

## **INTERACTING WITH THE SERMON**

### **SYNOPSIS OF THE SERMON**

Pastor Rich spoke about grief and losing a loved one. The sermon opened with a detailed summary of CS Lewis' memoir of his marriage titled *A Grief Observed*. This story served as a bridge to the tragic story of Absalom, King David's son.

The sermon flowed from certain episodes of Absalom's life. Beginning in 2 Sam 15:1-6 – Absalom proves to be no different than us today, rejecting current leaders. Additionally, he was a master *politician* playing off people's sense of grievance or resentment. He also chose to deliberately work toward splintering David's kingdom. The NT gives some direction on how to select leaders - Luke 16:10-12 offers three tests for leadership. The first is someone who can be faithful with little, can be trusted with more. The second is someone who has been trustworthy with worldly wealth. The third test is being trustworthy with someone else's property – being a good follower. Absalom failed in proving he could serve under his father. In the end, all his power grabs came to a head in Sam 18 - when David's army was forced to fight Absalom's.

But in the course of battle, his "hair" catches in a tree and leads to his capture and execution. The point was made, that what can sometimes take us down, is not necessarily a weakness, but perhaps an over reliance on a strength. For Absalom it was his hair (Ch 15). The book "fear your strength" – said leaders are more often undone by over-emphasizing and over-relying on their *strengths*. For Paul, de-emphasizing his past "success" (Phil 3:7-8) allowed him to fully embrace Christ. People's assets become liabilities when they dull our sense of need for God. Not only does success dull our sense of need for Christ, but it can deceive you into believing that since everything in my life is going well, I must be rightly related to God.

In the end, Death is no respecter of persons – all succumb. At the end of 2 Sam 18, David laments for his lost son. Relating to the story of Nicholas Wolterstorff in his book *Lament for a Son*, the grief of loss can be completely overwhelming and wholly unique. You don't have to come up with something brilliant to say to comfort a friend, who has lost a loved one. Just tell the person that you grieve with them, that you love them, and that you are praying for them. Hug them. Cry with them. Don't say, "It's not that bad." Death is awful. And it does leave a hole.

*In 5 minutes or less, briefly give a synopsis of this week's sermon. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain.*

## **GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED**

*These questions can be used as ice-breakers in the beginning OR interwoven between the questions below to draw the group into the discussion.*



- What are one or two things from this weekend's sermon that really stood out to you?
- What is a recent "test" you encountered – how did you do? What did you learn from it?
- Do you have any recent stories of how God used you to comfort someone who was grieving the loss of a loved one or a friend? What did God show you through those circumstances?

## SCRIPTURE STUDY

**Context:** In Chapter 16 we find strong warnings about how wealth can divide the heart and hamper one's growth as a disciple. It follows the parable of the Prodigal Son as Jesus digs deeper into what it means to be a disciple and how Christians should be different from the world. While this passage certainly addresses some of Jesus' clearest teachings money and wealth, it also has some broader applications. Particularly, when we read texts like this, we must be careful not to identify ourselves exclusively with the "good" side. How might the Holy Spirit be speaking to us through all the various actors and dynamics of this story? This particular passage was referred to in the sermon as "three good tests of leadership", but it could also be three good measures that reveal a faithful, undivided heart.

**Read Luke 16:10-15**

<sup>10</sup> "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. <sup>11</sup> So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? <sup>12</sup> And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"

<sup>13</sup> "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

<sup>14</sup> The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. <sup>15</sup> He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight."

- After reading the text, who is in the audience (v. 1, 14). What do we know about the Pharisees<sup>1</sup>? (some good answers include: the Pharisees had a "righteousness" that Jesus said was inadequate - [Matt 5:20](#); Pharisees were accused of hypocrisy by Jesus - [Matt 23](#); Pharisees accused Jesus of exorcising demons in allegiance with Satan - [Matt 9:34](#)).
- (14-15) What word stands out in the Pharisees reaction to Jesus' teachings? (a. sneering). What do the Pharisees outward actions indicate about their inward attitudes? (a. a mocking and dismissive response to Jesus' words AND a view that wealth and money had no corrupting properties)
- How does Jesus respond? Who are the "people"? Have you ever observed Christian "culture" missing it?

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<sup>1</sup> Scholar and historian Scott McKnight has a solid [blog post](#) summary about the Pharisees.



- Let's make it personal, Read 1 Sam 16:7 – God looks at the heart, not our masterfully crafted facades, forcing us to understanding our driving motivations and values. In what ways has Jesus challenged your values recently? How did the insight come? What have you done since?
- Let's return to the teaching that caused the Pharisees to mock Jesus and led to Jesus' harsh rebuke. Discipleship for Jesus was not a matter of ceremonial cleanliness and observing holy days – it has to do with circumcision of the heart – Rom 2:28-29 – surrendering to Jesus, more and more of ourselves.
- V. 10 – what's the first measure of faithfulness? (a. being faithful with little) We often overlook the little – what do you consider "little"? Being trustworthy, or faithful, is contrasted with being dishonest – what's the difference? (a. could include -manipulation, cheating, cutting corners, misuse). Have you seen this principle in your life – faithfulness in the little leads to something greater?
- V. 11 – what is Jesus' point in contrasting worldly wealth vs. true riches? (a. "worldly wealth" is better translated *unrighteous mammon* – when money becomes an idol; true riches are part of the abundant life that God alone can give). What would it look like to handle worldly wealth well?
- V. 12 – This verse get's to the heart of being a servant, and being a good follower. What point was made about this verse in the sermon? (a. serving another leader well, without promoting your agenda, leads to being entrusted with leadership rather than grasping for it). How might you be entrusted with someone else's property today? Where are you called, right now, to be a good steward?
- V. 13 – Jesus also taught about serving two masters in Matthew 6. Can money be an idol? How does money, in all that it represents – power, security, wealth, accumulation, success, etc – crowd out our ability fully serve Christ?

We can't get all of God, or all he wants for us, when we live with divided hearts. God cares deeply about our hearts, the inward direction of our hearts, towards him alone in faithfulness, holiness, and stewardship and away from all the distractions of this world.

## MINISTRY APPLICATION

*Below you'll see some options for ministry time with your group. We always encourage you to reserve time in your group to pray for one another and wait on the Holy Spirit.*

- What has the Holy Spirit been putting his finger on in regards to increased faithfulness and/or stewardship in your life? Get together with a couple others and pray for wisdom and courage to follow in all that God has for you in those areas.
- As you again weigh your heart on matters of money and where you find your security – in what ways might you need to return to the Lord your attitudes, abiding trust, or labors? How is God calling you toward greater trust in Him, and not things? Pray together that God's truths would penetrate your heart and that he would empower you towards greater surrender.
- Possibly, seek God's leading about the specific things He is asking your small group to be good stewards with (collectively) – who is coming to the group, who you're serving, the collective resources you have – what might God be saying to your group?

