

“Straight from the Heart” Luke 16:14-18

Context: The seventh parable in this series of eight re-directs Jesus’ discussion to the Pharisees. A strange interjection seems to interrupt the flow of thought. It is no accident however, since the interjection introduces a seventh parable of the eternal consequences straight from the heart of the previous parable. Salvation is still the theme of these parables, but the focus shifts from God’s intensive labor to save the sinner and His acceptance of their repentance to the outcome of Pharisees ensnared by the self-righteous delusion that God’s riches are their personal possession. Wanton disregard of stewardship described in the parable of the prodigal son morphs into the sin of personal avarice rather than profligacy. The interjection provides any hearer with an indelible mark of warning should they mistake self-justification for God’s justification. It fulfills Luke’s purpose of this Gospel, to steady the God-lover’s wobbly faith regarding a proper regard for law, mercy, and justice.

Life Principle: A self-justifying voice before men deafens the ear to a call for justification by God (Romans 3:24).

1. Expressions of the heart’s altar - Luke 16:14

The Pharisees tolerated the first three parables, cringed at the elder in the parable of the prodigal son, and held Jesus in contempt for the parable of the unjust steward because they sensed the personal implications. Contempt for this uneducated Jesus arose from hearts that “existed” for wealth and all the sins that a heart for that existence brings.

2. Repudiation of the heart’s altar - Luke 16:15-18

The Pharisaid altar of the heart assumes the position of God when it blindly declares its own righteousness to impress others. Jesus breaks that altar, comparing it to pagan worship. A very cryptic passage follows that contrasts God’s effective will. The passage alludes to His will in Old Testament righteousness ending with John the Baptist. Any trying to force their way into the Kingdom by legalistically fulfilling the Law’s righteousness will find the Law hard i.e. hardness of divorce remarriage as adultery. Jesus doesn’t do away with the hardness of the law; rather, He provides the atoning power by which God justifies the sinner through Jesus’ sacrifice and not by man’s justifications, such as justifying laxity of divorce as did the Hillel School of Pharisees

For Further Study:

- The context of this address shows the Pharisees as its target. As a **Bible study method**, determine their characteristics and why money and the law were important to them. See: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edersheim/lifetimes.viii.ii.html?highlight=pharisees#highlight>. What were their assumptions about wealth and its association with God’s favor? How are their assumptions represented in the parable that follows? What are your assumptions?
- Luke 16:15 characterizes a Pharisee as someone who justifies him/herself before men. As a **Bible study method**, look up the meaning of ‘justification’ in *Vine’s Dictionary* (i.e. Romans 2:13). What does the self-talk of justification in the heart look like (i.e. Luke 18:10ff)? Why is such justification like building an idol to Zeus before God (cf. “abomination”)?
- Luke 16:15 addresses justification by man and by God. Having studied the concept of justification above, consider how it relates to our doctrinal statement, particularly the phrase, “fulfilled all righteousness and satisfied all justice,” cited in footnote 7 (see our **doctrinal statement ‘On Last Things’** under **what we believe**, <http://www.gracepointfellowship.org/files/DocStmnt.pdf>). How does your justification by Jesus affect your freedom from the guilt and shame of sin (cf. Romans 8:1ff)?

Transformation exercise:

Meditate on Luke 16:15. When tempted to justify yourself this week, ask God to allow you to see the issue from His perspective.