THE QUESTION

What did John Chrysostom teach about Luke 16:9 and unrighteous mammon?

Asked by a THF member on April 11, 2026 · published November 9, 2026, updated November 11, 2026 · 8 numbered quotations · the 9 early Christian passages and 3 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-john-chrysostom-teach-about-luke-16-9-and-unrighteous-mammon

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

John Chrysostom, a later 4th-century preacher, quotes Luke 16:9 in several sermons and explains it as a call to give alms. He warns that friendship alone does not save us; our own good use of wealth must go with it. He also urges those who gained wrongly to spend rightly, and reads the eternal dwellings as lasting.

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POINT 1 OF 7

He names the verse and calls it almsgiving

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In his sermons on Hebrews, Chrysostom quotes the command and names Luke 16:9 outright. He explains it at once: making friends with wealth means giving alms.

1 “So then, let us make friends for ourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, Luke 16:9. That is, let us give alms.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Hebrews* 1 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 3, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 2 OF 7

Friendship alone will not protect us

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Chrysostom points out that Jesus did not only say make friends, but added how: by means of wealth. From this he teaches that the friends we make cannot save us by themselves. Our own good works and right use of what we have must go with it.

2 “To learn that it is not simply their friendship with us that can save us, notice what is added. For why did He not say, "Make friends for yourselves, so that they may receive you into their everlasting dwellings," but also added the way this must be done? By saying, "of unrighteous mammon," He shows that we must make friends of them by means of our possessions. This shows that friendship alone will not protect us, unless we have good works, unless we use rightly the wealth gathered unrighteously.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Hebrews* 1 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 7

The good work must be our own

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In his sermons on Matthew, Chrysostom uses the verse to warn against leaving everything to the prayers of the saints while we do nothing. He says he is not telling people to stop asking the saints for help. The verse, he says, points to almsgiving, so the good work is our own.

3

> “And I say this, not so that we may stop supplicating the saints, but to keep us from becoming careless, and from trusting our concerns only to others while we ourselves fall back and slumber. For in the same way, when He said, "Make friends for yourselves," He did not stop with this alone, but He added, "of the unrighteous mammon." He did this so that the good work might again be your own. For what He has signified here is nothing other than almsgiving.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Matthew* 5 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 2, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 4 OF 7

Gained wrongly? Stop, and spend well

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Chrysostom sees God's kindness in the verse: if we turn away from injustice, God invites us to spend well what we gained badly. But he scolds those who keep taking from others and give only a tiny share, thinking that is enough.

4

> “And, what is marvelous, He does not even make a strict account with us, if we withdraw ourselves from injustice. What He says is like this: "Have you gained ill? Spend well. Have you gathered by unrighteousness? Scatter abroad in righteousness.""
>
> *later in the same passage*
>
> “But we are so far past all feeling that we do not give even from our unjust gain. Instead, while plundering without end, if we contribute the smallest part, we think we have fulfilled all.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Matthew* 5 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

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POINT 5 OF 7

Not a license to cheat for giving

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

In his sermons on Acts, Chrysostom calls it a wicked idea to make unjust gains so as to have something for the poor. He compares alms from unjust stores to a fountain pouring out mud, and praises alms from pure stores.

5 “Many make gains, unjust gains, that they may have something to give to the poor. This too is a wicked imagination.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Acts* (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 7, page 6** Read it in the library ›
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6 “Great is the virtue of this practice when alms are poured out from pure stores. When they come from unjust stores, it is like a fountain pouring out mud.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Acts* (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 8, page 6** Read it in the library ›
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POINT 6 OF 7

He uses the verse to warn about riches

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In a sermon on First Timothy, Chrysostom quotes the command to argue that greed makes getting rich without injustice impossible. The English text here prints the reference as Luke 16:19, but the words quoted are from Luke 16:9.

7 “But suppose the wealth was not gained wrongly. And how is that possible? Greed is such a destructive passion that becoming rich without injustice is impossible. Christ declared this when He said, "Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous Mammon."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on First Timothy* (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 4, page 6** Read it in the library ›
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POINT 7 OF 7

The eternal dwellings are a lasting home

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Explaining Paul's words about our earthly tent, Chrysostom notes that a tent usually means something short-lived. So when Jesus calls the saints' resting places tents in Luke 16:9, he adds the word eternal. Chrysostom reads this as a home that does not pass away.

8

> “After saying "house of tabernacle," and by this showing both that it is easy to take down and that it is temporary, he sets against it "eternal," because the word "tabernacle" often means something temporary. Therefore He says, "In My Father's house are many abiding places." John 14:2 But if He anywhere also calls the resting places of the saints tabernacles, He does not call them simply tabernacles, but adds a description. For He did not say, "that they may receive you into their tabernacles," but, "into the eternal tabernacles."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Second Corinthians* 10 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 9, page 6 **Read it in the library ›**

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages explain the command to make friends with wealth, not the whole parable of the dishonest steward.
- They do not show every place Chrysostom used this verse, and one sermon on Philippians that quotes it is cut off here before the quotation.
- They do not spell out how much someone who gained wealth unjustly must pay back before giving.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 9 early Christian passages and 3 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages (sources 1–9, grouped by writer, earliest first), then 3 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it.

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Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *9 passages from 1 writer*

John Chrysostom, *c. 386–407 AD · sources 1–9*

1. *Homilies on Acts* (on point 5) Church, which we call the Xenon. Be inquisitive, sit before the doors, receive those who come yourselves. Even if you do not wish to take them into your houses, at… [continues online] **read ›**
2. *Homilies on Matthew* 5 (1885 English) **Quotes 3, 4, page 3** "so when He said, make to yourselves friends, he did not stop at this only, but He added, of the unrighteous mammon… [continues online] **read ›**
3. *Homilies on Hebrews* 1 **Quotes 1, 2, page 2** "For why did He not say, "Make friends for yourselves, so that they may receive you into their everlasting dwellings," but also added the way this must be done? By… [continues online] **read ›**
4. *Homilies on First Timothy* (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** "Christ declared, saying, Make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness… [continues online] **read ›**
5. *Homilies on Philippians* (1885 English; on point 7) "Christ also tells us. Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that they may receive you into their eternal tabernacles… [continues online] **read ›**
6. *Homilies on Philippians* Christ Himself has declared that this is impossible. "You cannot," He says, "serve God and Mammon," and, "No man can serve two masters," Matthew 6:24, because they give us… [continues online] **read ›**
7. *Homilies on Acts* **Quote 5, page 4** "Many make gains, unjust gains, that they may have something to give to the poor. This too is a wicked imagination." **read ›**
8. *Homilies on Acts* **Quote 6, page 4** "Great is the virtue of this practice when alms are poured out from pure stores. When they come from unjust stores, it is like a fountain pouring out mud." **read ›**
9. *Homilies on Second Corinthians* 10 **Quote 8, page 5** "After saying "house of tabernacle," and by this showing both that it is easy to take down and that it is temporary, he sets against it "eternal," because the word "tabernacle" often means something temporary. Therefore He says, "In My Father's house are many abiding places." John 14:2 But if He anywhere also calls the resting places of the saints tabernacles, He does not call them simply tabernacles, but adds a description. For He did not say, "that they may receive you into their tabernacles," but, "into the eternal tabernacles."" **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *3 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Galatians 6:17

Ephesians 4:30

Philippians 3:11

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What did John Chrysostom teach about Luke 16:9 and unrighteous mammon?” on April 11, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY