

# Inside Out

## Leaders' Guide

4 August 2024

*Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10 and Luke 16:1-13*

### Background

1. What was Jesus' primary purpose and calling in his ministry?
  - a. to proclaim the Kingdom of God. That was the fundamental thread of his teaching, and his stories, the parables, were Kingdom parables, bringing to the surface key principles of the Kingdom.
2. What were some of the characteristics of the Rabbinic storytelling tradition of which Jesus was a part? And what was one of Jesus' strategies at the end of his stories that helped to highlight the principles and/or values of the Kingdom of God?
  - a. The stories often were ambiguous and confusing, revealing their wisdom and insight only after considerable time, effort and thought. In the storytelling tradition there were stock story themes and stock characters.
  - b. Jesus would tell a story that would start out sounding quite familiar to his hearers, either in storyline or in character. Then at the end, in a mic-drop moment, he would radically alter the story with a sudden and surprising twist, bringing into focus a Kingdom principle or theme, a principle often at odds with key aspects of the kingdoms of this world.

### The Parable

3. What were the stock characters that populated Jesus' story and, given these characters, what might the hearer/reader reasonably expect to be the end of the story?

- a. The stock characters were:
    - i. The vastly wealthy and powerful master, strong, hard, even dangerous.
    - ii. The slick, manipulative and greedy manager.
    - iii. And the criminally complicit debtors.
  - b. When the manager fiddled the books to ingratiate himself with his master's debtors, the hearers would have anticipated the predictable result: When you mess with the wealth of a powerful and dangerous man the results will be catastrophic - at the very least debtor's prison, possibly much worse.
4. What was Jesus' mic-drop ending?
- a. "The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness."
5. What four take-aways are presented in our reading in verses 8 to 13? How might we try to make sense of each of these?
- a. **Vs 8:** "the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light." - we need to be shrewd or wise about how we use our material goods.
- Vs 9:** "make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings."  
 - one of the key threads in Jesus' kingdom teaching was planning with an eye to the future - not retirement, which didn't exist in the ancient world - but planning with eternity in mind. Just as the shrewd - if unsavory - steward invested in his future after his firing, so should the hearer prioritize, plan for, and invest in one's eternal future. "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."
- Vss 10-11:** "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?" - the way in which we tend to, or steward, the relatively inconsequential details - the material details - of this life will either prepare us for our life and responsibilities in the coming Kingdom of God - or not.

**Vs 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 God and money (mammon)." - As our 1 Timothy reading suggests, it is our love of money or material possessions that is the root of all manner of evil in our lives and world. When material goods are the god at the center of our lives all sorts of internal and external havoc is unleashed.

6. What is the inside-out reality mentioned in the sermon? Who or what is at the center of the lives of so many in the world around us? And who is meant to be at the center, the center around whom everything and everyone else is meant to revolve?
  - a. Quote from Tozer's *The Pursuit of God* on God's original design: "Within was God; without, a thousand gifts which God had showered upon them/us." The inside-out reality is that things have taken the place of God at the center of the human heart.
  - b. God and God alone is meant to be at the center of our existence.
7. What two results or consequences of a rightly ordered life were emphasized in the sermon?
  - a. *Freedom* - Anything other than God around which we order our lives is an idol - an idol that will chew us up and spit us out. Every form of idolatry demands human sacrifice - our sacrifice. It never delivers what it promises and instead demands of us everything. We will be bound and shackled as we are led unwilling victims to the altar of sacrifice. And in these sacrifices there is no hope of resurrection. Every idolatry is nihilistic in both essence and end. By contrast,

Christ at the center of a properly ordered life will bring peace, joy and a present and eternal hope - in essence life - eternal life. And increasing freedom from those chains that bind us.

- b. *A community where love and intimacy are obvious.* A loving, compassionate, caring community - a community that prioritizes people and relationships over things (and programs) goes well beyond a group that holds hands around the campfire and sings Kumbaya, because that love, that generosity, couldn't possibly stop at that door and remain God's love and generosity. God's love will continue to spill out to the world around us in relentlessly new and creative ways - and the world will notice. Such a community will be like a city set on a hill whose light can't be hidden.

Question for reflection

8. What idols have been or continue to be vying for space in the center of our lives?