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Upper St. Croix Parish UMC

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Luke 16:1-13

“With the Dishonest Wealth”

What kind of relationship do we find between God and humanity? First of all, as an answer, you might think of it as the Creator and the creatures. We know that through the scripture of Genesis, God created humanity in the image of God on the sixth day. And then, God said, “it is very good,” which means that “it is perfect.” Humanity was a masterpiece of God. God blessed all humans; “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen.1:28).

After humanity was fallen, however, human became a sinner to the Creator due to against the rule, which is “you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen.2:17). As a sinner, we are punished that we have to work hard to get fruits and to have pain in childbearing. Nevertheless, the Creator always thinks about his masterpiece; how to restore; how to save.

Finally, the Creator sent His Only Son to save His masterpiece. Humanity was saved because His Only Son obeyed God. The Gospel of John says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). That is because of God’s free love and the only Son, Jesus Christ’s obedience up to die on the Cross. Therefore, everyone who believes in Jesus Christ may restore the image of God as the masterpiece of God as well as may be granted to have eternal life. Humanity might be a debtor to the Creator regarding love.

In other words, we Christians, who believe in Jesus Christ, are debtors regarding love. Therefore, Jesus Christ taught us the first and the second commandments are that love God and love neighbors. I

encourage you to rethink the relationship between God and Christians: when God created us, we were the masterpiece of God. Now, we who believe in Jesus Christ are restored our status as the masterpiece of God due to God's free love. We are saved in the faith of Jesus Christ by the grace of God. Therefore, the blessing of God to the masterpiece is recovered as well.

What is the blessing of God to his masterpiece? After God created the humanity, God blessed all humans; "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen.1:28).

However, do not forget that we are on processing to recover, which means that we are saved in Jesus Christ, but not perfect yet. I am not talking about what Jesus Christ's blood is not complete. I mean that our status is the masterpiece of God, but at the same time, we are still in sin while we live in the world. We are still weak for temptation. The Apostle Paul says, "For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears" (1 Cor.13:9-10). In other words, we are saved, but we are still in sin; we are debtors, but not really debtors. Therefore, the present state of humanity to God prefers as a steward, rather than a sinner or a debtor. As the steward, we are blessed; we are restored well to God; God still blesses us to "be fruitful and multiply" in the world.

In the scripture of today, Jesus says to his disciples as a parable. In other words, Jesus says to us, who are his followers as Christians. A rich man has a steward who unjustly spent the master's property. The rich man upsets on him and asks his steward to give an account of his management because he cannot be manager any longer.

I encourage you to consider about this parable story genuinely as we are the steward of God: First, we are now the steward of God; secondly, we can be no longer steward someday; and finally, God may

ask us to give an account of our stewardship. Through this parable story, I hope that we may make our full improvement of the stewardship to God.

First of all, we are God's steward now, but we are still indebted to God for all we have. Do not forget that we are debtors to God regarding love. We have obligated to return what we have received when it comes to payback. However, until the time of payment comes, we are at liberty to use all we have, or we received from God. But, do not overlook that we have a condition. When we use all in our hands, we have to use them as God's pleasure, not our preference. That is the duty of the stewardship to the master. We have no right to dispose of anything we have, but according to God's will.

We are saved in the faith of Jesus Christ by the grace of God. However, we are on processing to perfection yet. We do not have any eternal property in the land of our pilgrimage, but God has entrusted us all we have in the journey of our pilgrimage temporally. What we received from God is included our souls, our bodies, and our goods. We know that God created humanity in the image of God. John Wesley, who is the founder of Methodism, addresses that God created the human in the image of God means that God entrusted us all the powers and faculties including understanding, imagination, memories, wills, ideas and even emotional feelings of love and hatred, joy and sorrow, respecting presenting good and evil; hope and fear and so on (John Wesley, "The Good Steward"). Defiantly, God also entrusted our bodies with beautiful organs of sense, of sight, hearing, and the rest. However, these sense and bodies also are not our own. We cannot create anything with our own abilities.

How about our families? Without God's allowing, we cannot have any family members, whether the biological family or not unless we have created ourselves. In other words, everything we have is that God entrusted us. We may use them at liberty until God asks us to give an account of our management.

However, do not forget we are the debtors to God regarding love. It means we may payback to God with loving God and loving neighbors.

Let us learn wisdom from the dishonest steward in the scripture. There was a steward who has spent his master's property at liberty. One day, he recognized that everything he has is belonging to his master, not his own. He also noticed that he should stop managing the master's property very soon. So, he prepared for the future using the master's wealth and power, which wrote off the debts of the master's debtors. Interestingly, the master commended him for his deeds because he used his master's wealth to make his neighbors to friends. That makes his master happy.

Furthermore, Jesus tells his disciples in the conclusion of this parable story, "I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes" (16:9). "The dishonest wealth" means that "worldly wealth" God entrusted us. Actually, the dishonest steward became a good steward because he used worldly wealth for his neighbors. Everything we have in the world is dishonest wealth because it is not ours, but God entrusted us for the journey of the pilgrimage. Therefore, before God asks us to give an account of management, let us use the worldly wealth to make friends like the good steward so they may welcome us into eternal homes. Let us use it write off debts of our neighbors so that we may have eternal life. Keep it in your mind that the worldly wealth (dishonest wealth) includes your souls, your thoughts, and your bodies.

Now it is time to think who would be our friends and our neighbors. I encourage you to seek your friends and neighbors to use your worldly wealth together before it is too late.

Thanks be to God!