



doesn't mean Christians can't be or aren't good business men. People of this world, however, have their focus only on material wealth; Christians keep their focus on eternal life.

And yet, Christians don't walk through life without doing works. Remember this parable is spoken to the disciples, those who believe in Jesus already! So when Jesus says, "And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings", Jesus is teaching us to give to others even in times when we don't think it is "right" to give!

You might remember from the old King James Version the word "wealth" was rendered "mammon." Mammon is properly understood as whatever we have that is beyond our daily needs. Mammon is our extra possessions, property, and money. Mammon is everything we have beyond our "daily bread."

So when Jesus encourages us to make friends "by means of unrighteous wealth", he is telling us to give more to those in need than what is "right." In other words, if someone needs our help, whatever you give them is beyond what they "technically deserve", which means it is "unrighteous". Making friends by means of unrighteous mammon is not a reference to wealth gained wrongfully or given sinfully, but instead simply doing what the manager in the text did. He cut a deal that was not right according to the agreement between the master and his debtors. So also, we should give to our neighbors in need even if doesn't seem right. The manager did it to save his life; We do it to show Christ has already saved ours. We heard David speak of God in the Old Testament reading from 2 Samuel 22:26, "With the merciful You show Yourself merciful." As God has been merciful to us bestowing on us undeserved grace, so we are merciful to others.

And yet all the givings and receivings of this life will pass. They will all "fail" as we heard in the reading. We come into this world with nothing, and we will leave this world with nothing. By showing such charity to others here on earth, on the Last Day, they will testify of the works that demonstrated our faith. That is to say, they will receive us, welcome us, into our eternal dwellings.

To be clear, it's neither our works of charity that earn us the eternal dwellings, nor is it the testimony of the Christians for whom we did good works who have authority to grant salvation. Our works testify of the living faith that believes Christ earned our place in the eternal dwellings. It is Christ who actually will receive us. When we give to those who need *our* "mammon" for *their* daily bread, the words of Jesus will be fulfilled on the Last Day when He will say as St. Matthew records: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.<sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,<sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'<sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?<sup>38</sup> And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?<sup>39</sup> And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'<sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me'" (Mt 25:34-40).

Christ earned your salvation, and therefore the forgiveness God gives you is undeserved. In connection to the parable, it might seem, then, that God is "unrighteous" in forgiving you. But God is always just. Christ paid the price of your sin. Christ endured what you deserved. He made satisfaction for your sins. Faith believes that what Christ rightly deserved, by God's grace, is given to you. Because of Jesus, you are declared sons of light. God is merciful to you because He was unmerciful to Jesus.

By faith, because of Christ, we get to share our mammon with those in need, being the means by which God provides for their daily bread, even though we know that all the world's "mammon" will eventually fail. Nevertheless, we give because we seek to demonstrate that our eyes are set on the eternal things. For by faith, because of Christ, we will receive the eternal dwellings, the spiritual riches that will never fail. In Jesus' name, Amen.