

# Puzzling Parables

## *The Wicked Manager*

November 5, 2017

Welcome to where we're learning to manage the things entrusted to us.

### How often do you seize the Lord's authority?



Jesus is preparing the Twelve to be sent out on their own; and, part of this Apprenticeship Training 2.0 comes as a two-part parable:

**#1 The Good Waiters:** wherein the Master comes and serves His faithful servants as friends.

**#2 The Dreaded Thief:** wherein He plunders what the sleeping owner tries to keep for himself.

Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?"

The Lord answered, [with a two-part *parallel* parable: #3] "Who then is the *faithful and wise manager*, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?

[Because, *the wise manager in story #3* parallels the good waiters in #1, who eagerly anticipate the unspecified arrival of their joyful servant-master, who returns from a wedding feast and serves *them as friends*]

It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, *he will put him in charge of all his possessions*. But [now we get *story #4, the wicked manager*, who parallels the unaware owner who encounters the thief in #2] suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. – Luke 12:41-45 NIV

Ever know someone who threw a party at their parents' house, in their parents' absence, against their parents' desire, abusing what was under their care as if it was their own? *Ever been that person?*

**The wicked manager treats the master's possessions, to which he's been temporarily entrusted, as though they are his to do with any old selfish, abusive, way he sees fit.**

This is Jesus' answer, by way of solution, to Peter's question.

If the guys in story #1 act like the guy in #3, the joyful master will come to serve them as friends; *but*, if the guys in #1 act like the guy in #4, the wrathful master comes as the thief in #2.

**The wicked manager chose to forget who he's responsible to.**

**He acts as though he's only responsible to himself.**

Therefore, his behavior becomes self-centered and selfish. Therefore, the Master-and-True-Owner rightly returns as a dreaded and unexpected Thief to repossess what is rightly His.

**Do you see your entrustments as His, or seize 'em as your own?**

We must always be on guard and girded with His Word, because **our nature is prone to usurp the Lord's authority**, and to selfishly, destructively, pursue our own, sinful, self-destructive agenda.

And, **we're not only fighting our own selfish tendencies, but the opposition of the enemy, and the temptation of the world.**

We must not allow ourselves to lose our intensity of devotion.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. – Romans 12:10-11 NIV

**This can't be forced or manufactured in the long run.**

It requires diligent daily renewal, *and* a firm belief that the best of everything comes to those who serve the Servant-Master.

**The opposite of the wicked servant isn't a legalistic one.** Jesus contrasts the wicked manager in #4 with the joyful, eager, waiters in #1 whose master calls his friends when he comes.

**Our ongoing motivating force must be love and grace over fear and guilt.** Otherwise we'll dread rather than desire His coming.



And though His coming may delay, He surely will, perhaps *today*. **The wicked manager fails to see each day as drawing closer to the inevitable, but only as proof that it won't be any time soon.**

And, he's right ... *right up until he isn't.*

The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. [In Jesus' later retelling of this story, He adds: **"where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"** (Mt 24:51)] – Luke 12:46 NIV

**This servant never truly knew or loved his Servant-Master.**

He's modeled after those in Isaiah who forsake and forget the Lord.

“But as for you who *forsake* the Lord and *forget* my holy mountain, [like the wicked manager in #4] who *spread a table for Fortune* and *fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny*, I will *destine you for the sword*, and you will all bend down for the slaughter; [when He comes as the unexpected thief in #2] for I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and *chose* what displeases me.” Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “My servants will eat, [like the good waiters in #1 and the wise manager in #3] but you will go hungry; my servants will drink, but you will go thirsty; my servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. My servants will sing out of the joy of their hearts, but you will cry out from anguish of heart and wail in brokenness of spirit. You will leave your name to my chosen ones as a curse; the Sovereign Lord will put you to death, but *to his servants he will give another name*. [Friends (Jn 15:15)] – Isaiah 65:11-15 NIV

But, just because we’re friends doesn’t mean we’re scot-free.

“That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. – Luke 12:47-48a NIV

These servants *are not* categorized as unbelievers; but, they *are* held to account for their actions. As will we. **Greater knowledge brings greater consequences if we don’t act on it.**

Any suffering we may experience will be specifically tailored to our wise and wicked actions while we’ve been out on *our own*.

Remember, this is a *parable*. **It won’t be an actual beating**. It’s like how people talk about “taking a beating” in the stock market and suffering the loss of their bad investments.

But, also remember, **it will be actual suffering**.

Paul warns us of the day of reckoning that comes to all mankind.



... his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. – 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 NIV



When I was young, my response to this was: *“Cool. I still get in.”* **I never pictured what someone actually suffers when escaping through fire: the sickening loss of hair and clothes and skin**. Type “burn wound” in Google Images, and you’ll sober up immediately!

These horrific com’parables are intentionally in there to help us comprehend how it feels to stand before our Creator and Savior having failed to appreciate and act on the very profound essence of our created purpose.



*Good-news is: we aren't really beaten. Bad news is: it's far worse.*

When Peter denied Christ repeatedly, and finally with an oath, just as the rooster crowed Jesus returned and looked Peter dead in the eyes; and, tough ol' Peter ran out and sobbed intensely. (Mt 26:75; Lk 22:62) After Jesus restored Peter, **do you think if given the choice, Peter would rather relive that moment or take a beating?**



We can't comprehend the pain or the consequences of seeing how we've betrayed and denied and usurped the perfect holy authority of the True Master who desires only to serve us as friends.

But, we can heed the explicit warnings from those who can.

*From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. – Luke 12:48b NIV*

**This life is a temporary assignment and a trust.**

**Everything we own is on loan.**

**It was His *before* we got here, and others will manage when we're gone.**

But, whatever we do with whatever's been entrusted determines our Master's response when we stand to account before Him.

**So, what has He entrusted to you to manage for Him?**

It requires maturity to realize that true fulfillment doesn't come by those who serve us ... but, by those we serve. *That's why ...*

[Jesus] **emptied himself**, taking the form of a **servant** ... – Philippians 2:7 RSV

**You can't be a servant if you're full of yourself.**

A key indicator of growth in Christ is less and less asking, "Who's going to meet *my* needs?" and more and more asking, "Whose needs can *I* meet?"

So, how are you managing?

**Don't be caught holding onto what isn't yours.**

The Master *is* coming; the moment is just ... *unspecified*.