

*Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. 2So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.' 3Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' 5So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' 7Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' 8And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. 9And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. 10"Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. 11If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? 13No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."*

Scrambling is what it is called.

The cooks among us might think of eggs but this is not a culinary term but a football term.

Scrambling. It is what the quarterback does at the moment things come apart. He is back to pass, his blockers are trying to keep the pass rushers from grabbing him – then suddenly a pass rusher breaks free and the quarterback is about to be crushed. Just then he scrambles.

Scrambling is a combination of running to avoid the tacklers and looking for someone to throw a pass to. It is also looking to see if there is an open place to run to instead of passing.

The value of a quarterback is revealed in that moment of scrambling. For a good scrambler can turn a play that should be a large loss into a large gain. Scrambling.

Jesus told the story of a man who knew how to scramble. He was a manager but not a very good one. A manager has the responsibility of taking care of his master's property – protecting it – improving it. But this manager was squandering the property – letting it be lost – letting the property deteriorate. Maybe he was lazy about collecting the debts owed to his master, or maybe he left the crops in the fields too long and rains came to ruin them. Whatever he was doing word of it came to the rich master. So he called the manager into his office and told him he was fired.

Now these days the rich owner would have taken away his keys right then and had him escorted from the property immediately but in the story Jesus told this manager still had some time to cook the books. So he went to some of the people who owed his master money and reduced their bills. He figured that after he was out on the streets that these people might help him in turn.

The rich master heard what was going on and he commended the dishonest manager.

I like to think of this as the opposing coach admiring the other sides quarterback after a great scramble. Caught, in trouble but finding a way to break free.

The quarterbacks who are good at scrambling know where they are and where they want to go. They do not just run around with their attention on the tacklers but they keep their eyes open for an opening the way the dishonest manager did.

So what does any of this have to do with you?

Most of us have a good idea of what God would want. We know that words like greed and selfish hoarding and meanness and dishonesty would not describe a God pleasing life. We know that words like love and sharing, and generosity and gentleness are words closer to the Spirit of God planted in our hearts. We know that stealing food from hungry children or tricking an elderly blind person is not what God would want any of us to do. We know that throwing a drowning person a life preserver or giving blood to save the life of another is.

But far too often things break down. What if the dollar I give to a beggar is going to buy drugs that will only further enslave him – what should I do then? Or what if a neighborhood thug is stealing from my elderly neighbors – is generosity toward that thug going to be helpful? It is like the pocket for the quarterback has broken down and the tacklers are everywhere and we are forced to scramble. Should I save for my retirement or should I send money to help starving children? Do I spend time at a church council meeting or time with my elderly uncle? Decisions, decisions. I want my child to excel in her favorite activity – and I want my child to learn of God. I want both for my child but when scheduling conflicts arise I must choose one.

That quarterback that scrambles knows what matters most. He is looking downfield using every sense and ability to move toward the goal.

Jesus wants his followers to do the same. He spoke a saying for our guidance. “Whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much; whoever is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.”

Being faithful to God is an everyday in every situation thing. Our serving God is not just some big play of giving millions to cure cancer but a little by little sharing with the hungry and the homeless, with those who seek healing for diseases and those who bring God’s word to children. Your weekly gifts of money and of time make a difference. Each weekend in worship – each day in prayer – each week giving yourself in service.

You cannot serve God and wealth, Jesus said. Wealth is not the goal of life - it is rather a tool to be used to get us to the goal of life with God. Remembering that in every situation will keep us moving forward toward God.

There is one big difference between you and a scrambling quarterback. That quarterback is on his own. But you are not. The Holy Spirit lives in you. Jesus has made a way for you. The Father will guide you home. You are going to make it. Amen.