

Text: Luke 16:1-2

Theme: Under New Management

September 18, 2016

Sometimes you see the sign on a business door. Other times, you find it in the Shopper. Wherever you might see it, we've all seen the sign, "Under New Management." The implication is that things are better now because of the new management. In our Gospel lesson, the rich man was soon to hang out his proverbial shingle that read, "Under New Management" since his current manager was accused of wasting his possessions. As we look at these words, we consider our theme: Under New Management.

I. By virtue of Christ and the cross, we are under new management. A. But why did we need a new manager? 1. We needed new management because we've been corrupted since birth. How is that possible? You and I, we were once cute little babies, at least in the eyes of our parents, so how could we have been corrupted since birth? The answer: We arrived born in sin and ever since that moment, we've lived in a sinful, corrupted, greedy, every man for himself, dog eat dog, get to the top of the ladder no matter what it takes, I must win, I must be better than the next guy world. By our very nature, we fail as managers of our personal lives, this world, and our faith-life.

2. We needed new management because, left to ourselves, we would never arrive. Imagine training for five years for the olympics. Week after week, you dedicated your life to preparing for one event. As you stepped onto the track for the 400 meter race, you left the starting blocks fully prepared to win. As you rounded the last curve, six men stepped onto the track not fifteen yards from the finish line and surrounded you. Suddenly, your olympic dreams were shattered as you were disqualified. In life's race, we can dedicate ourselves to running and we can leave the starting blocks. But, left to ourselves, we will never cross the finish line.

B. Realizing our need, how do we obtain this new management? 1. New management is possible solely because of the cross. Last Sunday, we focused on the power of one as we kicked off our Christian Education season. In the faith arena, the power of one isn't the power of you or me; it's the power of the One who journeyed to the cross, who never disqualified Himself, who went to the cross in your place and my place. Without the cross, there is no finish line, no race to run, no trophy to obtain. Under new management required Jesus to take the cross, to carry our sins, to make the payment for managers like us who couldn't manage life let alone our faith-life.

2. New management is possible solely by grace alone. Suppose you were running the 400 meter race at the state track meet. Fifteen yards before the finish line, you stumbled to the ground. The other runners who were competing against you stopped, picked you up, and carried you across the finish line where you were declared the winner. That's the image of grace alone, of God doing the unbelievable for the undeserving in an incredible way. Without Christ carrying you across the finish line, you could never receive the crown. God doing the unthinkable, God picking you up and carrying you, that was only possible because you were under new management.

3. New management is possible solely by faith alone. Go back to the runners who carried you across the finish line. If that event actually occurred, but you

insisted that you had to go back and rerun the race and actually win by your own efforts, what would be the outcome? As the Holy Spirit worked faith in your heart at your Baptism, He said, "Today, I declare you a winner. I guarantee that the crown of life will be waiting for you at the finish line. Hold on to that promise and it is yours." Holding on to that promise is holding on to your faith. By faith and by no other means, you are under new management, destined to receive the coveted crown of life.

C. Having received this new management, how do we live under it? 1. We live under new management by choosing to forgive. Imagine what this world would be like if every person chose to forgive. It may not happen, but the power of one that we spoke about last week enables you to be one who forgives. Maybe someone else will have more things, obtain that prized status in the community or whatever else may be out there. Whatever may happen, you are under new management and your Lord calls you to forgive as He has forgiven you. It matters not what the rest of the world does. You can exhibit the power of one by choosing to be one who forgives and moves on with life.

2. We live under new management by choosing to interact with God. Paul said it in our Epistle, "First of all, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people." Because of our new management, we have been given the greatest privilege possible on this side of heaven, the privilege of direct communication with our Creator. By His invitation, we are welcomed into His presence any time day or night to make our requests, to pray for His guidance, to offer thanksgiving. Look at the privilege that's ours because we're under new management! Only those under new management have received the invitation to stand in the presence of God.

3. We live under new management by choosing not to waste. We live in the most wasteful country in the world. Leave the United States for a few weeks and return and you will see it like you've never seen it before. Under new management, our great God says, "Stop the waste. Stop wasting your physical possessions by thinking you need more. Stop wasting your gifts and talents because you think someone else can do it better. And stop wasting My spiritual gifts by hiding them." You and I, we have so much in so many areas. Blessed beyond measure, blessed in so many areas of life, our Manager says, "Use it; use it wisely; use it faithfully; use it to My glory!"

4. We live under new management by choosing to follow our Leader. Go back to our track scene. Suppose Jesus were standing at the starting blocks and He said, "Run the opposite direction," would you do it? Because we are under new management, our Leader has said, "Prepare to go against the flow, to do what others choose not to do. By following Me, your life will be different because you are following a Leader that is dramatically different than the world. But, in the end, you will never regret it!" No one promised that new management would be easy, but our God steps onto life's track each new day and says, "Run it My way. It will be worth it!"

5. The next time you see the sign, remember the reality. By the grace of God, you have been given the greatest gift, the most coveted gift in the world, the gift called, "Under New Management." Amen.