

Scripture: Luke 16:1-9.

Theme: The Unjust Steward.

Text: Luke 16:9 --"..make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

Proposition: The friendship of those we help is our most lasting earthly possession, while the money, health and time we give up to secure their friendship will not be ours for long anyway.

Sources: RSV Bible
Abingdon Bible Commentary, p.1049.
Masterpieces of Religious verse.

Date written: July 23, 1954.

Places and dates preached:

Wheatland, Wyo., Aug. 1, 1954
Grove, Cheyenne, Wyo. - APR 15, 56
O U E R

Shenandoah, Wyo, First ch - 9:30 or 11 a.m.
Wyo. Air School (Refoms) 6:30 p.m.
Oct. 13, 1958

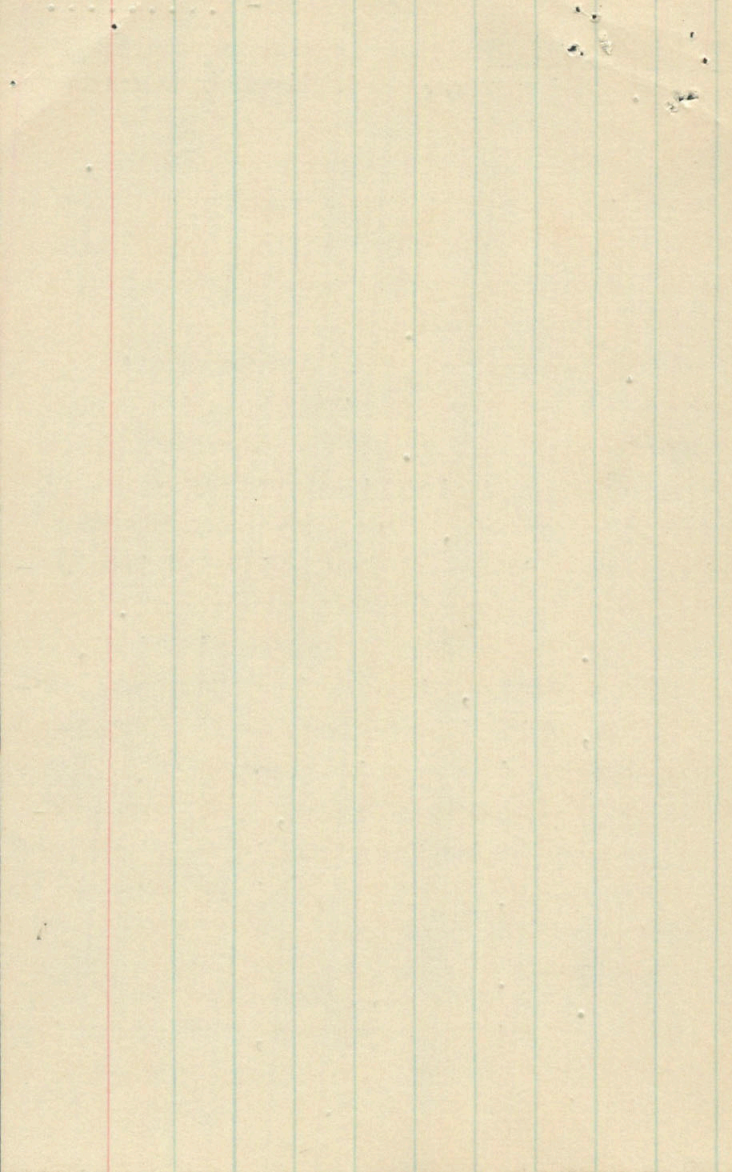
Introduction:

1. This story difficult because it seems to involve an approval of dishonesty on the part of Jesus. Thus it is a vivid example of the fact that to understand the Bible one needs to know something of Bible lands and times.

2. Jesus holds the steward's conduct up for admiration in one particular only. The steward is a steward of injustice not because he was dishonest, but because he was involved in a way of life which Jesus condemns without argument.

a. He worked on commission, as all agents, including tax collectors, did in Eastern Mediterranean countries, until recently. He was not paid a wage, but was expected to maintain himself out of the rent, part of which went into his own pocket and part to the landlord.

b. He was accused not of fraud but of mismanagement, and sending for the books (account) meant dismissal notice.



c. Not strong enough to work on land again.

d. Summoned master's tenants (debtors), 2 of whom were behind in rent, which was paid in produce (share-cropping).

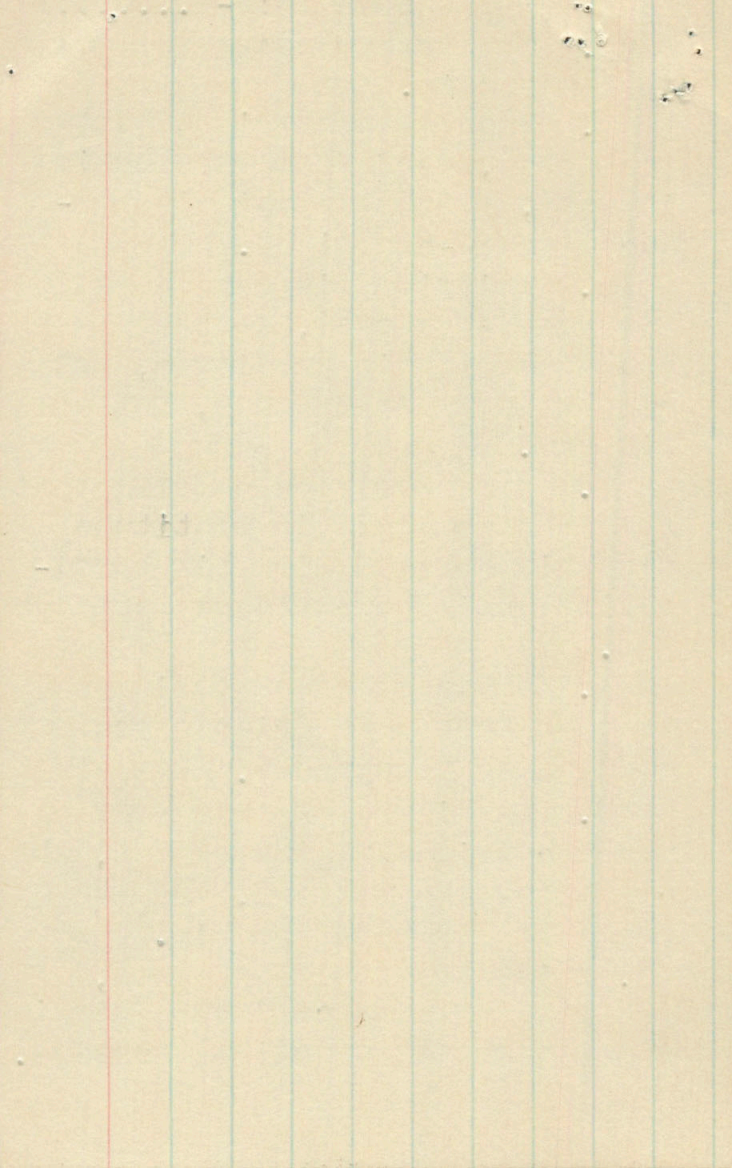
e. Remitting his own share of the rent they owed, he knew he would earn their gratitude, not at the master's expense, but at his own.

f. He probably calculated that the debtors would in gratitude find him work or give him hospitality until he could get another job.

g. He was a shrewd business man who knew that friends would go farther than money.

h. The wisdom of this conduct was recognized by the master, who commended the steward, and who probably did not fire him.

3. This story told by Jesus, which at first glance seems puzzling has an important practical message.



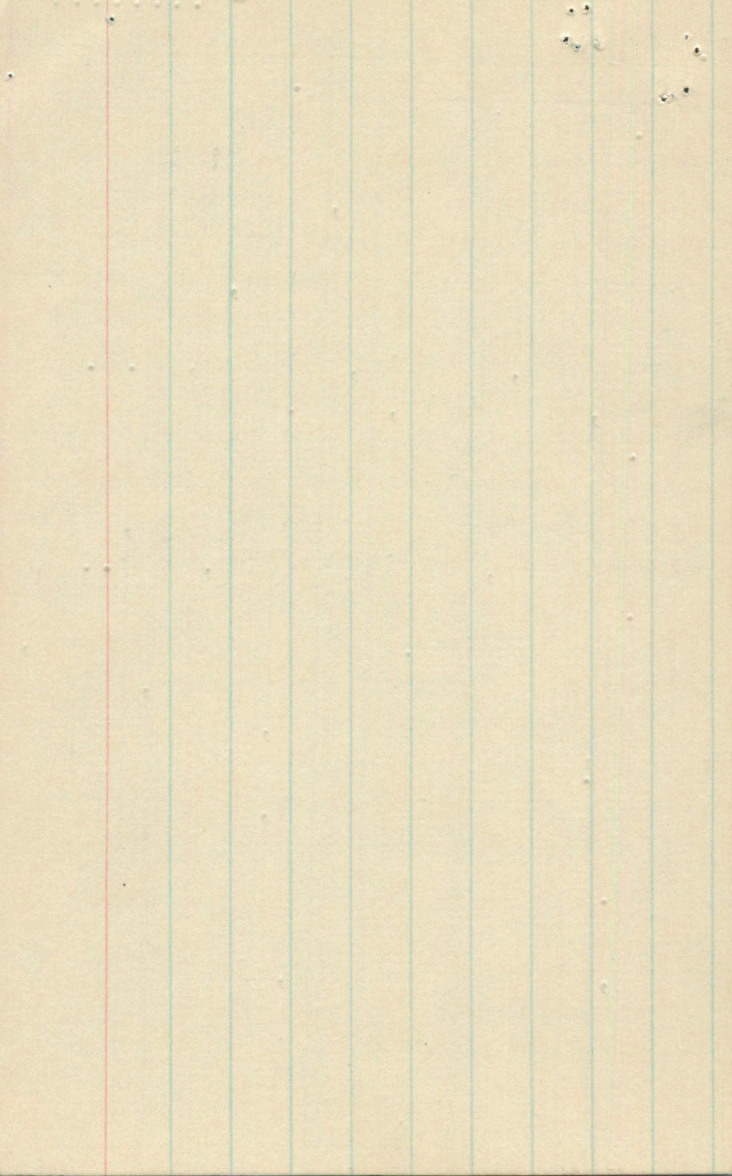
I. God is the only independent Being in the Universe.

1. The richest or most powerful human was dependent for birth and rearing upon others, depends on others to supply food and other necessities and luxuries, and is not independent of suffering and death (Roosevelt, Stalin, Hitler, J.P. Morgan, Carnágie, etc.)

2. "Independent" in its purest and most absolute meaning is an attribute of what we call God, like omnipotence, omnipresence, etc..

3. EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING
Before all Time, before all worlds,
Before the dawn of every age, the
dawn of every world,
Is God! And He remains
Beyond all coming ages, and beyond
All unthought worlds that yet may
be!

He is, in all that is, in all that
not yet is:
Even today He dwells in the tone of
the chord
That tomorrow will draw from the



strings of my harp.

...Namdev, 1270.

II. We are all stewards.

1. We are not concerned with the ownership of material goods.

a. Money and property:

(1) In this country it is unlawful to destroy or deface money (man charged with defacing money when paying income tax with silver dollars immersed in buckets of cattle blood; though charge dismissed on grounds that money wasn't actually hurt).

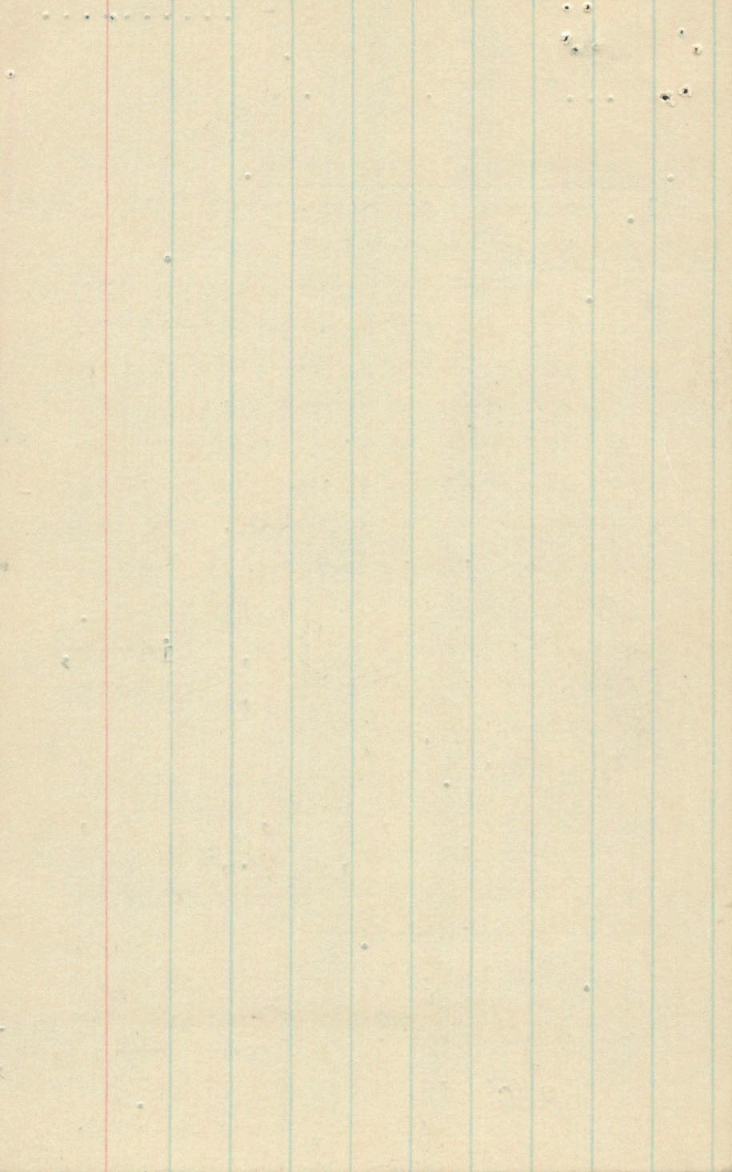
(2) Income taxes, ~~thieves~~, fluctuating markets, changing currencies, disavow complete ownership.

(3) Taxes, fire, drought, victors in war, etc., can make all types of property change hands quickly.

b. Health:

(1) All would have perpetual good health if allowed own ways, but **such** is not the case.

(2) Can't use bodies indis-



criminatingly as we wish, for this may destroy health.

c. Time:

(1) For some never enough time to do things we wish.

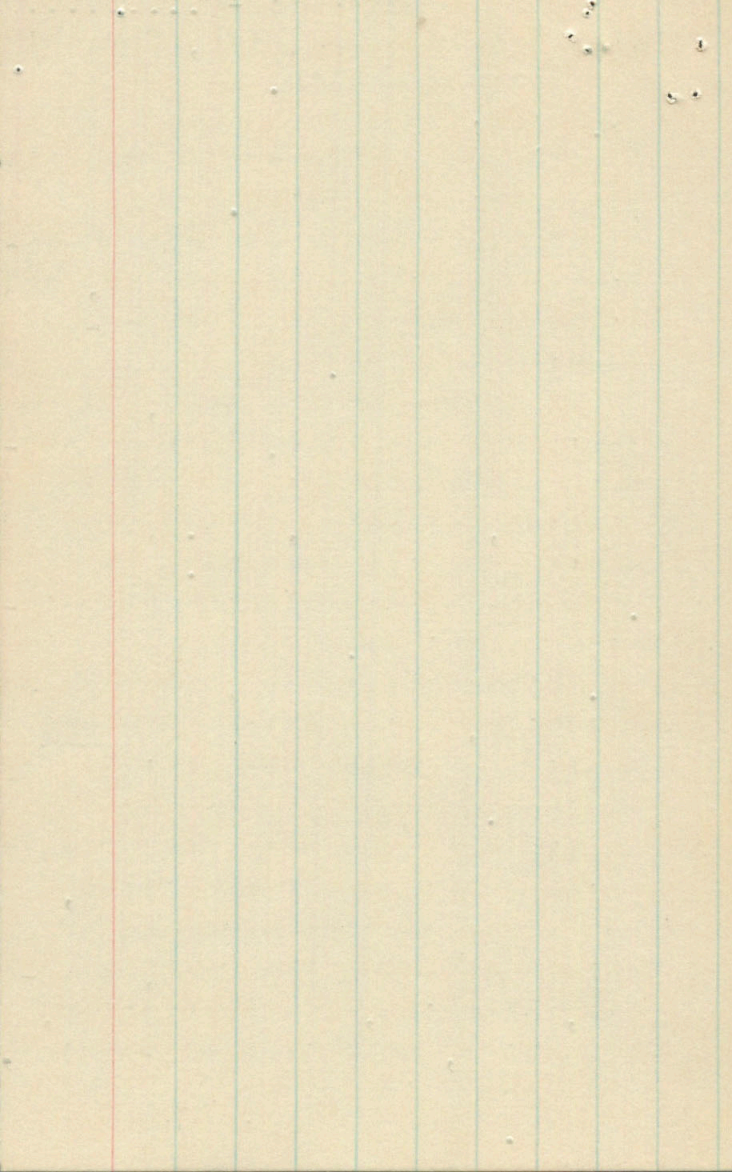
(2) For some never enough activity to fill hours of day, and aimless loafing or pleasure-seeking results.

(3) Whatever the case, we don't own our time, must do certain mandatory things with it (eating, sleeping, etc.), and can't stop its passage.

2. We are concerned with the circulation of things.

a. Like the steward, we work on commission, being allowed to use a portion of these good things for ourselves.

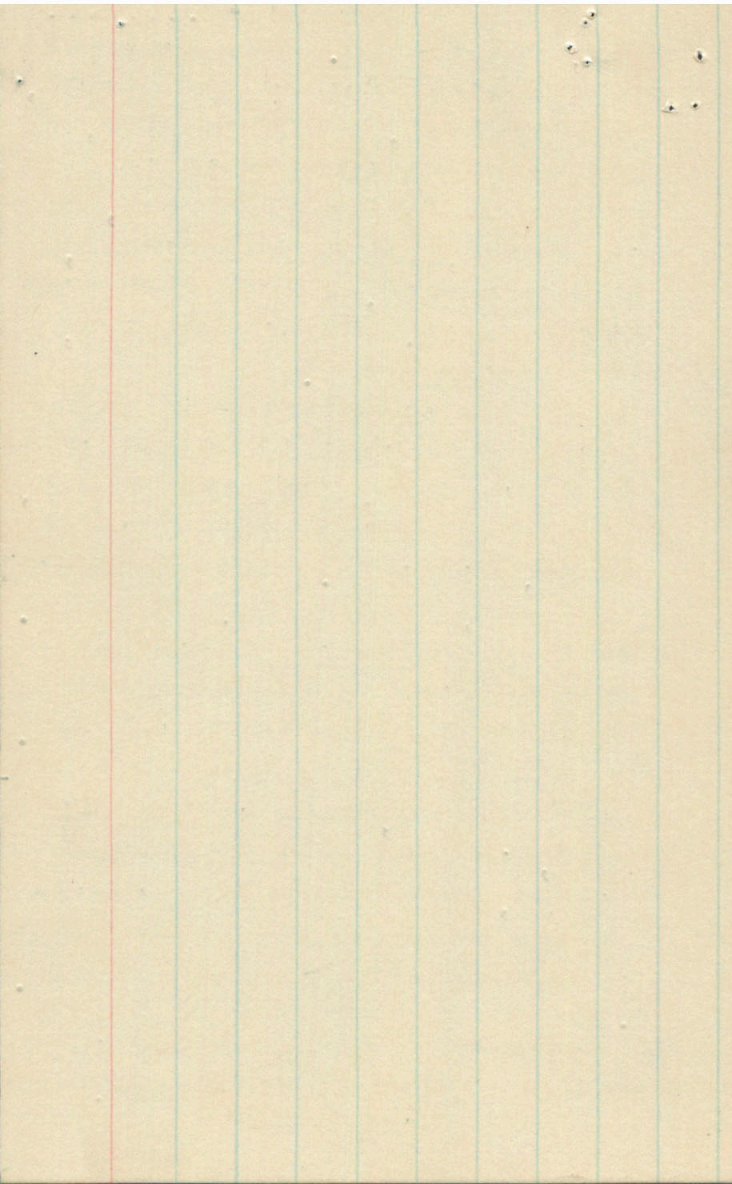
(1) Salesman gets 20% of sale price as his pay for selling, but after meeting expenses of sale must spend for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, education, religious expression, and recreation of self and family. The money is his to



use, not to own. May accumulate some against future bad health, unemployment, business risk, or old age, but invests it in savings which are lent out, or in stocks, bonds or business, thus using it, and in such risk may lose it. Is circulating, not owning money.

(2) In circulation of money a good rule is 1/10 of net income to God's work, like the church, gifts for relief of world's needy, missions. The money will be spent, circulated, some way. Better get lasting satisfaction from knowing that a respectable share of it goes to God's work. This church would have no financial worries, even in drought year, if good part of members tithed, and our church mission giving would be far beyond what is suggested by the conference.

b. We are allowed use of money and property and health ~~and~~ in return for service to others.



(1) Skilled person important to community may be evil in many ways, but allowed to continue and prosper because value of skill to community outweighs his evil.

(2) Taxation rests on theory that money and property allowable to holder only if he contributes to community.

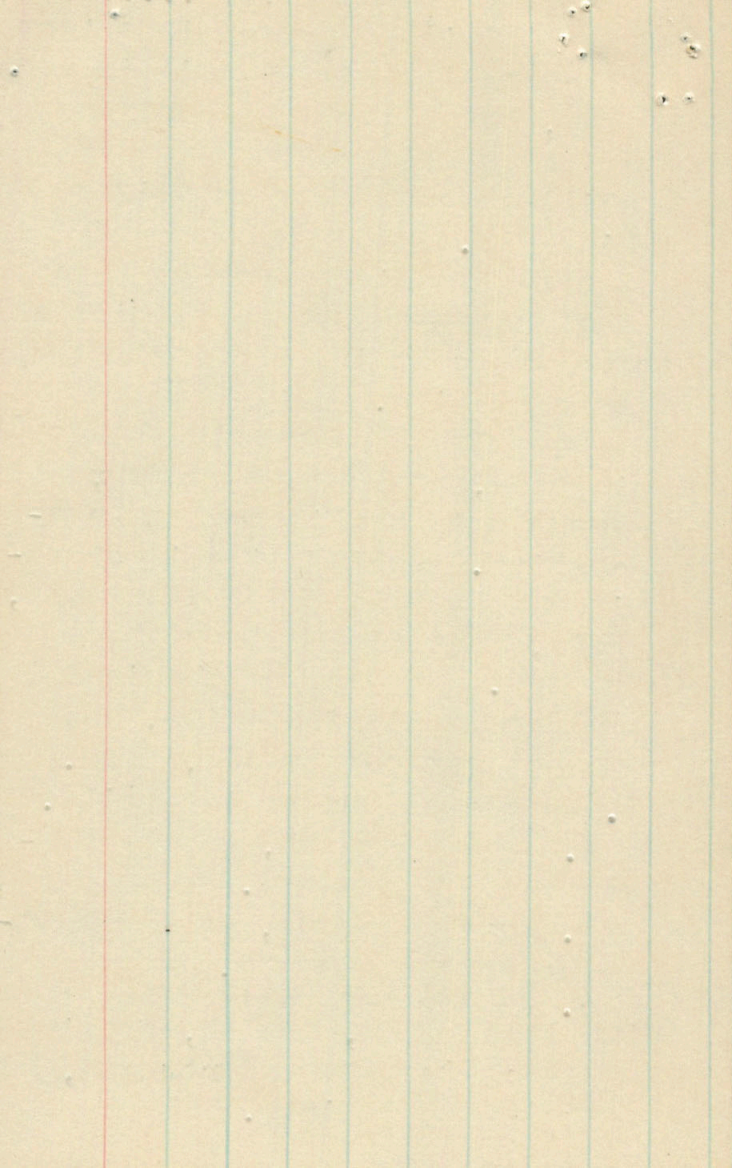
(3) Use of strength (health) in rape, robbery or murder results in confinement or execution. Social life is organized on the theory that health, life, must at least not harm others. We can use physical self only within limits, and do not own our bodies, even.

3. We are all under authority.

a. Some above us, as the master over the steward.

b. Some below us, as the debtors under the steward.

c. We are not better than those with less money, health, or time than we; just more fortunate, by accident of birth.



III. We are unjust stewards....

1. If our accounts were required for audit, they would not stand strict examination.

a. All have wrongdoing in past, and (at least in desire) in present.

b. ~~For~~ share the Biblical tenth with ~~God~~ and others.

c. The self-righteous who denies sin and wrong is the hardest to reach for Christ.

2. We are all under notice of dismissal, as was the steward.

a. By reason of age, health, or changing conditions, from our jobs and money and property and health.

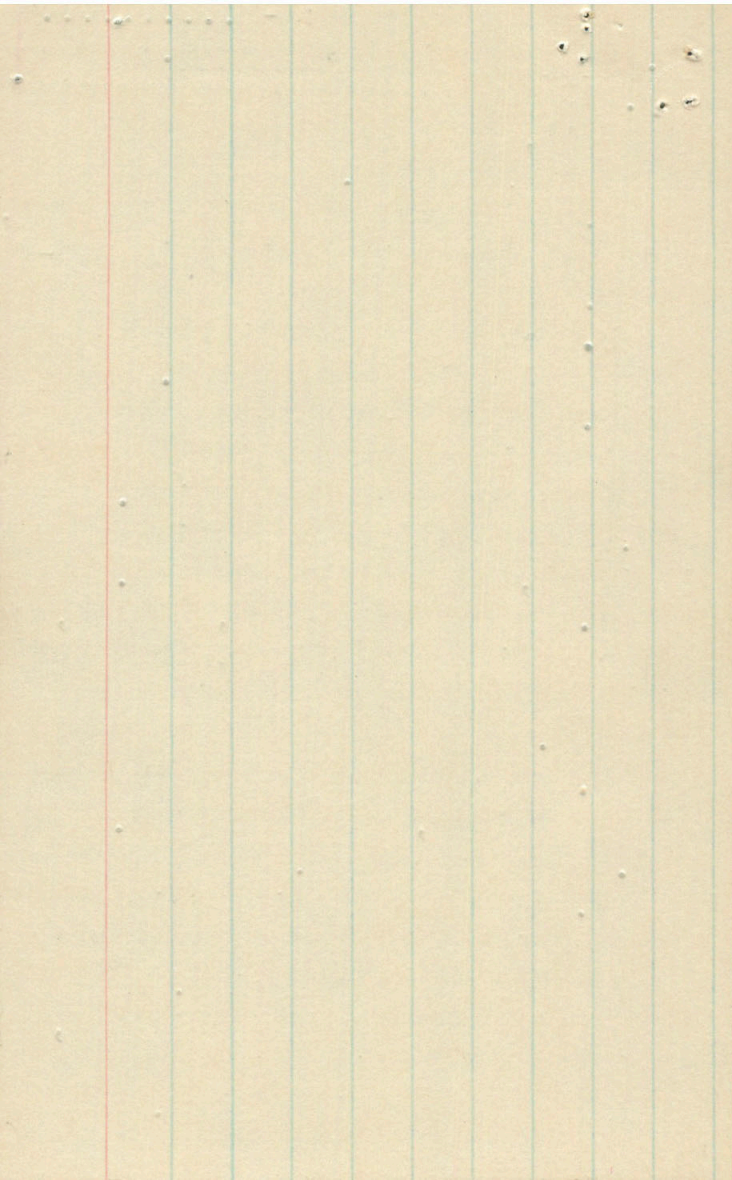
b. By certainty of death from these things, and from time.

3. What we can do.

a. Jesus taught in Scripture to make friends of those dependent on us for the time being.

(1) Parents with children, instead of alienating them by unreasonable directions.

(2) Employers with employees,



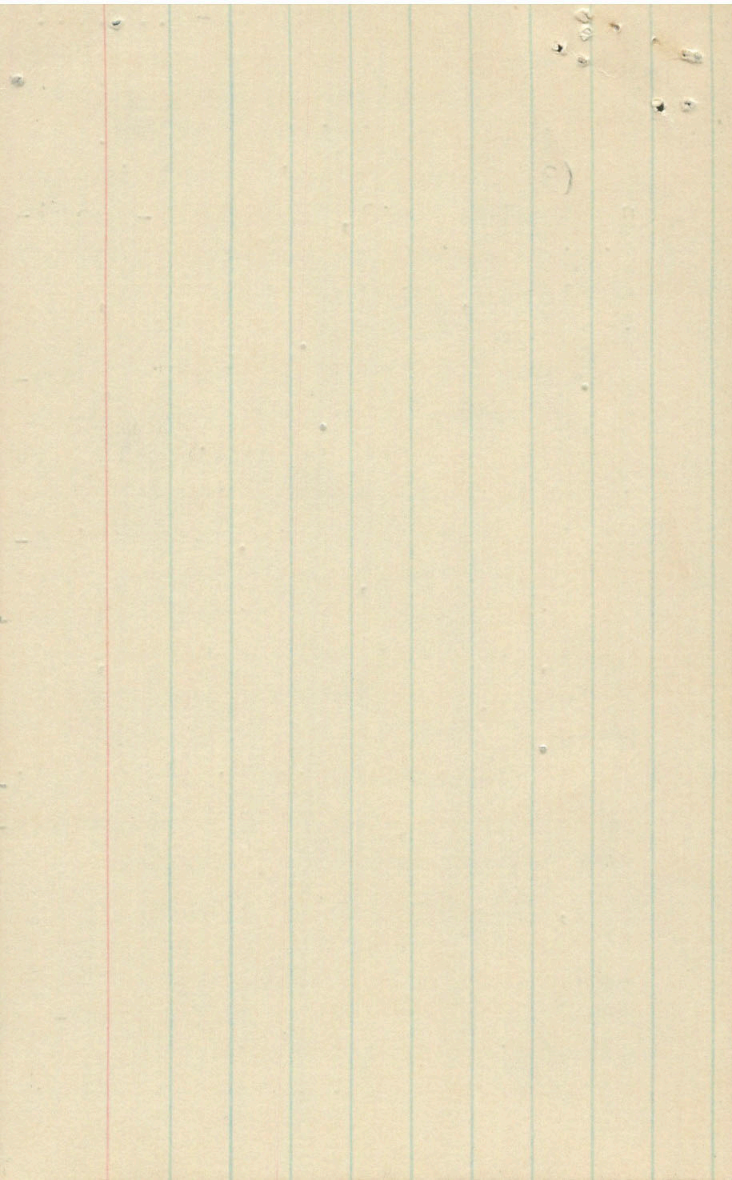
instead of extracting last drop of perspiration and last minute of time for minimum dollar.

(3) Jane Wyman's part in "The Blue Veil," as self-sacrificing nurse or governess of children, giving them love, illustrates idea.

b. Before long we shall be dependent upon them.

(1) Parents in their old age increasingly upon children for at least friendship, companionship and love, and perhaps for physical care and financial support, as their own parents, friends, and loved ones pass away.

(2) Employers in time of business stress, as employees ~~XXXXXX~~ ~~ly~~ union recently lending \$50,000 from union funds and 1000 employees \$200 each from own funds to company to help over period of stress due to over-expansion in producing as an effort to keep employees working



(3) In "The Blue Veil" ones she had loved as children banded together to care for nurse in her old age.

(4) Old person who was active in church and lodge finds these groups active in his or her behalf in time of need, if such need is known. Tithing church has the **means** to give adequate help to such.

Conclusion:

1. The money, health, time, we give to secure friendship will not be ours for long.

2. Life, as ordered by God, depends on interaction, on giving and taking, and it is not selfishness **but** humility to be willing to make use of one another.

3. The friendship of those we help is our most lasting earthly possession, one which we may think of as lasting even into eternity.

4. In the words of Jesus as given in our ~~story~~ story of the Unjust Steward,
----Text.

