked about our relationship with money** more than he did about prayer and faith combined? More than heaven and hell.

- He brings up this subject in **more than 40% of his parables** and teachings on the kingdom.
- **If I preached** on money as often as Jesus, it would be every 3rd sermon. Just sayin'.

Jesus' most dire warnings were about money. He implies, again and again, that a selfish spirit will keep us out of heaven.

(It's a big theme in Luke where we are going to spend some time today)

- **He says, for example, in Luke 18,** "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God."
- He tells listeners in Luke 14, **"Any of you that does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."** (Luke 14:33) He doesn't speak that way about anything else. To follow Jesus you have to renounce all personal control of that and give it to him.
- He told people in Luke 12, **"Watch out! Be on your guard against greed."** (Luke 12:15)
 - Here's the thing: He never says that about adultery or lying. Why? I think it's because with those sins, you know you've crossed the line when you've crossed it.
 - But greed is subtle. Usually, we don't realize we've crossed the line until we're miles beyond it.
 - Interestingly, **studies done of the American church** show that we Americans will admit to all kinds of sin--I struggle with pride, or lust, or anger--but almost none of us say we have a problem with greed.²

In Luke 16, our passage for today, he says: **"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both**

God and money." (Luke 16:13) Again, he doesn't say that about **anything else!** One forces out the other.

This subject has a **way of getting to the heart** like nothing else.

So, the primary reason we do this is not fund-raising, see. It's because you **simply can't be a disciple** without dealing with this because this gets at the heart like nothing else does.

- **It's to the point, I've told you,** that **even if we had no financial need** at this church--if we discover an oil reserve under the Apex Campus FTG tent--little black seepage appears one Sunday morning, and up from the ground comes a bubbling crude--we'd still do this because it's about our hearts. God doesn't need our money; he wants our hearts.
- And I **also tell you: If this is a big struggle for you to hear this**—you grew up somewhere where you say this abused, and you can't get past thinking this is some kind of manipulative way to get money, what I really want to do is take giving to us off the table. I'm serious. Let's just postpone that for now, because it's more important to me that you learn to be generous to the Kingdom of God and to give your money somewhere else than it is for you to have an insurmountable obstacle in your heart that keeps you from becoming a full disciple. And yes, I've had church consultants tell me it's crazy to say this, but I trust God with this church's needs, and it's more important to me that you grow in this area than it is raising money. So, if this is a huge issue for you because of some bad experiences, let's just take giving here off the table and focus on your heart.
- This is not some **church growth,** get-rich-quick scheme

What Jesus says here in Luke 16 about "no man can serve two masters" gets repeated verbatim in both Luke's Gospel and

² "Treasure Versus Money," message by Timothy J Keller on www.sermoncentral.com

Matthew's Gospel, but interestingly, as part of two different sermons that Jesus preached about money, which have two slightly different points of focus.

We're **going to look at both of those mini-sermons**--the one in Luke today and Matthew next week--and see how Jesus developed and applied this idea in both places.

Listen--hear me out: I think you are going to find this liberating, not burdensome. In these passages Jesus gives you the key to getting free from the most wearisome, toilsome tyrants ever to walk the face of the earth.

- Think about how much of your stress and heartache is money-related! Wouldn't it be great to be free from that?
- "PJD, I've got problems!" I'll talk to you later...

So, Luke 16: Here Jesus makes the statement about not being able to serve 2 masters at the end of his sermon. So, let's go back to the beginning:

16 Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' ³ "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— ⁴ I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

⁵ "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

⁶ "Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied.

"The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.'

⁷ "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?'

"A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied.

"He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'

OK, so what just happened? An accounts manager for a really rich guy is given his 2-week notice. (Basically, **he's fired**, but he has 2 weeks left on the job).

- **So, he goes home and is in despair**, he says to his wife, "**What am I going to do?** I've gotten used to drinking \$5 Starbucks Lattes every day and sitting in first class and there is **no way I'm going back to Maxwell House** and economy class."
- So, he **has a brilliant idea**: He **calls up all the boss's clients** who still owe his boss money, and he says: "*I see here that you owe my boss \$100,000. I tell you what. If you'll pay \$25,000 right now, I'll give you an official 'debt-settled' certificate and we'll just call it even*" (because this guy still has this legal authority to do it, b/c in those days the account manager had the POA, and technically this guy is still on the job because he has his 2-week notice). So he gives them this "debt cancelled" certificate and tells them, "Hey, just **remember later who took care of you.**"
- And this guy does that with **all his Boss's debtors**. **So after he's fired**, he's got a bunch of people who feel like they owe him a big, huge favor.

Then Jesus says, in a **surprising twist on the story**: ⁸ "The master (who'd just gotten hosed) commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. (Seriously. Did you see that coming? Jesus **praises** the shady manager.)

And then he explains the lesson: For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.

- **If you know, Jesus is saying, that your current reality is coming to an end**, isn't it wise to use whatever moments you have left to prepare for the next one?
- **So, what does that mean**, Jesus asks, for the **money and resources** God has made you the "manager" over?

⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

Jesus continues: ¹⁰ "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"

- **He says, in some mysterious way**, our faithfulness with our resources here will determine both our responsibility level and enjoyment level in the life to come.
- **The point is that God gave us what he gave us down here to steward.**
- **A steward** is someone who manages something that belongs to somebody else.
- You're not the owner; you're the manager, the steward.
- You realize that, **as God sees it, your money doesn't really belong to us, right?**
 - Watching a **Will Smith** interview: When did your kids learn that they were rich? "Let me just stop you right there. I'm rich, my kids are not. I let them use some of my money, but it's not theirs."

- **Same thing with us and God.** God gave us these things and he has a purpose for them.
- **Question:** Is that how you see your resources? **Be honest.** Do you see your resources as fundamentally yours or God's? Who really owns them?
 - **If you see it as yours**, you'll ask: *How much of this should I share with God?* **If you see it as his**, you ask, "What does he want me to do with all of it?"
- **Jesus said, "You are a manager; a steward."** God gave it to you to prepare for eternity, and soon you're going to give an account to him.

And **those who are wise realize that** and arrange their lives accordingly.

It's just common sense: If time on earth is short (we've already been given our 2 week notice--our death) and eternity is forever, shouldn't we be thinking more about eternity and less about our last two weeks?

One of my favorite Psalms is written by Moses. In it he prays a prayer I have prayed since college: "Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts" (Psalm 90:12).

- **Martin Luther** translated this verse as simply: "*Teach us to think daily about death so that we might learn how to live.*"³
- **Only when you grasp** how short life is and how long eternity is will your priorities come into focus!
- I remember when I was a kid my Sunday School teacher using an illustration (bird). "That would only be the first day of eternity."

A few weeks ago I told you the story of C.T. Studd:

³ Referenced in James Limburg, Psalms (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 310.

- **C.T. Studd, a professional cricket player** in Great Britain in the late 19th century--which **doesn't seem that impressive now** but back in his day it was the world's most popular sport, and he was like its LeBron James, star on England's national team.
 - **(Show pic:** he doesn't look like a professional athlete with the bowtie and all, I know, but things were different back then--work with me, here. *When you have a name like Studd, you are destined to be a professional athlete*)
 - **At the height of his career**, he wrestled with the thought that his life was yielding little eternal value, and he sensed God's call to carry the gospel to the nations. He spent the rest of his days in China, India, and then Africa, where eventually he died. This would be like **Renaldo or LeBron James** doing this today—or Kanye West, am I right? Naturally, people all over the world asked him why he did it.
 - **And his answer was always something like**, “Well, if Jesus was God who died to save me, shouldn't I be willing to give up my life to see his salvation come to others?”
- **And he wrote a poem, that my dad used to quote** to me when I was a kid:

*Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, yes only one,
So let me say, "Thy will be done";*

*And when at last I'll hear the call,
I know I'll say "twas worth it all";*

*Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

My parents drilled that principle into me. I think it is perhaps the greatest legacy they will leave for me.

- **My dad was the plant manager of a textile factory.** About 900 employees. I remember going to visit him one time at work and noticing that of all the cars in the management team parking lot, his was the worst one. Dad, don't you make more than these people? Yes. Why do you still drive *that*? He'd say, “Son, that stuff is not important. These missionaries we support--that's what is important.” **The years he got a bonus**, we'd discuss as a family where to give it. I was about 16. Every time: JD Greear fund. Dad, you should make an investment in my future.
- **My mom taught it to me in her own way, too.** **One of the conversations I most dreaded having** in my life was with her was during my senior year of college when I had decided God was calling me to forsake my law studies and go overseas.

My mom and dad were both Christians, but for some reason, I thought they would be disappointed. They had sacrificed so much to get me to college. They had pushed me to be my best and get the grades necessary to go to the next level.

I **sat down with her at a restaurant** between my college campus and our home, and I was trying to explain to her what God was doing. I was stumbling over my words, trying to convince her God had called me, and that this was a good idea. She sat silently.

Finally, I just said, “Mom, I know this is probably really disappointing. I know you must have had this vision of me living close, making a comfortable living, and raising your grandkids in a place where you could see them every day. But I feel like God wants me to go live overseas where people don't know about Jesus.”

And then I just sat there. I was **ready for the argument**. Maybe tears.

But instead, she said: “J.D., your father and I have been praying for God’s will for you your whole life. And if this is how God wants to use you life, we won’t stand in your way. There’s **nothing that would make us prouder** than knowing you gave your life back to God for his service.”

(I always knew my parents supported the concept of missions, just not their kid doing it)

I was stunned. But she wasn’t done. “*We’ll have all eternity to enjoy the blessings of our family,*” she said. “*So, if we miss out on some of them down here, that’s ok. We’ll have all eternity for that. We’ve only got a few years to ensure that people’s sons and daughters around the world have a chance to be included in our family.*”

Only one life to live...

That’s the legacy I was given by my parents. And it was greater than anything else they could have given to me.

So, one simple question for you: **What legacy are you leaving? What kingdom are you leveraging your resources for?**

Do you **live as if you believe eternity is real** and it is imminent? Are you **teaching your kids** to do so?

I often hear people today talk about “**bucket lists.**” **Bucket lists are all the things you want to do** before you die because you assume you’ll never have a chance to do them again. But does that make sense for the Christian?

- **The book of Revelation tells us that at the Resurrection** Jesus ushers us into the “new heavens and new earth.”

- **Scholars say new means “renewed.”** That means that heaven is not some ethereal existence in the clouds where we sit around in diapers with nerf bow and arrows playing the harp.
- Heaven is a new, renewed version of this earth, perfected and without the curse of sin.
- *And that means all the things I missed out on down here I’ll get to experience a perfected version of up there--**all the mountains, stars, rivers, oceans, planets, animals, culture, arts, music, architecture and extreme sports** that I never got to experience here are waiting for me there.*
- **Rev 21:26** even says that God will “...bring into heaven the glory and honor of the nations.” (21:26) Which **means he brings in the best of culture.** The best Italian food. The best of Arabian and Colonial architecture. The best art. Mardi Gras without the debauchery. Disneyworld without the lines. The Jersey shore without Jersey.
- **And we don’t know all that we’ll be capable of physically,** but Jesus’ resurrection is supposed to give us a hint. In his resurrected body, Jesus could fly and walk through walls.
 - So, here’s how I see it: **I’ve always wanted to climb Mt. Everest or Mt. Kilimanjaro.** And if I never get to that down here, that’s ok. In heaven, I’ll climb the renewed one, which will be a lot better anyway, and when I get to the top, I’ll just fly right on over to the heavenly Tuscany and have dinner.
- **So, put up your bucket list!** You **don’t have to worry** about anything you miss out on. And leverage your few remaining moments for eternity.

You see, there is **one thing we CAN’T do there that we can do here:** tell people about Jesus.

If you want to **put something on a bucket list,** make it that.

The only wise thing to do with your resources Jesus says in Luke 16, is to make friends for eternity.

- Use them to move people from darkness to light; to **make sure the people around you (and all over the world) know** that there is a way to escape judgment; a Savior who suffered the penalty for their sin and defeated death on their behalf so they could enjoy him forever.
- The **people alive in the world during this generation** have one shot to hear the gospel, and it's us.

In that last day, when our Master returns, the ONLY thing that will matter to you is whether you were a faithful steward and **used your resources** for that purpose.

And then Jesus makes the statement we started this message with, the statement that embodies his most important teaching on money:

¹³ **"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."**

Both can be present in your life, but only one will be at the center. Only one can be FIRST. **One of them you'll look to for happiness and security** and you'll pursue and other you'll have a more casual relationship with.

Which one is it for you? God or money?

Last November, we began a 2-year Journey called FIRST:

- It was us asking ourselves: Is God truly first to us?
- The **basic idea** was this: Lots of things can be important. Only one thing can be FIRST.
- **And whatever is first in your heart gets your best**, and you're willing to settle for "good enough" in everything else.

- If what you drive or where you live is first in your heart, then you are willing to put up with "good enough" in everything else.
- **I used a couple of examples:** new house/college
- That **ought to be a conversation** that takes place about giving if God is first.
- So, is the **Kingdom of God important** or is it *first*?

Last verse in the passage: ¹⁴ **The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.**

- **Why were they sneering?** Isn't it obvious? They loved money, and Jesus was attacking what they looked to for life and all its blessings.
- **That's what you do** when someone threatens you at your core. **You sneer.**
- They weren't trying to argue, because they knew he was right. **Sneering reflects the heart** that says, "I really just hate that you went there." Is that you right now?
- **Let me ask: Are you sneering right now?** If so, what does that reveal about your heart?
- **I'm just asking.** If right now you're like, "Why does he always talk about this?"

*Is it because **your money is so precious to you** that you don't want anyone, not even Jesus, messing with it?*

MUSIC: FIRST SPECIFICS

Our goal in FIRST is that we be a congregation of people who serve God, not money, and put him first, and **thus leverage our money for eternal purposes.**

Our **primary goal is that 100%** of our church people live this way. Our secondary goal is the money that comes in from it.

- **Yes, there are things we feel like God has called us to do**, and they have price tags attached, but we know that if our people are living like disciples, putting God first, there will be more than enough to do what we need to do.
- **(That's why you'll hear very little** about financial goals and a whole lot about what it means to be a disciple.)

A year ago we started this. About 10,000 of you have been involved. 2,343 started to give for the 1st time!

So, let me address **3 different groups** today:

- **First, those of you who made a commitment last year.** I want to encourage you to finish strong. Show the same faith in the middle that you did at the beginning. Don't doubt in the dark what you saw in the light!
- **Second, for some of us, maybe God has financially blessed you or grown your heart** for the kingdom of God and he might be calling you to increase your commitment.
 - **Me and V:** 6 months salary. Stored asset
 - **The question to ask: What represents FIRST?**
 - **TITHING, for example, is a great place to start your giving journey**, but for many, it doesn't represent FIRST
 - **I think of the Lenkers, our CP over at BCC:** the way we want God to be first is that he is literally the biggest bill that we way. Their biggest bill was their mortgage so they set as their goal making their gift greater than that
- **3rd group:** Those of you who are new here--or for whatever reason you didn't make a commitment last time. We want to **invite you to join** us.
 - I'm not talking to guests--but if you feel like God has called you to make this church your home, you should join in.
- **Maybe you say**, "This doesn't apply to me." Maybe you're in debt or you have been through difficult financial circumstances or you are a student. Consider:

- Jesus used as his prime example of generosity a widow that gave two mites.
- The Apostle Paul commends the Church in Macedonia for giving out of their poverty and doing so with great joy!
- **"I know that some of us feel like we are *not* in a position to be able to give because of debt or financial hardship. We want to help you align your finances with God's plan and that's why we have volunteer financial coaches that would love to meet with you this Tuesday at Brier Creek. You can find out more summitchurch.com/stewardship."**

And like I said at the beginning, if this is too much of a struggle for you, please apply this by giving **somewhere else**. But above all, become an actual disciple.

This about your heart, and this is your tool: **Commitment card**:

- (Stored assets)

PRAYER:

(use card and pray in service--with families if applicable?)

- **Primary Goal: 100% Engagement**
 - Since last fall we have been asking that 100% of our church would put Jesus first in our lives.
 - **Y'all I've been doing this long enough** to know that I can't even get 100% of the people in my **immediate family** to do anything.
 - But we sense that *this* is what God was calling us to and what he wants for his church.
 - Jesus said that "What is impossible with man is possible with God." (Luke 18:27)

- **Will you pray?** Let's pray right now that God would stir our church to all take a step of faith and commit to put him first and that it would amaze the world with what he can accomplish for his glory and his purposes!

- **Secondary Goal: \$75 Million**
 - **We believe it will take \$75 million** over these two years to accomplish all that the Lord has called us to do in this season as we strive to create a movement of disciple-making disciples in RDU and around the world.
 - We know that *God doesn't need our money* to accomplish his purposes.
 - **Let's pray now that the Lord would provide *exactly what we need*** to fulfill his calling on our church.

