

7/28/24: SERIES- -'NEVER HEARD THAT' (#1) PASTOR JOHN

- **NEW SERIES** for the next few weeks....stories/lessons from Bible that perhaps you never heard or, possibly, caused some level of consternation or puzzlement. Today's story, as told by Jesus, is about an unrighteous guy who is presented as a model for behavior for His disciples.
- Pastor John first ask us to recall the shortages /empty shelves during Pandemic...and how we all, one by one...succumbed and joined the 'herd'of the panicked' in the over-buying/hoarding phenomena.
- Pastor John shares his feeling that he and so many of us, saw their reality changing-with things going away, perhaps forever. In following passages, Jesus portrays a similar circumstance in which an unrighteous guy makes a decision to live in light of what's coming next...and is praised for it.

Luke 16:1- 13 - - He also said to His disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were bought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. (2) And he called him and said to him, 'what is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' (3) And the manager said to himself, 'what shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg? (4) I have decided what to do , so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.' (5) So summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' (6) He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' (7) And then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty'. (8) The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.. (9) And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. (10) 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. (11) If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? (12) And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? (13) 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 money and God.

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- We start with a very entrusted manager in V 1-2esteemed, worthy...with strong relationships, who is now losing his position - -and really, everything in his life- - because of his unrighteousness and mis-management.
 - In V-3, he quickly envisions a new reality coming and a temporary window of opportunity to make some decisions for a future that avoids destitution and total failure.

- In V 4-7, and even in his depth of despair, the steward recognizes that he still has relationships, and for a short period of time, he has an ability to react. While there is some theological debate, this unrighteous man (1) might simply be 'sticking it to the man' while also ingratiating himself to the rich man's debtors, or...(2) as the only person knowledgeable of the various debts and their terms and working with that degree of independence, he might have well have been (excessively) padding/over-inflating artificially high prices so that he could reap his own excessive profit.
- Now he has an opportunity to revert to the fair price and use this opportunity to be generous to the debtors and fortify his relationships for his own gain. (Note by writer of these Notes:could his motive possibly and at least partially be one of repentance?)
- In any case, he had been an unrighteous man trying to do something about his 'new reality'. So, why in V 8, is he commended?!
- Seems non-sensical but the hinge of His point is this: Certainly, the man was unrighteous and sinful. At the same time, he was an example of someone who, in his depth of fear and despair....he acted. And he did so with initiative, cunning, and absolute shrewdness, recognizing opportunity, reinforcing relationships and planning for a new reality/new life. That vision, skill and initiative could well serve the disciples (and us today) TO THE EXTENT IT BE USED FOR GOOD AND IN PURSUIT OF A 'NEW REALITY' IN CHRIST.
- That is....how can we use our time....our resources (including relationships), our gifts, our worldly wealth and personal assets to manage our pursuit of faith (our own and in others). Through Jesus ('The Way, The Truth, and The Light'), things can be transferred from a broken, simple world to a perfect and heavenly one.
- When we give our lives into His Hands, He put His life in our hearts. As disciples (and managers of our faith), coordinate our assets of this world and be vessels of the Holy Spirit in promulgating the Gospel thus optimizing the number of faithful that will attain heavenly eternity.
- Coordinating our assets involves being good stewards as well....of our time....our money.....our gifts....and our lives (conduct).
- If the unrighteous man could use his worldly gifts to seek a new reality, how much more we could manage through all of the aboveand considering what's a stake....and in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.
- So, why is it so hard for us? Because there is this tension between the dark, atheistic spiritual forces that exist in this world and the Lord's promise of and our faith in heavenly/Godly eternity.
- First, the appreciation that so many in our world miss is that our time on this earth is inexpressively tiny compared to all of eternity.
- Second, many people (at least in modern countries) perceive the comforts and luxuries of this world so impressive, that they get caught up in it and and believe this is all there is/can be.....and that you can just 'tweak' what little needs to be fixed. These prideful people see our current existence as, in effect, the only existence.
- But NO!!- - YOU SHOULD BE A GOOD STEWARD OF EVERY GIFT AND ASSET AT YOUR DISPOSAL IN THIS BROKEN AND VERY TEMPORARY EXISTENCE WHILE FIXING YOUR EYES ON CHRIST AND ETERNITY. Understand that every one of our assets/gifts are from God and we have a responsibility! And He will call us into account for what we do with it!! As we consider what's at stake in terms of our eternal selves, any thought of tension between that all important destination and the momentary pleasures of this current world should immediately and 100% vanish.the pitch of this world is absurd!!!
- Our world/existence today, rather, and as brief as it is, represents an opportunity....to make THE decision...to place your faith in Christ ...and in doing so, to actually effect eternity and to secure your place in eternal heaven. (V-9-12)
- Using the analogy of an acorn (like the seed planted in our heart) and a 100 year old tree.....the prospect of heaven will be so big and so unimaginatively grand!!!!

- **V-13-**“you cannot serve God and money.” Does my money (or other gifts from God) reflect my priorities for the Kingdom? God says use money but be free from it, not allowing it to enslave you....but look, firstly, toward Jesus as your Master. Bottomline, God will call you in account.....he will expect good management and you can expect the ultimate reward from God. We wait with joyful expectation!
- Remember this: **NO ONE IN HEAVEN WILL EVER LOOK BACK AND WISH THEY HAD INVESTED LESS!**

BE GOOD STEWARDS IN CHRIST!