

Luke 16:14-18

"Faithful Hearts"

January 4th, 2025

1. Intro

- a. Well, as we saw last week, Jesus is still speaking in the same contextual setting as he was in throughout all of chapter 15
 - i. In chapter 15, while Jesus was feasting with tax collectors and sinners,
 1. The Pharisees and the Scribes were all there as well
 - a. And they were GRUMBLING that Jesus would surround himself with such awful people
 2. So, Jesus told a series of Parables in Luke 15, all of which were designed to emphasize his mission in coming to this earth...
 - a. Jesus had come to seek and to save the lost
 - i. And every time one of the lost is FOUND, all of heaven is filled with joy and celebration
 1. For one of God's wayward sons or daughters has come home!
 - ii. But, at the end of chapter 15, the tone of Jesus' stories begins to shift
 1. With the insertion of the older brother into the Parable of the Prodigal Son,
 - a. The tone of Jesus' teachings moves from joy to judgement...
 - i. From celebration to condemnation
 - b. And Jesus begins to make it clear in chapter 16
 - i. For all those who return to the Father in brokenness and humility
 1. The doors to the Kingdom of been flung wide open
 2. And a great feast awaits you at the banquet table of the King!
 - ii. BUT, for all those who continue to stand OUTSIDE of the Kingdom
 1. In their prideful self-righteousness...
 2. In their arrogant self-centeredness...
 3. In their UNREPENTANT entitlement and presumption...
 - iii. For all who continue with THAT kind of heart, the door to the Kingdom will remain shut
 1. And we'll see next week that this door will remain shut to them for all eternity
 - iii. Last week, we saw Jesus begin to teach on these things in the Parable of the Dishonest Manager
 1. And Jesus used this Parable to make a distinction between the sons and daughters of this world, and the sons and daughters of light
 - a. The sons and daughters of this world are shrewd and conniving in all of their planning and scheming
 - i. Their hearts are always set on how they can best secure for themselves the pleasures and the comforts of this world
 1. Their hearts are set on the false god of Mammon
 - a. And they are perfectly content to use the WAYS of Mammon – the ways of this world – to gain the TREASURES of this world
 2. But Jesus was VERY clear at the end of his parable...
 - a. You CANNOT serve both God and Mammon
 - i. For you will either hate God and love the treasures of this world

- a. The hearts of the Pharisees were full of scorn and derision for the things that Jesus was teaching
 - 2. Because in their hearts, the Pharisees WERE NOT lovers of God
 - a. They were lovers of MONEY
- ii. The Apostle Paul would address this same kind of heart in 2 Timothy 3, verses 1-5
 - 1. As Paul was encouraging his young disciple to live a life of righteousness and faith and love and purity,
 - a. He warned Timothy that there would be MANY who would NOT live in such a way
 - i. And they would eventually find their way into THE CHURCH
 - 2. So Paul warned Timothy,
 - a. *¹But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ²For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholly, ³heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. AVOID SUCH PEOPLE.*
 - 3. Paul makes it clear...
 - a. These types of people are going to creep into households
 - b. They're going to have the appearance of godliness
 - i. But in their minds they are corrupted, and they are disqualified
 - 1. For they are not lovers of God, but lovers of money
 - a. Ultimately, they are lovers of SELF
 - ii. So Paul says to Timothy without apology and without hesitation...
 - 1. AVOID SUCH PEOPLE
 - b. And Jesus makes it clear to us here in Luke 16:15 WHY we are to avoid such people...
- 3. Luke 16:15
 - a. *¹⁵[Jesus] said to them [to the Pharisees, the lovers of money], "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.*
 - i. "God knows your hearts"
 - 1. Isn't it fascinating how Jesus uses these words in a MUCH different way than how our world uses them today
 - a. In our world today, especially here in America, we are very quickly getting caught up in a wave of revivalism
 - i. We hear new stories every week about thousands of people getting baptized in one city...
 - ii. About tens of thousands of college students turning to Jesus on multiple college campuses
 - iii. Just the other day, there was the headline that a painting of Jesus sold at an auction at Mar-O-Lago for \$2.75 MILLION dollars
 - 1. And one of the captions joyfully stated, "Revival is HERE!"
 - 2. Now, these things all hold THE POTENTIAL that God COULD BE doing a great work here in our nation
 - a. But the Bible is clear, my friends, in ANY professed move of God, whether it is within an individual or on an entire college campus,
 - i. We are called to examine THE FRUIT of that movement
 - 1. Is there the fruit of repentance and brokenness over sin?

2. Is there the fruit of an overwhelming hunger and thirst for righteousness,
 - a. Marked by a hunger for the Word of God?
3. Is there the fruit of an unapologetic desire to OBEY the commands of Jesus Christ,
 - a. As an outward expression of our inner LOVE for him?
4. Is there the fruit of a growing FEAR of the Lord?
- b. This is what happened in Ephesus when Paul came into this pagan city and began proclaiming the Word of God
 - i. For TWO YEARS, Paul spent EVERY DAY speaking boldly and reasoning and persuading the people about the Kingdom of God
 1. This was a time of great spiritual awakening in Ephesus, and it was PROVEN by the fruit
 - a. MANY of the residents of Ephesus came forward and confessed their sin, and divulged all the evil things they had been doing
 - b. MANY who had gotten caught up in idolatry and witchcraft brought their wicked books out and burned them for all to see
 - c. And Acts 19:17 tells us that "*FEAR fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.*"
 - ii. The fruit of this movement of God was plain for EVERYONE to see
 1. And as a result, the Word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily
 3. But what is the reaction today, when people in the Church see all of these supposed revivals in our land, and they simply hit "pause" and ask, "What about the fruit?"
 - a. What is the general reaction to this BIBLICAL question?
 - i. "You can't judge what's happening there... only GOD knows their hearts."
 1. And far too often, this expression becomes a wall of self-defense, as WE choose to justify ourselves before men
 - a. Sure, that professing Christian is still consumed with hatred and bigotry and a lack of love toward the poor and the needy...
 - i. But you don't know his heart!
 - b. Sure, that professing follower of Jesus is still caught up in sexual immorality and the desires of the flesh...
 - i. But you don't know her heart!
 - c. Well yes, those professing believers still look just like the world around them, as they continue to chase after money and power and influence...
 - i. But you don't know their hearts!
 - b. And in our twisting of the Scriptures, we have ended up justifying all sorts of evil before men
 4. But Jesus uses this phrase in the exact opposite way, doesn't he?
 - a. God knows our hearts...
 - i. And that ought to cause us much fear and trembling
 1. God doesn't base our salvation upon a one-time profession of faith when we were a kid back in VBS or youth camp

2. He doesn't base the forgiveness of our sins upon the day that we got baptized
3. He doesn't base our eternal condition upon how many times we've attended church, or how much money we've tithed, or how many prayers we've prayed
 - a. We can EASILY use all of those things to justify ourselves before men, all while our hearts remain desperately wicked
- b. No, friends, God knows our hearts
 - i. And the question is, when He sees our heart, does God see a heart that has truly been made NEW?
 1. Does He see a heart that has been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit?
 - a. A heart that has surrendered to Jesus as King...
 - b. A heart that delights in the law of God...
 - c. A heart that LONGS to bear the fruits of love, and joy, and peace, and patience, and gentleness, and kindness, and self-control
 - ii. Not a heart that is perfect by any means, for we are ALL still warring with the old man and the old woman of our flesh
 1. But does He see a heart that has come to Jesus like the Prodigal Son,
 - a. A heart that cries out as we sang earlier...
 - i. "O, to grace how great a debtor, daily I'm constrained to be;
 - ii. Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee!"
 - ii. God knows your hearts, friends
 1. So what does He TRULY see when He looks there?
 - a. This is a question of utmost importance, because again, Jesus gives to us only two choices
 - i. Back in verse 13, Jesus told us that we must CHOOSE between serving God or serving the things of this world
 2. And now Jesus says that you must CHOOSE between what is exalted among men, or what is exalted before God
 - a. For the things that are exalted among men are an ABOMINATION in the sight of God
 - i. This word that Jesus uses for "abomination" is not a pleasant word at all
 1. The proper definition of this word is "to reek with a stench"
 - a. It is that which emits a foul odor and hence is disgustingly abhorrent
 2. Think about the smell when you come upon some dead animal that has been rotting for days out in the heat
 - a. Jesus says that THIS is how God thinks about the things that are exalted among men
 - iii. When a person says that they are a child of God, and yet they unashamedly pursue wealth and power and prosperity,
 1. God looks at their hearts, and what he sees there REEKS with an awful stench

- iv. When a person says that they are a follower of Jesus, and yet they continue to have cold and hardened hearts towards their neighbors,
 - 1. God looks at their hearts, and what he sees there is PUTRID and ROTTEN
- v. When a person bears the name of “Christian,” and yet they are still walking in UNREPENTANT sin...
 - 1. Even though all the world around them might affirm and justify them in their so-called “Christianity,”
 - a. God looks upon their hearts, and he sees an abomination
 - i. This is the heart of idolatry, my friends
 - 1. Idolatry corrupts what is meant to be holy
 - 2. It stains what was meant to be sacred
- b. This is why God gave the Law to the people of Israel following their exodus out of Egypt
 - i. For hundreds of years, the people of Israel had been slaves in a pagan land
 - 1. They were surrounded by the worship of the Egyptian gods
 - a. It is believed by many scholars that each of the ten plagues that God sent against Egypt were specifically directed toward each of their gods
 - i. God turning the Nile into blood was likely a condemnation of the pagan deity, Osiris, who was linked by the Egyptians to the fertility of the Nile River
 - ii. God filling the land with frogs was likely a condemnation of the pagan deity, Heket, the goddess of fertility and childbirth, who was often depicted with a frog's head
 - ii. The pantheon of Egyptian idols was broad and deep, and again, the Israelites had been immersed in this idolatry for CENTURIES
 - 1. But God knew that He would be sending them into a place that was EVEN MORE plagued with idolatry
 - a. The land of the Canaanites would eventually become the Promised Land of Israel
 - i. But in those days, prior to the conquest of the Land, there were MANY tribal deities in these pagan nations
 - 1. Ba'al, the storm god and fertility god
 - 2. Asherah, the mother goddess of fertility and motherhood
 - 3. Molech, the god who so often presided over the atrocious practice of child sacrifices
 - 4. Anat, the war goddess
 - 2. These gods and goddesses were worshiped by all the peoples of Canaan, as well as many of the lands surrounding them
 - iii. God was delivering His people OUT OF a land of idolatrous abominations, and He was sending them INTO a land JUST AS FULL of idolatrous abominations
 - 1. So, in between these two destinations, God gave His people the Law
 - a. The Law would serve to set the Israelites apart from all the other nations of the world
 - b. The Law would serve to restrict unrestrained passions, to curb evil desires, to help the people of God more accurately reflect the character of God
 - c. The Law would serve to make the people HOLY
 - iv. And God's instructions were made perfectly clear to His people
 - 1. Follow His law as He has prescribed, and all of their worship and offerings and sacrifices would be like a beautiful aroma before Him
 - a. And He would accept them with great delight

2. Corrupt His law with the things of this world, and the wicked practices of the nations around them, and all of their offerings would become like a stench before Him
 - a. And He would refuse ALL of it
- v. This was the warning given in Leviticus 26, verses 27-33, as God said to His people,
 1. *²⁷But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me, ²⁸then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins.*
²⁹You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.
³⁰And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you. ³¹And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, AND I WILL NOT SMELL YOUR PLEASING AROMAS.
³²And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it.
³³And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.
- vi. From the time of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai
 1. The people of God were to be governed by the Law of God
 - a. And as they followed the Law of God, their worship would be PURE and ACCEPTABLE before Him
 - i. The Law would serve to make their worship HOLY before Him
- vii. But that's not how things played out, was it?
 1. For the Israelites, even though they were the chosen people of God,
 - a. They were frail and weak sinners... just like you... just like me
 - i. Time after time, the people of God fell away from the law of God
 1. And they did exactly what God told them not to do – they went and worshiped according to the ways of all the nations surrounding them
 - b. So God, in His mercy, raised up the Prophets
 - i. Men like Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel
 - ii. Men like Amos and Hosea and Obadiah
 - c. God raised up the Prophets to call His people back to His Law
 - i. Repent...
 1. Turn back to the commands of God...
 - a. And He will restore you back to the lands that He has taken you from
- viii. This was the cycle that was “on-repeat” throughout the Old Testament, wasn’t it?
 1. The people of God would follow God for a season
 - a. But then they would fall into idolatry, and God would rebuke them and discipline them
 2. Sometimes, they would repent, and God would restore them
 - a. But it wouldn’t be long until these things happened again
- ix. This cycle persisted for centuries...
 1. UNTIL the last of the Old Testament prophets arrived
 - a. When John the Baptist came on the scene, his message WAS NOT, “Repent, for God might restore your land and your prosperity and your national identity, if you return to Him”
 - i. No, John’s message was the good news of “*Repent! Bear fruits in keeping with repentance! Prepare the way of the Lord! Make his paths straight! For the Kingdom of God is HERE!*”
 - c. So Jesus says in verse 16,

4. Luke 16:16

- i. In verse 17, Jesus reminds us...

5. Luke 16:17

- a. *¹⁷But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.*
 - i. Brothers and sisters, this is why it is so very important for us to read both the Old Testament and the New Testament with great zeal and diligence
 - 1. Paul encouraged Timothy at the end of 2 Timothy 3 to continue in what he had learned and had firmly believed
 - a. He reminded Timothy that, from his childhood, Timothy's mother and grandmother had taught him the sacred writings
 - i. And it was through the sacred writings that Timothy had become wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ
 - b. Friends, the sacred writings were the Old Testament!
 - i. The oral traditions and the teachings of Jesus were certainly being handed down among all the new churches that were being planted
 - 1. But for the most part, the sacred writings that Paul was talking about consisted PRIMARILY of the Old Testament
 - 2. It consisted PRIMARILY of the Law, and the Prophets
 - c. Paul says to Timothy, "These are what have made you WISE for salvation, as you have placed your faith in Jesus!"
 - b. For it is in the Old Testament that we find the specifics of the NEW Covenant, which would be established through the blood of Jesus Christ
 - i. In Jeremiah 31, verses 31-34, we read these amazing words...
 - 1. *³¹Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*
 - ii. Through the blood of Christ, we Gentiles have been adopted into the family of God
 - 1. Through the blood of Jesus, we have been brought into the true Israel of God
 - a. And therefore, through the blood of Jesus, we have been brought into the New Covenant that God has made
 - i. This Covenant is not like the Old Covenant that God had made with Israel...
 - 1. Which they very unsuccessfully tried to uphold through their EXTERNAL obedience to His commands
 - 2. Under the NEW Covenant, God does not abolish His law and say to everyone, "Hey, just slap the name of my Son on your t-shirt, and then live however you want and we'll call it good!"
 - a. No! Under the New Covenant, God says He will put His law WITHIN us
 - i. He will write His Law ON OUR HEARTS
 - 3. God says it in this way in Ezekiel 36, verses 25-27...
 - a. *²⁵I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart*

of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

iii. Brothers and sisters, this is why Jesus says that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for ONE DOT of the law to become void

1. Jesus didn't come to abolish the Law, but to FULFILL the Law!

a. Where Israel failed over and over and over again, Jesus came, and he upheld the Law of God PERFECTLY

i. Through his PERFECT obedience, Jesus was the sinless and the spotless Lamb of God

1. Through his fulfillment of all of God's righteous commands, Jesus became the only acceptable sacrifice for our sins

b. He who was perfect in obedience, went to the cross to bear the punishment for OUR disobedience

i. He who knew no sin, was made to be sin on our behalf,

1. So that THROUGH JESUS, we might become the righteousness of God

2. THROUGH JESUS, we might be given a new heart and a new spirit

3. THROUGH JESUS, the Spirit of God will dwell within us, and we will be a people who DELIGHT in obeying the statutes and rules and commands of God

2. And our delight in the Law will be the evidence God has TRULY brought us into His Kingdom

a. In this way, God the Father is making a bride FIT for His Son

b. In this way, God is purifying the Church, and washing her clean in preparation for the Marriage Feast of the Lamb

c. Friends, I believe that this is why Jesus interjects this seemingly random statement on divorce and remarriage here in verse 18, where he says...

6. Luke 16:18

a. ¹⁸"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

i. Hear me on this, the Scriptures are clear in regard to divorce and remarriage

1. God has designed marriage to be between one man and one woman, as long as they both shall live

a. Jesus affirms this in Matthew 19, verses 4-6, when he says,

i. ⁴"Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

b. By God's design, marriage is a joining together of two into one

i. And whatever He has joined together, man has no right or liberty to separate

1. Now, is the grace of God sufficient to cover over the sin of divorce

a. It is

2. And we would do well to remember that there is only ONE unforgivable sin in the Bible

- a. And it is NOT divorce
 - 2. But we cannot shy away from the biblical reality that God HATES divorce
 - a. Yes, because it is man tearing apart what God has joined together
- ii. But on a GREATER level, we must never forget that, according to the Scriptures,
 - 1. The union of a husband and a wife is THE earthly representation of the Union between Christ and his Church
 - a. And God the Father will not stand for ANY adultery within that union
 - i. Now clearly, there is ZERO concern that Jesus will ever divorce us or commit adultery against us
 - b. So this message is for us, then, isn't it?
- b. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to remain faithful in our union with Christ
 - i. We are called to remain pure in our betrothal to our Savior
 - 1. This is why the New Testament is FULL of commands to FLEE from anything that would make us unclean
 - a. FLEE from the love of money that would cause us to wander away from the faith
 - b. FLEE from youthful passions that would cause us to become dishonorable vessels
 - c. FLEE from sexual immorality that would cause us to be joined with the prostitution of the world around us
 - d. FLEE from any idolatry that would cause our hearts to become adulterous,
 - 1. And therefore, lead us to become a stench before our God
- c. If you are TRULY a new creation in Christ, then God has given you a NEW heart that delights in His Law
 - i. He has given you a NEW Spirit who will cause you to walk in His commands
 - 1. So keep in step with the Spirit, brothers and sisters
 - a. For blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord
 - b. Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him WITH THEIR WHOLE HEART!