

The outward-looking church is the far-sighted church

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 February 2011

Preacher: Craig Dyer

[0 : 00] Well, good morning everyone. Let's turn on our Bibles again, shall we, to the Gospel of Luke and Chapter 16 that Willie read for us just a few moments ago. And it is a delight to be here this morning. Thank you so much for the privilege of coming to bring God's Word today.

And thank you again, as has already been said, to everyone who participated in the conference yesterday. It's an immense encouragement to us at Christianity Explored to have the partnership of the family here at the Tron.

And we thank you for your prayers and support in all kinds of practical ways. We are very grateful indeed for that. The kind of banner headline of the conference yesterday, you will have noticed perhaps even if you weren't there, was the outward-looking church.

And I know that you have bought into that and are buying into this whole idea of not simply being in a church family to care for ourselves and to build ourselves up, that a central component of building ourselves up is as we engage in the work of getting the Gospel out.

So we're interested in what is going on in the world. And as we turn to Luke 16 this morning, I want to suggest to you, and more than that, to try to impress from the Word of God upon you, the thought that an outward-looking church is a far-sighted church.

[1 : 20] And as we think of looking out, we don't simply want to look out to what is immediately around us, but we want that to be driven by an understanding of what is to come.

And I think that is what this passage is about. I don't know if it intrigues you the way it intrigues me. It is one of a number of passages that I would consider to be on my list of open subjects that I'm still working on.

I don't think I've quite nailed it yet, but I'm interested in it. It fascinates me, and I want to try and understand more of it. And actually, preaching helps me to do that. So I hope that you'll join me in the adventure this morning as we turn to Luke 16.

Let's ask the Lord for his help as we do that. Father, thank you for all that has gone before this morning, for truth that we've read and sung, that we have brought back to you in prayer, that has helped us to frame our urgent cries to you for our world.

And now as we quieten ourselves before your Word, as we open our Bibles to Luke 16, may yours be the voice that is heard.

[2 : 31] Please help us, preacher and hearers alike, to team up with a determination that we will not waste this 30 or so minutes, but that you will come and speak, and our eyes will be open, our ears will be ready to listen, our minds will want to compute, our feet will want to walk according to your steps.

Granted, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it is a mysterious little passage. And this morning I have two main headings with some subs.

So let me give you the two main headings. First of all, we're going to do the easy bit, which is we'll look at the parable that Jesus told. And we'll just get crystal clear on what was going on there. And then in the second half, we'll think about the point that Jesus made.

That is more difficult, I think. But let's do the first of these. First of all, the parable that Jesus told. Please have your Bibles open. And the first of my little subheadings is, as we think of this manager to whom we're introduced here, we think first of all of his situation.

So Jesus tells his disciples, verse 1, there was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.

[3 : 46] It's quite interesting to know that the word there for wasting is the same stem as we find across in chapter 15, verse 14, about the prodigal who squandered his property and reckless living.

Squandered. It's the same thing. Here was a business manager employed by the company owner to look after his affairs, but he had been squandering the boss's money.

He had been misappropriating funds. That's what was going on. That was the situation. Verse 2, And he called him and said to him, What is this I hear about you?

Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be my manager. When I was a student, and in fact before that, in one of the places that I worked, we had open plan offices.

I wasn't often in there, but we had open plan offices. And the boss's office, he made a great claim of the fact that his door was always open, the blinds were always up, anyone could go in. One morning I went in, the door was closed, the blinds in his little office were drawn, and there was a palpable sense of tension in the office.

[4 : 57] Someone was in for the high jump. And there was this, oh, this horrible feeling in the office. Now imagine as Jesus tells the story how the disciples felt about this.

It was their equivalent of that for us. In the 21st century, if you go in, in the morning, and there is not a good feeling in the office, this guy has been going in for years, he's made the business work for him, as much as he's made it work for his boss.

He's expecting another great old day, misappropriating funds, squandering the boss's money in whatever way he sees fit.

But on this morning as he goes in, there is that solemn sense. And he may say good morning to his PA, and she's looking rather nervous, and she says, the boss wants to see you.

And as he goes to the boss's office, the door is closed, and the blinds are drawn, and things are a little bit unusual. And as he goes in, the boss says, sit down.

[5 : 59] What is this I've heard? It's a very penetrating question, isn't it? What is this I've heard? What is this I've heard about you? What have you been up to?

Hand in to me an account of your management. You're finished. I just want to know the total of the damage, but you're finished. I no longer trust you. That was his situation.

Notice secondly, his desperation. Verse 3, the manager said to himself, what shall I do since my master is taking the management away from me?

So again, hopefully you've never been in this situation, but you can well imagine it. Your mind goes into a spin. You suddenly realise that the gravy train you were on is making an impromptu stop, and you're getting off.

There's not even a platform, it's just a signal, and you're leaving the train. You're now going to be without a job. The management is being taken away. The meaning of that is not only that you're losing your job, but you're losing all the opportunities you had to manage creatively, shall we say.

[7 : 09] To feather your own nest. All of that now is being taken away. He has the wit to realise no other businessman will employ him as a manager, because when word like this gets out, he's finished.

He's in desperation. How will he keep a roof over his head? How will he have food to eat? So he does some thinking. He realises he's not going to get a job at that level of management.

The management has been taken away. That's finished. So he begins to think about, well, what else could I do? And maybe as he came into the office that morning, he saw the men out digging the roads.

And just for a fleeting moment, maybe I could get a job as a manual labourer. Maybe I could go in. And then he looks down at his waistline and he thinks about the too many business lunches he's had.

And he realises that he should have invested in a gym membership, but he hadn't done that. And he acknowledges that he is too weak to dig.

[8 : 11] And too proud to beg. You see his desperation. He'll do anything. But he couldn't hack it out with the manual labourers.

He knows he wouldn't last an hour, never mind a day. And he thinks of those who can't earn their living any other way, who beg. And he realises that that too is a door that is close to him.

But the fact that as Jesus portrays the story, he's thinking about these things, indicates something of the desperation of this man. Thirdly, notice his innovation.

Here is the eureka moment in the story. If we could hear Jesus saying it, I'm sure in verse 4 there was an aha! Eureka!

I've got it! I've decided what to do so that when I'm removed from my management, people may receive me into their houses. Jesus. Talking about thinking outside the box, he's already done that.

[9 : 13] He's not just thought about could he be, could he find another form of employment. He's managed to think that through and close these options down. He's now thinking even further outside the box.

He's thinking outside the universe in some respects. He's thinking about a situation, he's thinking about something he could do so that even if he is no longer able to supply his own needs by normal employment, he might still be able to ingratiate himself with people whereby they will welcome him into their homes and they will give him something to eat.

I've decided what to do so that when I'm removed from management, people may receive me into their houses. Do you see his end game?

He's now thinking not only about how can I get wages, he's not only thinking how can I get another job, he's actually thinking beyond that, he's closed down these options, he's thinking actually how can I just make sure that there will be somebody who will take me in and who will feed me and look after me.

He's thinking several moves ahead. End game. He wants to use the fleeting opportunity he has to provide for his future when he's sacked.

[10 : 31] So verse 5, 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.

The manager said to him, take your bill, sit down quickly and write fifty. Then to another, and how much do you owe? He said, a hundred measures of wheat.

He said to him, take your bill and write eighty. What is going on here? Well, the discounts vary according to the commodity.

It was risky to lend oil, probably olive oil is what is in view here and the risk was that the quantity could be returned diluted in its mixture or mixed with inferior oil and therefore the amount of interest reflected the risk that the lender was taking.

With wheat it was much more difficult to adulterate the repayment so the interest rate was much less. But the general principle stands, this man with time and influence running out used the resources and the opportunities he had in that moment to make the future better for himself.

[11 : 45] He actually engages in a little bit of legal fiction here. Well, all of them did at that time or many of them did. Technically in Jewish law a Jew ought not to charge interest to another Jew.

You ought not to do that. But it was generally accepted practice. They looked at the law and said, well that's really only for the preservation of the poor so that they're not exploited. But in business it doesn't really matter too much so we'll do it.

But being good Jews they didn't want to make it look as though they were breaking the law so when you received your bill the interest was never seen in the actual document.

It was just shown that you had borrowed a hundred measures of oil when actually everybody knew you and those from whom you borrowed it knew that you'd only borrowed fifty. It was just the way the system worked.

So this colossal amount of interest was automatically added and if you were the person who was borrowing it you knew that in turn you would do that to others further down the line. That's how the profits were shared around.

[12 : 50] And often it was up to the manager to arrange this kind of automatic interest payment not shown in the ledger and ostensibly the owner of the company would know nothing about it.

That's why he employed a man like this. That's why normally he wouldn't look too carefully at the books. And as we just begin to strip back the culture a little bit we can see that's exactly what Jesus is talking about.

His original hearers would have got that. They understood that's how business worked at that time. And if so if that's the case as this man says to the man who's borrowed oil let's take a hundred and make it fifty he's actually not so much robbing his boss but potentially sacrificing his own interests by forgoing the commission he would make on the amount of interest extracted.

The boss couldn't complain or it might become apparent that he had indeed been demanding interest. That's what's going on as he cancels these debts as he cuts down the amount that is owed.

And that leads us through his situation his desperation his innervation to his commendation. Verse 8 The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.

[14 : 16] That's the last thing Jesus says in this little parable. The last thing he says about the actual story as he tells it the master commended the dishonest man for his shrewdness. In a sense that's one of the most difficult things about the story to understand isn't it?

But actually on another level it's not that difficult to understand. The owner had been outwitted by this rogue trader and although these two men had fallen out although they had parted company although the manager could no longer work for the owner of the company actually these men at a very basic level speak the same language in a dog-eat-dog world.

The owner has some reluctant respect for this man's sense of self-preservation. He has some regard for his ability to as it were snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

And I picture him going home to his wife at the end of the day and sitting down having dinner and his wife is saying how's everything at the office and the boss says well I've had to let so-and-so go. I've had to let him go and she says but he's been with you for years.

Yes, turns out he's been ripping me off for years. And you won't believe what he did today before security actually got to his office to change the locks. He had in my creditors and he cancelled their interest.

[15 : 39] And although he is now without a job, tonight he is the toast of the local chamber of commerce. And he will not be short of a business lunch for many a day to come. And the boss, although he has been done over by his manager, has a grudging sense of respect for the man's ability to think fast and to think far in what he did.

He has taken his boss's ultimate sanction against him and he has used even that to his advantage. The parable that Jesus told.

Now what is the point that Jesus made? Well I see we've run out of time. Perhaps we'll do that another time. Well I don't think I'm going to get off with that light. Let's just have a look at verse 8.

Jesus ends the parable after the first sentence of verse 8. And then he continues, for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the sons of light.

Now we need to get some things crystal clear here. What is the point that Jesus is making? Let me spell out the obvious. It's not the man's dishonesty that Jesus commends.

[16 : 58] In fact as you look at the beginning of verse 8 there is all the world of difference between the master commended the shrewd manager for his dishonesty which it doesn't see and the master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.

The parable that Jesus tells is not about a man being commended for his dishonesty he is sacked for his dishonesty but rather it is a very striking story about a man who is commended for his shrewdness and in fact it would be impossible to come away from this parable in context and think that Jesus is in any way comfortable about dishonesty and a lack of integrity in financial handling or in any other type of handling.

Impossible. Why? Because in verse 11 he says if then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth who will entrust to you the true riches? If you've not been faithful in what is another's who will give you what is your own?

Verse 10 who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much. One who is dishonest in very little will be dishonest in much. So it would be impossible to read what Jesus says and come away with any doubt in our mind that he's saying actually there are times when dishonesty is okay.

There is no question of that in what Jesus says here. So what is the point he made? Well two subheadings. Number one will you see with me the irony in what Jesus says?

[18 : 30] The irony in it. Look again at verse 8b. For the sons of this world in other words the characters like the man we've been reading about this morning this manager the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the sons of light.

Jesus is commenting on how as he looked around the world as it was at that point the business people of that generation are often two moves ahead all the time.

They've sharpened their wings. they know what's going on. They're able to see a good opportunity and they're able to act now in a way that will pay dividends later.

That's the point that Jesus is making and he seemed to feel that his business people known here as the people of the light lacked in some senses the farsightedness that the people of the world had.

Now that is a terrible irony. It means that those living in spiritual darkness take the trouble often according to Jesus. They take the trouble to see further ahead in any given situation than do the people of the light.

[19 : 55] It's almost as though Jesus is saying to his disciples here, you know guys, the world is running rings around the church in terms of its ability in its own affairs.

to handle itself in such a way that it makes the right investments, makes the right decisions now that will pay dividends in a day to come. It's as if Jesus is saying, I just wish you were a little bit more like that.

In the Moffat translation, that middle part of verse 8 is translated like this, the children of this world look further ahead in dealing with their own generation than the children of light.

see the irony of that. The children of this world who don't have the torch see further ahead than the children of light who do have the torch.

And when we put it in these terms, we can see the subtlety of our enemy. What do we know that Satan has done? Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers, those who don't know Christ, so that they cannot see the light of the glory of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

[21 : 13] He has blinded the minds of unbelievers, and God opens our eyes to see the truth of the gospel. If you know the Lord Jesus this morning, God has done an eye-opening work in you. That's the wonder of his transforming grace.

But then the enemy doesn't stop with the initial blindness. He continues to blind us or fog up our vision or put things in our path so that Jesus says, the children of this world look further ahead than you do.

For some reason you're not seeing far enough ahead. Well that got me thinking. And that got me saying to myself, well what was it Jesus had seen amongst his disciples that gave rise to this parable?

What had he noticed in them that was so disappointing in terms of their ability or their inability to see further ahead, to see what really mattered? Well let me give you some examples, just perhaps three of them, from Luke's Gospel.

Flick back to Luke chapter 6 for a moment. What was it made it hard for the disciples of Jesus to see as far ahead as they ought to have been able to do?

[22 : 27] Chapter 6 verse 41. And it's hopeless because we're just parachuting into the middle of this and we're not going to set it in its context but just take it at face value.

41. Jesus says, why do you see the speck that's in your brother's eyes but do not notice the log that's in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, brother, let me take that speck out that is in your eye when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye?

You hypocrite. First take the log out of your own eye, then you'll see clearly to take the speck that is in your brother's eye. And I just wonder if this had all been building up in the mind of the Lord Jesus finally to bring him to the parable in Luke 16 when he's contrasting the people of this generation and their ability to see ahead because he felt that his disciples were not looking in the right things.

And what were the kind of things they were looking at? Well, some of them were so busy looking and finding faults in others that not only were they blind to the opportunities beyond them and ahead of them, they were actually blind to their own failings.

Now, Jesus is not saying here that it's wrong for us to have a concern about the sin that may be in the lives of our sisters and brothers in Christ. That is not wrong.

[23 : 49] We ought to have a concern. And there is a procedure laid down for us in the scripture to help others with that. But what the Lord is saying here is that this ridiculous situation had developed where people were expert at spotting everyone else's faults and failings.

They had become fixated by them. The faults and failings of others in the church family had so occupied their vision that they couldn't see even their own failings. Far less the opportunities that Jesus wanted them to see.

Flick over to chapter 9. Please, chapter 9 verse 46. Another little example there. This is well known to us, isn't it? 9.46, an argument amongst them as to which of them, an argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.

We're not even going to have to read beyond that. An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. that's the kind of thing that would give rise to Jesus saying to his disciples why is it that the people of this generation can look further ahead in dealing with their own generation than you, the people of light?

Busy squabbling with each other, finding fault with each other, busy trying to impress upon everybody else how important you all are, wasting valuable energy, focusing on things that do not matter.

[25 : 23] One more example, chapter 12, verse 22, verse 22, and when he said to his disciples, therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on, for life is more than food and the body is more than clothing.

Why did the Lord Jesus say that to his disciples? Because they were anxious about their life, what they would eat, and they were anxious about their clothing, what they would wear.

They had become completely fixated by the issues of that day. They had forgotten that they had a heavenly father who provided. It was sapping their energy. It was filling their vision.

Notice how Jesus finishes that section, verse 29, and do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your father knows that you need them.

Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. It's interesting, isn't it, that in 16 we're told that the people of this generation have a shrewdness about them, but actually it's in the wrong direction because they're seeking after all the wrong things.

[26 : 43] But even more depressing is for the Lord Jesus to say, yes, and you're very like them, my people. You're very like them, your vision is preoccupied, your ability to see is dominated, not by the long game, not by what could be done, but rather you are fixated by squabbles, finding fault with each other, fighting over who's the greatest, rank and position, posturing and posing, and also you're worried about all the things that those who don't know my heavenly father are worried about.

I just wonder if it was somehow in the totality of that observation of his disciples that it gave rise to this amazing little parable and Jesus saying the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the sons of light.

The manager had used the resources and the influence he had to better the situation of friends so that when he no longer had that influence, he would still have those friends to help him.

And Jesus said, I just wish you had that kind of killer instinct, church. I just wish you had that ability to seize the opportunity to see what can be done.

The irony of it. Secondly, and finally, on this second heading, the meaning of, or the point that Jesus made, the instruction we receive from it. The application Jesus makes is in verse 9.

[28 : 23] I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, and can I tell you that the phrase unrighteous wealth, you see it again in verse 11, is exactly the same as the word money that you see in verse 13.

It doesn't mean that you are to come by this money in an unrighteous way, it is just talking about money that belongs to this world, money that is of this period, resources that are part of the existence of the world at this time.

That's all that Jesus means by that. There's no other loading on the meaning of the phrase unrighteous wealth. It's exactly the same as the word money, you cannot serve God in money, exactly the same word in verse 13. What does Jesus mean by this?

Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails, they may receive you into eternal dwellings. Again, I need to just state the obvious. Just as we see from verses 10 to 11 that in no way does Jesus commend dishonesty in this passage, so also we see from verses 14 and 15 that whatever Jesus means by using money so that your friends will welcome you into heaven, it cannot mean what some take it to mean that we are to use our money in such a way that people will be helped and blessed and encouraged and when they die and go to heaven they will speak well of us to God and God will say well that was very kind of so and so doing that for you, I'll make sure that when they die they too are welcomed into heaven.

Can you believe that's how some commentators have handled that verse? I'm sure you can, but I'm telling you that is how some commentators have handled it, they think it means use your money to buy influence with men who buy influence with God who will then say when they die, when you die well you too ought to be welcomed into heaven because you were a kind person.

[30 : 21] How do we know from the passage that can't be true? We know it because of verse 14. The Pharisees who were lovers of money heard all these things and they ridiculed Jesus but he said to them, you are those who justify yourselves before men but God knows your hearts.

What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. In other words, how could you ever imagine that by ingratiating yourself with people by the use of your money you can somehow ingratiate yourself with God?

Impossible. So we reject that. That's not what it means. Now what Jesus is endorsing here is simply farsightedness.

That's all. The outward looking church is the far looking church, the farsighted church. Made up of Christians who are farsighted. Who can see ahead.

Who can act now in the light of then. That's what the whole thing is about. Jesus is endorsing the fact that we should use the resources of our time, of our health, of our wealth, and the gifts that we have now, that we should deploy them in such a way that they have an eternal impact.

[31 : 42] That's all he's saying. He calls us to use them so that when they're gone, their investment will last forever.

And the only way to do that is to invest in people. He told a story about a man who used the fleeting opportunity he had before security came and kicked him out of the building to make friends for himself so that he'd be welcomed into their homes.

However far fetched that may be in modern business terms. It made sense in that term and we can see the principle of it this morning.

man. And then Jesus says, I tell you my friends, make friends for yourselves by means of the resources that you have now in this world.

Whatever they may be, time, health, wealth, gifts, home, car, whatever it may be. Use what you have so that when it fails they may receive you into eternal dwellings.

[32 : 45] All it means is, here was a guy who fixed things up in such a way, who made an important decision in a very pressurized moment to make sure he was going to be welcomed later into people's homes.

And Jesus is just picking up that little picture and saying, wouldn't it be great not simply to do what this guy did to see that you yourself are welcomed into other people's homes, but use what you have with a view to that eternal welcome in heaven so that others will be welcomed in heaven.

that's all he's saying, I think. He calls us to use these resources so that when they're gone we will have invested them forever.

And the only way to do that, as I say, is to invest in people. Only people last forever. That's why Jesus wants us to make friends. If we want to see people spending eternity in the heavenly dwellings, then we need to be thinking ahead now and using the wealth and the opportunities that we have in the short time that we have it.

And I'm certain that's what Jesus is saying. I'm certain that he's disappointed to discover that his disciples don't automatically do that. And the reason for all of that, I think, is what we see in the beginning of chapter 15.

[34 : 08] Just flick back for a minute and then we're going to close. But let me just show you the wider context. about making friends for relationships that will last forever.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Jesus and the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled saying this man receives sinners and eats with them. Great sign of friendship of course.

So he told them this parable, what man of you having a hundred sheep if he has lost one of them does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it.

And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors saying to them, rejoice with me for I have found my sheep that was lost.

Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

[35 : 08] You see, Jesus has been criticized for who he builds relationships with. Luke 15 is topped and tailed by the horrors of the standard religious establishment.

At the beginning, it's the Pharisees who are disgusted at Jesus eating with these people. In the end of Luke 15, it's the older brother who's disgusted with the father welcoming the prodigal back.

What are you doing dad? What did Jesus do? He built relationships that will last for eternity.

He went to those who knew they were sinners and he loved them. And he shared his life with them and he ate with them. And that, it seems to me, is exactly what Jesus is encouraging us to do.

He's encouraging his people to be farsighted. To use the opportunity we have now to make friends. so that when all of this opportunity is gone, when all of life is over, our work on earth is done, we leave our money, we leave our abilities, we leave our resources, we leave our gifts, we leave our careers, we leave our businesses, we leave everything.

[36 : 31] We will have invested them for eternity. That's what Jesus is talking about here. He's concerned that the world in its spiritual blindness, at least in regard to its own affairs, is running rings around the church, which is meant to have the spiritual foresight.

And I think that the Lord Jesus identifies a very subtle but major weakness in his people. That we are so infected by the values of this world that we fail to have that ability to see ahead and act wisely now in the light of that coming day.

It's being infected by the world that makes us critical of each other. It's being infected by the world that makes us want to fight for personal greatness. It's being infected by the world that makes us want to want what the world wants.

And how Jesus longs that the people of the light would have the vision to see further ahead, would have that shrewdness. And that we would be engaged in building friendships with people, not just because we do it out of a sense of duty, because we feel guilty when we don't, but because we are sharp, clued up, smart, shrewd, farsighted, astute investors.

The Bible says that the righteous are as bold as a lion, but Jesus says they're as shrewd as a city investor. Can you see that investing now for eternity, investing in other people's lives now for eternity, it's not just a thing you have to do in the midst of life because you're a Christian.

[38 : 21] It is the only thing that will last forever. So to do that is actually not really to be sacrificial, it is to be shrewd. It is to buy up the only thing that is going to last forever.

And I think that is what Jesus is calling us to here. A vision that is characterized by clarity and urgency as the man in the parables vision was and a lifetime of thinking long-term gain via short-term cost.

Investing now, making friends by means of the resources we have that are passing through our fingers so that when these things fail as they certainly will, our friends may with us be received into the eternal dwellings.

What could be more exciting? The outward-looking church is the far-sighted church made up of individuals who do the thinking on Luke 16 and seek to please the Lord accordingly.

Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Just let me quote the verse of the hymn we sang earlier.

[39 : 53] Forgive the small ambitions which often tie us down enticing us to idolize achievements or renown.

Seduced by creature comforts, allured by worldly gain. We need your word to turn our thoughts to treasures which remain. Father, we believe that the Lord Jesus in speaking this parable puts his finger uncomfortably on an issue of blindness for us.

And we thank you that he does so in love. We thank you that we have the thrill of being the people of the light because of your grace to us. Lord, please help us, we plead and pray, to get these things crystal clear.

And grant us the ability to be farsighted in our decisions about how we will spend our lives, all of them, in their totality.

So that we will invest for eternity, not simply because we think it's a Christian thing to do, but beyond that because we're excited to see how shrewd an investment it is.

[41 : 15] We think of David and Julie going off to Nigeria. We thank you that that is a shrewd investment. And we ask your blessing upon them. And we pray, Heavenly Father, for those of us who stay, that you will help us with the resources you've given us equally to invest.

for the glory of your name, to invest in people for eternity. Amen.