

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Gospel of Luke, Session 25, Jesus on the Shrewd Manager and Divorce, Luke 16:1-18

© 2024 Dan Darko and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Daniel K. Darko on his teaching on the Gospel of Luke. This is session 25, Jesus on the Shrewd Manager and Divorce, Luke 16:1-18.

Welcome back to the Biblica e-learning lecture series on the Gospel of Luke.

In the previous lecture, we looked at the so-called parables of the lost sons or what some of you know as the parable of the prodigal son, and as you follow that lecture, you probably got that I don't like the idea of the youngest son being called the prodigal in that parable because Jesus' aim is to show that he was a son who was lost and this son was found. Notice what was happening in Luke chapter 15 because we will be moving on straight to Luke 16. The Pharisees and scribes came asking Jesus and wondering why Jesus dines with tax collectors and sinners.

Jesus used the three parables, the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and the parable of the lost sons, to explain why dining with tax collectors and sinners is a cause for celebration. The crux of the matter in paraphrasing Jesus' words is this: the ones who are lost are found. Let's celebrate, and if only you could see and imagine and recognize what you could do to join the party, you would see that there is a good cause to come and celebrate the ones who are lost and are back home. In chapter 16, Jesus takes the subject matter to a new level and begins to address the disciples.

Notice that in the previous one, it was the Pharisees. Now the focus comes on the disciples. And then here he tells a parable that would be very controversial in scholarship today, and I'll try to unpack as much as possible.

Chapter 16, verse 1. What you know as the parable of the true steward. He also said to the disciples there was a rich man who had a manager. And charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.

And he called him and said to him, what is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you are no longer, you can no longer be a manager. And the manager said to himself, what shall I do? Since my master is taking the management away from me, I am not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do.

So that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses. So, summoning his master's debtors, one by one, he said to the first, how much do you owe my master? He said, a hundred measures of oil. He said to him, take your bill and sit down quickly and write 50.

Then he said to another, how much do you owe? He said, a hundred measures of wheat. He said to him, take your bill and write 80. Verse 8. And notice verse 8 in particular because I highlight the word master for you.

It's a very controversial language there that I will ask to look at a little bit more closely later. The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous so that when it fails, then they receive you into their eternal dwellings. This is a very, very interesting, yet controversial parable. Because, in fact, notice what is going on here.

Jesus had just finished speaking to the Pharisees and the scribes. And I've just told them three parables to kind of emphasize the reason why he dines with tax collectors and sinners. They are lost and found in the kingdom of God.

The outcasts are received with hospitality, and Jesus himself implies the highest form of hospitality in the kingdom of God. Now turning to the disciples you notice in today's, in the next four or so, three or four lectures, you'll begin to notice that whenever we turn to the disciples, the discussion would assume some leadership responsibility. So here the character in the parable is a shrewd manager or steward.

I think I should explain the word steward a little bit before I move on. The word steward is the word *okonomia*, which actually carries the sense of a household manager. This person could be a slave or somebody the master brings to take charge of the household and administration of the household when he travels to a far distance or goes to another place that he finds to be his comfortable dwelling or abode.

This person is entrusted with a lot. All that the manager owes if it is a slave, the slave also supervises the work of other slaves, and the person has, if you like, a sense of prestige because the trust that comes with that household management comes with a lot of authority and power if you like. So, imagine what is going on in this parable when the manager begins to realize that things have not gone that well and the master is about to fire him.

He makes decisions, and then, in a very weird way, in verse eight, we are told that the master commands the behavior of this shrewd manager. Key questions to look at

in the parable before we move on and here I pose four questions. One, who does Kurios or the master refer to in verse eight? If the master who commands the behavior refers to the master of the parable, then it means that the master who was being cheated has seen some virtue in the character of a dishonest person or modeled behavior in the character of a dishonest steward.

One could also think about the master, the Kurios, in verse eight, in terms of Jesus. If you think about the Kurios in terms of Jesus, then it is Jesus talking about events that are separate in the parable and making the transition in the form of application to show that you know that this is a corrupt steward, but the corrupt steward was having a foresight that is commendable. The second question one should look at as we begin to examine this parable is the nature of the conduct at play.

What is it? What is going on? What is being commanded? In other words, is Jesus commanding someone to exploit the master to gain France? Or is the commendation about the personal generosity of a steward who is going to take what is due him to win France as part of his strategy, if you like? A third question one may ask of this parable is whether we should begin to look at the language of dishonesty in verse 8 as something that refers to the previous practices of the same servant and then give room to say, you know what, in the parable there is a shift of previous behavior and a shift to present behavior because in the same verse 8 where the master is called Lord, the steward is still called dishonest, unrighteous, if you like, unjust, to translate the word precisely. Lastly, one may still ask the question if this steward had dubious dealings in the parable with the debtors even before the master came in and that what the master is saying then is just echoing some of the things that are already taking place. Scholars have developed a lot of interest in this parable because of the controversy around it, but for the sake of this biblical e-learning lecture series, I want to remind you about what not to do in biblical studies or in the desire or quest to understand the scriptures today.

In the past 30-40 years, we have developed an obsession with scholarship that says if something is controversial, then it is scholarly; if something is so dubious or is so counter-orthodox, then it is scholarly and attractive. I don't know where you are following this lecture series, but before I go on with this lecture, I just want to give just take a pause and just caution you against that. That is my world in the economic world, and it is not a happy world.

Imagine that your whole pursuit in life is to find something controversial so that somebody will say you have something new to fight for. We just want to be careful about that, and I think of all the issues surrounding this particular parable that are legitimate questions to ask I think it is one of the reasons why in the past 30 years a lot of attention has been given to some of the questions that we throw at this parable often missing the central issue here. So let me try to cap some of the things that Jesus is saying here.

Remember I told you Jesus is talking about the disciples. The audience here has seen the transition from the Pharisees and the scribes who ask why he dies with tax collectors and sinners to the disciples. And so the focus here on what the leadership role of the disciples could be as Jesus journeys towards Jerusalem, knowing that the climax of his ministry is going to take place in Jerusalem and the Lucan plot Jesus is gradually ushering them into an eschatological era where they have to be conscious about what leadership in the kingdom of God entails, and they need to have the foresight to be able to walk that faithful walk knowing that it is not all about here and now.

You see, the steward here is what we are told in verse 13, squandered the master's resources. That is the same language that is used in Luke 15, talking about the lost son squandering the father's estate abroad. If you remember, I used that analogy of Las Vegas in that conversation.

The other thing to observe in this particular parable is that you see this particular steward is such a character. The steward will not change his behavior even when he's fired. The master said you know what? You are going to lose your job because you have been so dishonest, and depending on how you translate the master at the beginning of verse 8, then what is happening is this.

The steward is being fired for corruption. Say, let me have one more corruption now that I am told this before I leave, which is what one's supposed not to do in kingdom leadership, isn't it? But is that not the story these days? Do people who are busted for corruption even try to use more dubious ways in their exit strategy just so that they can land softly on a cushion somewhere? Now, that could be for application somewhere, but just remember that Jesus is talking about the disciples. These are the ones who are going to take over from him after the passion week and after he dies and resurrects and commissions them to go to Jerusalem. The second volume of Luke-Acts begins in Acts and talks about the commencement or the beginnings of early Christianity. So, Jesus is showing us something about the character of this steward that one should be very, very disturbed about, and yet something about the steward is commanded in this parable.

We also find here that the steward is so shrewd. He employs cultural sensibilities to actually appeal to the people because this is a culture where hospitality is a big thing, and there is a culture of reciprocity where generosity is reciprocated and so people feel as if they owe someone something when kindness is given and so he says, no I got this idea, this is something I can exploit. Notice that in that parable, he says so that they can receive him in their homes. He says how much do you owe my master? Do you notice how basic the things are? He mentions oil, you need for a meal, he mentions wheat.

So how much do you owe? Just cut it in half, just so that the beneficiary will have the heart open to receive him. It will still qualify as generosity, not private. In Washington, they call it loving.

In African politics, it's complete corruption. But you see, this steward is busted by the master, says I'm going to fire you, but he's still doing all this. You see as we think about this parable and how Jesus talks about the kingdom of God and the place of the outcast, do not forget about the responsibility Jesus places on those who are his disciples and the need for them to do what they are supposed to do to advance the kingdom of God in leadership roles and as disciples of Christ Jesus himself.

When we look at this steward, it is the reason three views have been advanced about the identity of this particular steward and the conduct. Some say that perhaps what is going on here is that Jesus is interested in highlighting the foresight of a dishonest man as a lesson for kingdom leaders to observe. Not everything else about this particular guy but the foresight to be able to say he is corrupt agreed, but he is able to see into the future to do the future work for him.

That one should be commended. So, one group of scholars advanced that argument to that degree, and you could very much read the story around that path. Another thing that we find in the views about the conduct here is where the emphasis is on the steward, and one view goes as follows: the steward works for his master and has a commission with the things that are owed to the master.

In other words, if debtors pay their debts, it will benefit the steward who is being fired. So, if they were able to pay their debts in full, then the steward, as the view goes, may gain half of what they owe. Knowing that when he gets fired, he will not be there to collect the debts and so benefit from this commission, the steward decides that before he leaves, he exercises generosity to forfeit his portion of what is owed so that when they pay the half to the master, he will win France in the process.

If you interpret it that way, as some scholars have advanced that view, then you don't see a lot of bad behavior here. You actually see someone who says let me use money currency as an example. For example, let's say I work for a master, and three people owe my master a lot of money.

Some owe one million, one owes, let's say, 100,000, and another owes 10,000. But the agreement with my master as part of my service is if the one who owes one million gives the one million back, if I'm able to bring that one million back, then I'll be entitled to half a million, and half a million will go to the master. And for the one who owes 10,000 or 100,000, if they bring it back, then I will give 50 to my master because that's what my master expects.

And for the 10,000, I'll give five because that's what my master expects. And so those who interpret the parable this way say that what is going on here is this. This guy is saying I am generously giving out my commission to win France.

If you read the parable that way, then everything looks really good. Then you see a very wise guy saying, you know what, if I am fired tomorrow, I don't get to be the collector. But I will be the collector who is wise.

The wrestle with those who don't read it that way is the language of shrewdness and the language of adegia, dishonest and unjust. That is used. Another way we look at this parable is those who emphasize, and I am leaning towards this direction, to say that when we look at what Jesus is doing here, Jesus is not talking about the macro picture of every detail of the parable but perhaps very interested in the shrewdness of the steward and his ability to be able to secure a place for himself in the future.

If that is the small portion that you are looking at, then forget about the first view, which talks about the four sides but includes the big dishonest and everything. The last view would say, no, no, no, no, he's a dishonest guy. But Jesus's point doesn't have to do with that.

Jesus's point, as we will see later on, maybe that he's challenging the disciples to be faithful stewards in the kingdom of God with foresight, serving in faithfulness. Because if they serve faithfully, God will reward their faithfulness. I will not do you any favor if I ever move on from this parable and tell you these views are settled issues.

No, it's a debated matter among scholars. But I want to urge you to think about it this way. Think about how Jesus will continue the parable, knowing that he's talking to the disciples, and how he would emphasize faithfulness and reward.

In other words, if one should ask what is at issue in this parable, then I would say, take note of five things. One, faithful stewardship may be a central issue in this parable, in which Jesus is very interested in making sure that his disciples understand that if they take good care of the possessions of the things that are entrusted in their hands and they become faithful stewards, that faithfulness will be rewarded. The second thing at issue will be the observation of dishonesty at the cost, where Jesus will emphasize that when one is unjust about that which belongs to the other, God could not trust that person to be faithful so as to give that person possessions of their own.

The third thing at issue to look at will be the foresight in this parable, where Jesus emphasized, which I think is a very, very important issue here, that looking ahead to

be able to secure one's future is a prudent thing for those who exercise leadership in the kingdom of God. Now, if you lean towards the second view I mentioned earlier on, then you might also look at the shrewdness of this particular, excuse me, figure in the parable if indeed he was using his commission as benevolence. But even if he's not using his commission, notice where you can see his shrewdness in this account, where he says, I will be benevolent about that which does not belong to me, so that I can appeal to cultural sensibilities of generosity and reciprocity, that when I am kicked out, I may do better.

Do not miss Jesus' discussion on discipleship here. Disciples must be aware and aware with a deep sense of agency that they must have the ability to think beyond the present because foresight is very, very important in matters of faithful service in the kingdom of God. As Joseph Fitzmyer put it in his commentary, he says, the parable is not a warning against the destructive nature of riches, an approval of the dishonesty of the manager, or an approval of any falsification of account.

The master's approval bears on the prudence of the manager who realizes how to best use what material possessions were his to ensure his future security. If you have this at the back of your mind, even though Fitzmyer leaned towards the guy using his own commission as benevolence, look at verse 10. Jesus goes on by saying, one who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

If you have not been faithful in unrighteous wealth, who will entrust you with the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Basically, in matters of kingdom principles, I outline these four things quickly.

One, Jesus concludes that parable by highlighting that the one who is faithful in little will be entrusted with much. The quality here is the ethical principle or the pietistic principle that the person who fears God to be faithful in what God has entrusted to his or her care is someone who can be trusted with something that God can give him or her to take care of. Two, Jesus' principle derived from this parable is that being faithful in the service of others will ultimately bring rewards to the faithful ones.

Three, Jesus also highlights in this parable that unfaithfulness in God's service will attract punitive retaliation in the immediate aftermath of telling the parable. And lastly, as he concludes the principles of the parable here, I highlight the fourth. Good foresight must inform fitting conduct in the service of God.

Is it not true that too many disciples of Jesus Christ today think about the here and now and not about the future? And yet, when they begin to talk about what makes them a Christian or their Christian destination, they talk about being on the way to heaven, the future. Do you realize that this jointed spectrum, the temporal spectrum, says, I want to live here and now without foresight, but I want to live my life as if I have the visa to go to heaven in the future? Jesus says for the disciples, God the master has entrusted so much to our care as stewards, to their care as stewards.

If they are faithful in that which belongs to God, God will reward them with something of their own, knowing that they are trustworthy. They should lead their lives with the foresight that the ultimate judge will come, and the ultimate judge will make a determination about whether they are faithful or unfaithful, whether they are honest or dishonest, and whether they deserve reward or punishment. To the disciples, the crux of the matter is this.

If the Pharisees were unhappy to hear why Jesus dined with tax collectors and sinners, they must know kingdom service requires faithfulness and prudence. Prudence in terms of managerial foresight. As long as they do that, they will be rewarded by God himself.

When Jesus finished speaking in these terms, he pushed the disciples to the side, and some Pharisees came into the picture. And now he turns to the Pharisees. And you know what happens when Jesus gets into this Pharisees' team.

So now the disciples fade into the background, the Pharisees come, and I read from verse 14. The Pharisees who were money lovers, who were lovers of money, had all these things that he was telling the disciples, and they ridiculed him. And he said to them, 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—verse 16. The law and the prophets were unto John.

Since then, the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the law to become void. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.

And he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. Now, this is supposed to be a simple passage that you see on the screen. However, I have to highlight a few things from this passage because of various controversies and some of the things that come into my classroom when we begin to talk about this subject.

Parts I will highlight in a brief, and then verse 18, which deals with the marriage and divorce part, we will look at it a little bit more closely. So, Jesus is dealing with the Pharisees here. Notice the audience has changed.

The change in audience is significant because, here, Jesus is going to deal with matters of law and morality. He goes on to assure the Pharisees that if you like, the kingdom of God that is being preached is not an outlier. It's actually in a continuum with the teachings of the law and the prophets.

If you like, it is in accordance with the Jewish scriptures. Since John the Baptist, these things have been continuing, and he says that the kingdom of God is coming and people are trying to enter it, and that expression is, do they enter it violently? Are they forced into it? That is an interesting phrase in this particular passage. Jesus goes on to remind the Pharisees that the law and the prophets that he is talking about here must be settled with them because that is what they are more comfortable with.

They would not like to see the teachings of Jesus contradicting the scriptures, and Jesus is trying to say, look what I am saying; what I am doing is in a continuum with what you preach. But there is something about this passage that you should find incongruent or disturbing. Look in first, and depending upon your translation, you will see that some scholars make it or translate it as an accusation from the Pharisees that will prompt the sense of mockery or ridicule of Jesus referring to the Pharisees as money lovers.

Now, you should know that I did not ridicule that statement, but the first time I observed the Greek, I laughed, and you should know why because in the teachings of the Pharisees, they don't like luxury. Their teachings are that you live a simple life, live in a mean way, and try to live a righteous life in observance of the law. So their teaching is exactly against what this accusation is, money lovers.

What is going on? We know the other sect that is familiar and is more based in Jerusalem, the Pharisees. They are money lovers, they are business people, they own a lot of real estates, they like to be in charge, they control the temple system, they try to occupy a system, they are prominent figures on the Sahendrin, they like to wiggle around, they will use whatever connections whether it is Romans and Greeks to get their way to do this, not the Pharisees. But Jesus is accusing them or someone is accusing them or Luke is inferring that there is a charge against them. They are money lovers.

No wonder you see in that text. They mocked Jesus but what does Jesus know that we don't know? Think about that. Jesus also makes a charge against them about their obsession for public image.

They like to be seen in public as people who are self-justified and all that. I would like to suggest to you that Jesus in Luke was not an enemy of the Pharisees. In fact, in a culture where hospitality meant a lot, the Pharisees found it conducive to sometimes inviting Jesus for a meal, and Jesus would take their invitation and go to their home.

It is usually when he is there that the things that happen cause commotion. In other words, they graciously invite him to be a rabbi, and he accepts their invitation. In that culture of hospitality and reciprocity, this is important.

It's an important gesture that you don't offer to your enemies, even though we find some scholars assuming that those are all entrapments. We want to be careful about how we push this. Is it possible that when Jesus went out for meals with some of these guys in their homes and some of the instances I ran through with you through this lecture series he saw more that we are not aware of that make him clearly aware that perhaps they prefer opulence even though they preach simplicity.

They live in luxury to some extent, even though they preach living in a mean fashion. Because notice something that Luke does very often. Luke accentuates and highlights the place of the outcast and the poor.

So, compared to the Pharisees and their lifestyle, they probably love money. But they don't want to be told that. They don't want to be told that.

Now I will tell you something that is almost like a joke. I am a native of Ghana and I'm from a particular tribe called the Kwaiwo tribe. In Ghana, people laugh at us because we like business.

They think that when we were born, we actually were born with business brain. We like to make money. We buy things and sell things.

We know how to sell things. We do things. We owe a lot of things in the country and we are a very small group of people who owe too much.

But what a Kwaiwo doesn't want you to tell them is that they are rich. No, no, no, no, no. A Kwaiwo does not want you to know that they are rich.

A Kwaiwo would like to hang around with you and almost behave that they are so poor. And there are so many reasons why Kwaiwos behave that way. As an insider, I can tell you.

Sometimes because they don't want others whom they consider to be lazy to depend on them. Sometimes they think that if people know what they have, they would just

envy them and make their life miserable for them. But culturally, Kwaiwos don't want to be told they are rich, even though they are.

I see that in every culture, there are surgeons. I mean, one of the things I work on is race relations. I found out that as someone who is married to a white and has my next race children, I have seen racism on both sides of the aisle in America in particular.

And whenever I tell a white friend who is being, you know, if I would put it bluntly, they'll say, no, no, no, no, no. Because racism, don't say it's racism. Even if it is, the action is racist.

No, don't say that. When I see a black person who has authored by mouth to say, I don't want white people around here. And I say, oh, but that's racist.

No, no, no, no. It's not racist. It's like in America, people are allergic to the word racist, even though the word, practice of racism can be seen everywhere in this country.

You see, Pharisees could be like that. No wonder, in the Bible, they are accused of being hypocrites again and again and again and again. Jesus was touching something they were not comfortable with.

Nobody in society would tell them that because they get to have the microphone, and they are always telling people that they live a simple lifestyle. Jesus is challenging them here. But let's go on to see something else about this passage.

In verse 16, people enter the kingdom of God violently. You should know that there are a few ways you can read them, depending upon how you answer the following questions. You can read it in the passive.

If you put it in the passive, then you will ask, is it about people being forced into the kingdom? Because some English translations suggest that. If you read it as active, you will look at it as people pursuing the kingdom of God violently. And then you could also see it as just entering the kingdom itself without anybody behind being a violent act.

These three areas I put up there are obvious passive, obvious active, and something neutral that the person is forcing themselves to reflect the translations you have in your English. Translation choices come to play in how they interpret 16:16. So have that at the back of your mind and don't be quick to judge because it's not a simple thing.

The one that I want to talk about here is the charge Jesus lays against the Pharisees in this teaching about divorce. My students have brought that up again and again in the classroom, and we have addressed it a few times. All agreed that they are very, very important issues for us to address in society today. When we look at the gospels, here we are dealing with the gospel of Luke and how Jesus deals with this subject.

First, you should know that the laws of Moses did not condemn divorce. So, when Jesus said that the teaching of the kingdom of God is in a continuum with the law and the prophets and still goes around and says, hey, if you marry a divorced person, you have committed adultery. That is a problem.

You should see what he's doing with the Pharisees. He's appealing to something that we should be aware of in how we deal with the text. You should also know that there was no one view in Judaism about divorce, and neither was it a uniform view among the Pharisees on divorce.

The school of Shammai among the Pharisees will have a different view of divorce than the Hillelites, the school of Rabbi Hillel, which was the school that Gamaliel, for example, belonged to in the Pharisaic sect. The school of Shammai would argue that one can divorce under the exception clause for adultery or fornication. Though the Old Testament did not condemn divorce, in these rabbis interpreting the scriptures and applying the scriptures, they have seen the sense in which some of the loose ends of Deuteronomy 24 have to be tightened.

But these groups are also deemed very conservative because among the Pharisees that Jesus will be talking to, those who belong to the school of Hillel don't buy the school of the Shammaites. They say that divorce is permissible even if you think that your wife is not attractive enough. You can divorce her.

But see, Jesus is really raising a sensitive issue in the Kingdom of God. So, for the preachers listening to this lecture series, friends, welcome to the camp. You know, some preachers don't want to address controversial issues, but they want to serve in the Kingdom of God.

Wrong calling, wrong service. Jesus addressed controversial issues. You need to deal with them.

Why? Because where there are people, there are sensitive issues to deal with. Leadership is otherwise too easy if all we do is to go with the flow. So, let's unpack what is going on in Jesus' teaching here.

Specifically, as Luke tells us, he addresses the Pharisees here first by establishing that his teaching is in continuing with the law and the prophets. He then goes on to talk about the hypocritical outlook. They want to self-justify in the marketplace.

Then, we touch on an issue that they have divisions in the insight on divorce among the Pharisees party. Let me refresh your mind on Deuteronomy 24. Deuteronomy 24, the law that we sometimes see being appealed to in the New Testament reads, when a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of the house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, then the former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled.

For that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance. So, notice what is going on here in that law of Deuteronomy. What is going on here in Deuteronomy is you could issue a certificate of divorce for some really unhelpful reasons or some easy reasons, but if you give the certificate of divorce to the woman whom you have divorced, and the woman goes and marries another man, excuse me, if the other man dies or the other man divorces her in the same way, the first husband cannot go and marry that woman.

That is an abomination. The whole idea of issuing a certificate of divorce was a big issue because it is a very, very easy way to let one's spouse go. Jesus seemed to lean towards the Shammites' view that divorce should not be that easy.

Marriage is supposed to be sacred, and so the interpretation of some of the scriptures come into play, but one should always remember that it is accurate when some argue that all testaments never condemn divorce. That is true, but notice how subsequent rabbis, especially in Second Temple Judaism, are dealing with their issues. But when we even scan through the first three Gospels, the Synoptic Gospels, what do we see? Let's take a look.

What we find is, take a look at Mark. Mark, Jesus was talking to the disciples, and he said what we see more so in Luke as well, as Jesus talks to the Pharisees in Luke. In Mark, he says, As in the house, the disciples asked him again about this matter, and he said to them, whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

The Luke passage in verse 18 echoes that everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. In Matthew, though, when Jesus was giving a public lecture in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus appealed to the passage we looked at in Deuteronomy and said in 531, It was also said, reinterpreting the law, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her certificate of divorce, Deuteronomy 20. But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, *poinir*, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

And then, in chapter 19, Jesus said again, because of the hardness of your hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning, it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, *poinir*, and marries another, commits adultery. So, what we find here is that the exception clause features in Matthew, as you see in the text, and then in Luke, we see more about who marries whom, when you divorce and marry, that is a problem.

And Jesus speaks on that to hit the Pharisees; it is both two ends when he deals with the Pharisees that way because, on the one hand, some Pharisees will say, yes, that is what we always thought. On the other hand, some Pharisees will say, no, we disagree with that. But you see what Jesus is saying here is very, very important when we think about the subject of divorce and remarriage.

Take a look at the text, and here my focus is in Luke and how Jesus is dealing with the disciples. Pay attention to the text; divorce is supposed not to be one of those easy things; marriage is supposed to be a bond between two couples that is lasting, and elsewhere in the New Testament, it typifies the image even between Christ and his church; it should not be taken lightly. One should study the text carefully though, and not push it too far.

And sometimes we quote Mark, we quote Luke, when we mean Matthew, we need to be able to understand what is going on across this, because in Matthew's exception clause, where I have seen a lot of problems come from, what does Matthew mean except for sexual immorality? That is not my task here in particular, but I still want to expose you to what that word means. The word translated as sexual immorality is only one word, *poinir*, that I showed you in the passage. The word can mean unlawful sexual intercourse, prostitution, adultery, or uncharity of sexual uncharity of many kinds, or fornication.

The Greek lexicon some of the reliable Greek lexicons will say the same thing, that be that in particular whom I prefer in the way it outlines this, will say it is fornication, adultery, unchastity, illicit sex, it is involved in whoredom, or prostitution, or forms of illicit sexual behaviors of various forms. In other words, the word *poinir* could be the

umbrella term of all things sexual impropriety. You don't want to give yourself permission to say I am married, but I can indulge in all kinds of sexual behaviors.

Jesus will not like that, but one should also be careful that we don't appeal to these things so easily as an exit strategy. As a pastor, I've often said, even in the case of divorce, if at all means possible, try to resolve the issue with your spouse and seek to live lives together that will glorify God. If with a divorce clause, if the divorce clause has to be involved, that should be the last resort when things cannot work at all.

But students have pushed me recently in particular; whenever we came to this subject, they asked me things like, what about abuse, what about alcoholism, what about abandonment, what about, I say these are legitimate issues, what does the Bible say? I said I don't know. Why? Because I don't see them being referred to the Bible. In the Bible, they need to be discussed, and people have to make sense of the issue because some of the issues will be justifiable if we make sense of it.

Let's come back to Luke, though, and see what Jesus is doing to the Pharisees. Jesus has just told the Pharisees that he agrees with them on interpretations of the law and the prophets and has accused them on three counts that they are money lovers; they don't like that, and they mocked him about that. They like to be seen in public, they say, but that's true, that's true, they like to be seen in public, and then he touched on divorce, almost assuming that he's trying to show an area of agreement with them in their teaching.

Some Pharisees will agree, but some Pharisees will not. In the synoptic parallels that I showed you, what is going on is this. In Mark, in Matthew, one finds that Matthew states and interprets the Mosaic law with the exception clause I showed you.

In Matthew and Luke, the audience consists of disciples and Pharisees. In Matthew and Luke, we find that the address only goes to men. In Mark, we find the setting it answers to disciples at a home setting, and then the address goes both ways: women, too, should be careful about divorce and remarriage.

A second look at this verse is self-evident as you see verse 18 on the screen. Jesus is in effect, saying the Pharisees should stop justifying themselves in public, they should stop being money lovers and pretending that they don't love money because God knows the heart, and they should seek to be clean in the heart and stand as men who are not exalted or who are not pompous in their standing before God. Luke reminds the Pharisees that the kingdom of God is not against the teachings of the law and the prophets.

In matters of divorce and remarriage,, in fact,, he agrees with a lot of what the Pharisees themselves have to say. Dear friends, following this lecture, I can almost

tell you that this particular part of Luke is one of those hard parts when people are making sense of a series of things in the match, and a lot of thinking is required. The parable of the shrewd manager evokes all kinds of sensibilities.

There are even people who say that that parable says that the kingdom of God is against wealth. You notice I didn't advance that theory because you can't find it there. Now, when we come to the Pharisees, we see how Jesus moves from the disciples to the Pharisees and addresses issues with the Pharisees.

I don't know as you listen to where you are as a Christian or as someone trying to understand more about Christianity. If you're a disciple, think about the parable of the shrewd manager and think about faithfulness and faithful service, knowing that there will be an ultimate reward. If you can imagine yourself in the place of the Pharisees, where you advocate for one thing and leave the other, then understand that Jesus has always condemned hypocrisy and will remind us about the need to be sincere and faithful in our work with God that the attitude of the heart a pure standing before God is commendable and noteworthy in the kingdom of God.

I don't think I was able to address one of the most difficult issues here sufficiently for time constraints, namely the issue of divorce and remarriage, because my experience in the classroom is as soon as you bring that subject up, people would wish you answer every question they have. Unfortunately, I may not have been able to answer your specific question, but one thing I urge and encourage you to do is to continue learning about the scriptures and continue to live a faithful life in your walk with Jesus Christ as we grow and pursue this walk together. Sometimes, we may face difficult questions and difficulties in life, but through it all God will be with us God will grant us grace, and I pray that even where some understanding is lacking on my part God will grant you the insight and discernment that you'll be able to make decisions that will ultimately glorify him in how you choose your walk together with him knowing that he who rewards faithful service and faithful walk stands to reward you as faithful servant in his kingdom.

Thank you and God bless you and I pray that you continue this learning journey with us and follow with the rest of the lectures. God bless you.

This is Dr. Daniel K. Darko on his teaching on the Gospel of Luke. This is session 25, Jesus on the Shrewd Manager and Divorce, Luke 16:1-18.