

Luke 16:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

Analysis

Jesus presses the point: 'If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?' The logic is compelling: if you can't handle 'unrighteous mammon' (τῷ ἀδίκῳ μαμωνᾷ, *tō adikō mamōna*)—mere earthly wealth—why would God entrust 'true riches' (τὸ ἀληθινόν, *to alēthinon*)—spiritual treasure? Money management reveals spiritual maturity. The question expects negative answer: no one would entrust greater responsibilities to those who've proven unfaithful with lesser ones. This teaching radically elevates money's significance—not because wealth matters ultimately but because how we handle it reflects and shapes our souls. Financial faithfulness qualifies or disqualifies us for spiritual ministry.

Historical Context

The distinction between 'unrighteous mammon' and 'true riches' is crucial. Earthly wealth is temporary, tainted by this fallen world, and ultimately worthless (1 Timothy 6:17). True riches include spiritual gifts, ministry opportunities, souls entrusted to our care, revelation of God's truth—eternal treasures. Yet God uses the temporary to test fitness for the eternal. This principle explains why many gifted, talented people never receive significant spiritual responsibility—their financial unfaithfulness disqualifies them. Conversely, faithful stewards of money often receive enlarged spiritual influence. The principle applies beyond finances to all earthly stewardship.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What are the 'true riches' Jesus refers to, and how do they contrast with earthly wealth?
2. How does your financial management reflect your readiness for spiritual responsibilities?
3. What might unfaithfulness with money look like—careless spending, stinginess, debt, materialism?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	οὖν	ἐν	τῷ	ἀδίκῳ	μαμωνᾷ	πιστοὶ	οὐκ
If	therefore	in	G3588	the unrighteous	mammon	faithful	not
G1487	G3767	G1722		G94	G3126	G4103	G3756
ἐγένεσθε	τὸ	ἀληθινὸν	τίς	ὑμῖν	πιστεύσει		
been	G3588	the true	who	to your	trust		
G1096		G228	G5101	G5213	G4100		

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 3:8 (Parallel theme): Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

Luke 12:33 (Parallel theme): Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

James 2:5 (Faith): Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Luke 16:9 (Righteousness): And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Luke 18:22 (Parallel theme): Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

Revelation 3:18 (Parallel theme): I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.