

The title for today's message is: **"Where is your Effort Placed?"**

Jesus said: ***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.***

Grace and Peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The parable in our gospel lesson today speaks to this theme of effort that is the lack of effort, discipleship, commitment or following through.

As we look closely at the parable of the dishonest manager, we can see that Jesus is saying that people who do dishonest deeds put a lot of effort into their deeds.

A manager was fired for not doing his job well. Then he thought, "what shall I do? I'm too old to dig ditches and I am ashamed to beg."

So he calls in all the people who owe his master money and tells them to change their bills.

He figures in this way, those people will be beholden to him and they will take care of him now that he has lost his job.

Pretty smart thinking, right? The master then finds out about his shrewdness and as our text says the master then commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness, but necessarily approval.

Even today a lot of people put a lot of effort into doing the wrong things for their selfish ends.

For example " Two partners had a clothing store. One would stay in the back room while the other waited on the customers.

The one waiting on the customers would pretend to be hard of hearing. So when a customer would choose a suit he liked, he would ask for the price.

The clerk would call to his partner in the back room, "How much is the suit Harry." Harry would reply in a loud and clear voice so the customer would be sure to hear \$149.00.

The clerk would then say it was \$129.00. Many people would hurry and buy that suit for \$129.00 thinking they were making a good deal because they thought the clerk heard the wrong price.

Little did they know that the partners were pulling a fast one on them and in their own greed they jumped at the chance of making a great deal.

Now the point is if the wicked people of this world go to so much trouble and effort to be wicked and dishonest.

Why can't His disciples put as much or even more effort into being sons and daughters of God.

Here Jesus wanted His followers then and now, to put in the same, if not more effort as the men of the world, but with nobler motives.

If only the Christian was as eager and ingenious in his attempt to attain goodness as the men of the world are in their attempts to attain money and comfort.

Jesus wants us to act with the same intensity in our discipleship toward Him as the cheats and crooks act in their attempt to gain worldly things.

Now, in the context of this text, Jesus is heading for Jerusalem and He is sensing that those following him, do not realize what kind of life He is calling them to live.

He is sensing they are along for a joy ride. And to see the thrills of His miracles.

They are coming along to see a good argument between Jesus and the religious leaders.

They do not comprehend, or understand the seriousness, the dedication to discipleship, He is calling them to live.

So Jesus says in our text: ***"for the sons of the world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light"***

The son's of the world are those who totally live by the way's of the world, non believers. The sons of the light are believers.

Look, this is not about money, nor dishonest stewardship, but it is about commitment, discipleship, and following Jesus with one's whole life.

Jesus wants our life committed to Him. He wants the way we act, the way we think, the way we make decisions, the way we work, and the way we interact with others.

All to be influenced by our commitment to Him as Lord, master and savior of our lives.

Jesus is saying if crooks and those who are only looking out for their own welfare, act so decisively about things that really don't matter.

Why does a Christian seem so casual about the care of his or her soul? Do you see the point Jesus is making here?

He's saying that since non believers are so concerned about the way they live their life, why aren't my followers?

If the crooks of the world will stop at nothing to make money, why aren't we who are believers of Jesus as committed to Him with such ambition, and dedication?

Jesus then says a statement which strikes to the heart of the matter. He says: ***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.***"

Jesus concludes with a sharp statement as a way to sum up what he had been trying to say all along.

And if you are going to follow Me, then give Me all your love and effort, giving Me your entire life.

He is saying he doesn't want any half-hearted discipleship. He wants total effort on our part.

Jesus is saying; If the dishonest people of the world can put so much effort in their work serving the world.

Then why can't you try even harder to serve Me, love Me and love your neighbor?

My friends, our money does not have to be our master. Money itself isn't evil. As long as we have a proper set of priorities, we can approach money as if it served us.

More importantly, no matter how much or how little we have, we can approach our earthly possessions as a gift we have been given in order to serve God and each other.

In God's great scheme of things, money is a little thing. But that doesn't mean that a Christian can't use it wisely.

We can do things like budget, save, and invest. If God gives us the ability, we can work hard at our jobs so that our income grows.

This is good and comes from God. As a Christian, redeemed and forgiven by Jesus our Savior,

We can strive to be faithful even in the little things. This is our grateful response to God for what he has done for us.

So can you put forth the love and effort to serve Jesus? That's what He's asking us. So ask yourself where do your priorities lie.

Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.