Beware of Loopholes Handout

We live in a culture that quite literally lives for the loophole. We want, even compete to be the special exception to the rules. What might Jesus have to teach us about seeking loopholes?

Luke 16:1-17 (NLT)
1  Jesus told this story to his disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a manager handling his affairs. One day a report came that the manager was wasting his employer’s money.
2  So the employer called him in and said, ‘What’s this I hear about you? Get your report in order, because you are going to be fired.’
3  “The manager thought to himself, ‘Now what? My boss has fired me. I don’t have the strength to dig ditches, and I’m too proud to beg.
4  Ah, I know how to ensure that I’ll have plenty of friends who will give me a home when I am fired.’
5  “So he invited each person who owed money to his employer to come and discuss the situation. He asked the first one, ‘How much do you owe him?’
6  The man replied, ‘I owe him 800 gallons of olive oil.’ So the manager told him, ‘Take the bill and quickly change it to 400 gallons.’
7  “‘And how much do you owe my employer?’ he asked the next man. ‘I owe him 1,000 bushels of wheat,’ was the reply. ‘Here,’ the manager said, ‘take the bill and change it to 800 bushels.’
8  “The rich man had to admire the dishonest rascal for being so shrewd. And it is true that the children of this world are more shrewd in dealing with the world around them than are the children of the light.

The central character in the story is dishonest, but shrewd, wasteful, but crafty. However, he is a steward or manager of someone else’s property. This is the heart of Christian stewardship; God has given us everything, nothing we have is really ours, so we are accountable fully to God for how we live our lives, treat other people, earn and spend the money that crosses our palms, and how we treat God’s creation.

What is going on in our hearts when we are willing to sell our integrity for mere money?

9  Here’s the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your earthly possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.

Jesus does not always give us the moral of a parable. Yet here it is. Use your material wealth, your time and your energy to help other people.

However, Jesus is saying that if we invest appropriately in eternity, then we will have people who will welcome us and care for us. After making this point, Jesus turns to address the integrity issue.

10  “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities.
11  And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?

Imagine being disqualified for great things of heaven because you were unfaithful with the material wealth God gave you here on earth. Jesus is declaring that this is exactly what will happen.

12  And if you are not faithful with other people’s things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?
13  “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Are we exchanging the true riches of God for mere money and empty leisure that is here today and gone tomorrow?

14  The Pharisees, who dearly loved their money, heard all this and scoffed at him.
15  Then he said to them, “You like to appear righteous in public, but God knows your hearts. What this world honors is detestable in the sight of God.
16  “Until John the Baptist, the law of Moses and the messages of the prophets were your guides. But now the Good News of the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is eager to get in.
17  But that doesn’t mean that the law has lost its force. It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the smallest point of God’s law to be overturned.

Almost everyone wants to create their own way into the Kingdom of God, but alas, there are no workarounds, no loopholes in God’s will or ways.

The real crux of the matter is spelled out here. Our posture of obedience shows in our faithful attention to God in even the smallest of matters. If we are faithful, then we will do the great things and not leave the small ones undone whether or not anyone is looking. But if we are unfaithful, we will look for the loopholes. If you are seeking after loopholes with regard to God, then you are putting yourself above God. Such loopholes turn out to be nooses!