

Sunday Message

25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year C • 18 September 2022 • Psalter Week 1

THE QUALITY OF MERCY

LUKE 16:1-13



In today's Gospel, Jesus uses a parable about a steward's sharp practice to make a point about our relationship with God.

The steward has been accused of wasting his master's property. He knows he's about to lose his job and end up with nothing. Back in Jesus' time, losing one's job meant becoming destitute unless you had friends or family to help you out.

Realising he's not able for physical work and too proud to go begging, the steward does some quick thinking. He needs to act, and fast. So he hatches a plan that might provide him with some friends and security in the future.

He calls his master's debtors one by one and cancels or reduces the amount of money they owe his master. He calculates they will be grateful and look out for him when he is jobless. It is an unethical and desperate plan, but it works.

When the master discovers what the steward has done, he is impressed. He praises the steward for being clever enough to know what to do in this desperate situation.

In telling this parable, Jesus isn't condoning improper behaviour. Rather, he uses it to stress the importance of taking decisive action when decisive action is needed. The steward hadn't been doing his job properly and so faced the sack. But when his future security was on the line, he acted quickly. He didn't hesitate. He saw that he needed to act – and he did.

It must be the same with our spiritual life. Our relationship with God is paramount, but we can neglect it and drift along or get distracted by other things. If we neglect our relationship with God, we need to act as quickly and decisively as that astute steward.

We need to be as clever in safeguarding our spiritual future – and the salvation of our souls – as the smart people of this world are when their financial future is in peril. ■

REFLECT

Some years ago in Thailand, a mobile phone ad was designed to touch people's heartstrings. The three-minute video begins with a small boy being chased out of a chemist's by the owner, who has caught him stealing. She forces him to return the stolen medicine and demands to know what he plans to do with it.

It is for his mum, he says.

At this point, a nearby café owner comes over and calms the situation by paying the chemist for the stolen items. He hands the boy the medicine and tells his daughter to get him some food, too. With medicine and food in hand, the boy runs off.

Now the film jumps forward thirty years, and the man is still working in his café with his daughter's help when, suddenly, he collapses. His daughter is distraught as he

lies unconscious in hospital and horrified when she's handed a medical bill for over 17,000 dollars. Numb with shock, she talks to the doctor who's attending to her father. Desperate, she puts her house up for sale to cover the cost.

The next scene shows her asleep with her head on her father's bed. Upon waking, she finds a new medical bill in an envelope next to her. The amount? Zero.

A note alongside it explains that "all expenses have been paid, with three packs of painkillers and a bag of veggie soup".

It turns out the doctor treating her dad is the same boy he helped all those years ago after he stole medicine from the chemist. The debt is cancelled, written off. "Giving is the best communication," states the ad at the end.

Unlike the steward in the Gospel story, who is motivated solely by self-

PRAY

Pray that you will always live in such a way as to give glory to God. Pray that you will always seek to do the right thing.

LEARN

As Christians, we must never let the love of money or any other distraction draw us away from God.

Our relationship with God is of paramount significance in our life.

SAY

Lord, help me to put you first. Never let me drift away from you. Amen.

DO

In these challenging economic times, we are all aware of the threat to our financial welfare. But what about the danger to our spiritual welfare? What action do you need to take to deepen your connection with God?



preservation, the café owner and doctor in the ad were motivated by mercy and compassion. The café owner intervened with the chemist to help the frightened little boy. Thirty years later, when he had the opportunity, the boy returned that mercy.

Mercy is an overriding theme of Pope Francis' ministry. It's an ingredient, he says, that is all too often missing from the Church and our lives. In all our living and preaching, in everything we do, we must show mercy, he says. To not let rules and regulations get in the way of mercy; to not become so caught up in self-righteousness that we forget mercy.

If we seek to practise mercy at all times, we needn't worry about our spiritual future. We will have acted sensibly, prudently, lovingly, as Christians should. Like the steward in the Gospel, we will have acted wisely. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

I am the salvation of the people, says the Lord.
Should they cry to me in any distress,
I will hear them, and I will be their Lord for ever.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who founded all the commands of your sacred Law upon love of you and of our neighbour, grant that, by keeping your precepts, we may merit to attain eternal life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Amos 8:4-7

A reading from the prophet Amos.
Listen to this, you who trample on the needy and try to suppress the poor people of the country,
you who say, "When will New Moon be over so that we can sell our corn, and sabbath, so that we can market our wheat?
Then by lowering the bushel, raising the shekel,
by swindling and tampering with the scales we can buy up the poor for money, and the needy for a pair of sandals, and get a price even for the sweepings of the wheat."
The Lord swears it by the pride of Jacob, "Never will I forget a single thing you have done."
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 112

Response:

Praise the Lord, who raises the poor.
or
Alleluia!

1. Praise, O servants of the Lord,
praise the name of the Lord!
May the name of the Lord be blessed both now and for evermore! (R.)

2. High above all nations is the Lord,
above the heavens his glory.
Who is like the Lord, our God,
who has risen on high to his throne
yet stoops from the heights to look down,
to look down upon heaven and earth? (R.)
3. From the dust he lifts up the lowly,
from the dungheap he raises the poor
to set him in the company of princes,
yes, with the princes of his people. (R.)

SECOND READING

1 Timothy 2:1-8

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to Timothy.

My advice is that, first of all, there should be prayers offered for everyone – petitions, intercessions and thanksgiving – and especially for kings and others in authority, so that we may be able to live religious and reverent lives in peace and quiet. To do this is right, and will please God our saviour: he wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth. For there is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and humankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus, who sacrificed himself as a ransom for them all. He is the evidence of this, sent at the appointed time, and I have been named a herald and apostle of it and – I am telling the truth and no lie – a teacher of the faith and the truth to the pagans.

In every place, then, I want the men to lift their hands up reverently in prayer, with no anger or argument.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Open our heart, O Lord,
to accept the words of your Son.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 16:1-13

(For shorter form read between > <)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

>Jesus said to his disciples, < "There was a rich man and he had a steward who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. He called for the man and said, 'What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of your stewardship because you are not to be my steward any longer.' Then the steward said to himself, 'Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me, what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed. Ah, I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes.'

"Then he called his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, 'How much do you owe my master?' 'One hundred measures of oil' was the reply. The steward said, 'Here, take your bond; sit down straight away and write fifty.' To another he said, 'And you, sir, how much do you owe?' 'One hundred measures of wheat,' was the reply. The steward said, 'Here, take your bond and write eighty.'

"The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness. For the children of this

world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light.

"And so I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into the tents of eternity. > The man who can be trusted in little things can be trusted in great; the man who is dishonest in little things will be dishonest in great. If then you cannot be trusted with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches? And if you cannot be trusted with what is not yours, who will give you what is your very own?

"No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money."

The Gospel of the Lord.<

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive with favour, O Lord, we pray, the offerings of your people, that what they profess with devotion and faith may be theirs through these heavenly mysteries.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

You have laid down your precepts to be carefully kept;
may my ways be firm in keeping your statutes.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Graciously raise up, O Lord, those you renew with this Sacrament, that we may come to possess your redemption both in mystery and in the manner of our life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.