

Scripture Study

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



Opening prayer

Amos 8:4-7

(Psalm 113:1-2,4-8)

1 Timothy 2:2:1-8

Luke 16:1-13

Overview of the Gospel:

- In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus continues teaching by the use of parables. He is speaking to his disciples, but the Pharisees are close at hand listening in (verse 14).
- The steward in the parable was probably a servant who served as an agent of goods for his employer. In the process, he extracted usurious amounts on top of the actual transaction amounts. He finds himself about to be out of a job when his master discovers he is wasting his goods (verse 1. See also Luke 15:13).
- Desperate to provide for his future, the steward foregoes his share of the profits, hoping to ingratiate himself to his master's debtors. He thus averts a material crisis using material goods.
- Jesus wishes to show us that we can avert a spiritual crisis both here and the life to come, by also using both the material goods of this world (in almsgiving and supporting the spread of the Gospel) as well as the spiritual goods of prayer, love and repentance.

Questions:

- In the First Reading, what is the approach to material goods that is being condemned by God through the prophet Amos?
- In the Second Reading, why does St. Paul direct Timothy to promote prayer for everyone—especially “for kings and all in authority” (verse 2)? What part of God's plan will this help accomplish (verse 3-4)?
- In Jesus' parable, in what crisis does the steward find himself? What plan does he devise? In light of this scheme, why does the owner commend the steward (verse 18)?
- How does Jesus summarize this parable (verse 9)? What do you think he's commending here? How do verses 10-12 help you understand his point?
- Why would it be important for Jesus' disciples to hear this parable?
- What's the problem with trying to serve two masters (verses 13)? What characterizes the attitude of the Pharisees (verse 14)? How does this parable speak to them?
- How do you view your money: (a) “It's mine, keep your hands off”? (b) “It's my creditors”? (c) “It's God's—I just manage it”? Why? How could you use it for the sake of God's kingdom?
- Who (or what) are some of the masters you've served in the past? What masters pull at you for allegiance now? How do you deal with these pressures in light of your allegiance to Christ?
- How can we use the spiritual goods at our disposal that are available through God's grace?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 952, 2424

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

Oh, how precious time is! Blessed are those who know how to make good use of it. Oh, if only all could understand how precious time is, undoubtedly everyone would do his best to spend it in a praiseworthy manner! -St. Padre Pio

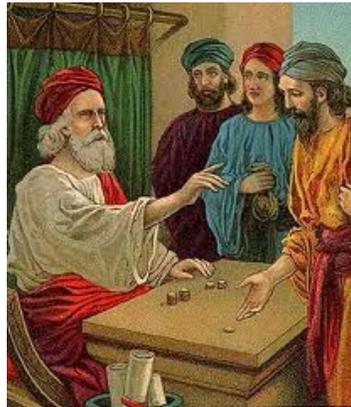
"Either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other"

Scripture: *Luke 16:1-13*

Meditation: What kind of future are you investing in? Jesus seemed to praise a clever manager who used underhanded means to secure a profitable and happy future for himself. Jesus obviously thought that the example of a very clever manager who took thought for his future well-being would be a perfect illustration for anyone seriously interested in securing their future in God's kingdom.

What lesson can we learn from this parable? The dishonest steward is commended for his shrewdness. The original meaning of "shrewdness" is "practical wisdom" or "prudence". It is the ability to deal with a given situation, to see what needs to be done and to do it. A shrewd person exercises foresight, discernment, and judgment (the ability to see through and understand a situation and what will likely happen if he doesn't take appropriate action). Three other parables where Jesus commends this kind of practical wisdom are the parables of the wise builder who built his house on a rock (Matthew 24:7), the wise steward who orders his household well (Matthew 24:45; Luke 12:42), and the wise virgins who remembered the oil for their lamps (Matthew 25:2-9).

Jesus commends his listeners to be wise and prudent not just in the exercise of their material and financial resources, but more importantly in how they use these resources for advancing God's kingdom and the work of the gospel. What we invest our time, money, and material resources in shows what we treasure or value the most. Some invest solely for their own personal advancement, comfort, and security. Some invest for the future well-being of others, such as loved ones or individuals they want to support or help in some way. Jesus warns us to invest in and not neglect what is most important and crucial –



that which lasts forever. When we invest in God's kingdom – his kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17) – we are not only securing our relationship with God for all eternity, we are also promoting the spread of the Gospel and the advancement of God's kingdom on earth. How we invest our lives and resources today has consequences not just for tomorrow or for the rest of our earthly lives but for eternity as well. How invested are you in the kingdom of God and in the things that last for eternity?

Jesus encourages us to be like the shrewd steward who used money generously to make friends and win for himself a secure and happy future. Generous giving is connected with almsgiving – giving financial assistance to those in need (*sell your possessions and give alms - Luke 12:33*). Those who receive alms become your friends because you are merciful to them in their time of need, just as God is merciful to you in your need for his forgiveness and help. True wealth consists not in what we keep but in what we give away. What is the enemy of generosity? It's greed, the excessive desire for personal gain and security. True generosity does not impoverish the giver, but enriches that person a hundredfold! Generosity expands the soul; greed contracts it. God is generous and superabundant in lavishing his gifts upon us. We can never out give God. He shares all that he has with us. Do you know the joy

and freedom of a generous heart and liberal giving to others?

Jesus concludes his parable with a lesson on what controls or rules our lives (Luke 16:10-13). Who is the *master* (or ruler) in charge of your life? Our *master* is that which governs our thought-life, shapes our ideals, controls the desires of the heart and the values we choose to live by. We can be ruled by many different things – the love of money or possessions, the power of position, the glamour of wealth and prestige, the driving force of unruly passions and addictions. Ultimately the choice boils down to two: God and mammon. What is mammon? Mammon stands for material wealth or possessions or whatever tends to control our appetites and desires. There is one Master alone who has the power to set us free from the slavery of sin and addiction. That Master is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Possessions and material resources are a great responsibility. The Lord expects us to use them honestly and responsibly and to put them at his service and the service of others. We are God's servants and all that we have belongs to him. He expects us to make a good return on what he gives us. God loves generosity and he gives liberally to those who share his gifts with others. Love of money and wealth crowd out love of God and love of neighbor. Jesus makes clear that our hearts must either be possessed by God's love or our hearts will be possessed by the love of something else. Where is your treasure?

"Lord Jesus, all that I have is a gift from you. May I love you freely and generously with all that I possess. Help me to be a wise and faithful steward of the resources you put at my disposal, including the use of my time, money, and possessions."

Meditation: © 2010 Don Schwager
www.rc.net/wcc/readings/