

Sunday Message

25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year C • 21 September 2025 • Psalter Week 1

YOU'RE FIRED!

LUKE 16:1-13

This is an unusual parable. It seems as though Jesus is condoning sharp practice by the steward. In the Palestine of Jesus' time, many large estates were owned by absentee landlords who left the running of the business to a steward (a little like the situation that existed in Ireland for so long).

These stewards usually ran the business to their own advantage. Provided the owner received what he considered a regular income, he wasn't too bothered about any sharp practice the steward might get up to.

In this parable, the landowner decides that his steward's shady dealings have gone too far and calls him in and fires him. Faced with ruin, the steward assesses his options. Hard work is out of the question. So too is begging. Both would entail a loss of status in a community where a person's reputation was paramount. The only option left is to call in all the favours that are owed him.

Jewish law forbade earning interest on a loan. But there was a way around it. The rabbis knew that unless the lender could foresee some return on the loan, he was unlikely to lend money with no hope of reward. This might mean more hardship for the poor who couldn't borrow to get them out of a hard time. The solution went along these lines: when someone wanted to borrow something, they agreed on the amount to be repaid but a larger amount was handed over. The difference constituted the interest.

In the parable we see several examples of this practice. The person who borrowed fifty measures of oil agreed to repay a hundred; the borrower of eighty measures of wheat agreed to repay a hundred, and so on. The extra fifty or twenty was probably the steward's 'take,' as it was he who negotiated the deals. By inviting the borrowers to write smaller sums on their bonds, he is doing them a favour but losing out himself. He is calculating that favours done demand to be repaid. Known perhaps in the past for driving a hard bargain, he is now acquiring a reputation for fair play and generosity, and won't lose out by the rise in his public esteem. If the borrowers have gained a little money, they have also taken on a new obligation to take care of him. He manipulates the money to make friends for his forced retirement.

Instead of feeling cheated, the landowner is forced to smile at the steward's ingenuity. This leads Jesus to comment that 'the children of this world' are more astute business people than 'the children of light'. He goes further in advising wealthy Christians to make the best use of their wealth for the sake of the kingdom. Jesus is no champion of money. He regards it as 'that tainted thing'. Some older translations use an unusual phrase here, 'the mammon of iniquity'. Mammon means something like possessions. On the only other occasion when the word is used in the Gospel (Matthew 6:24), it also points up a tension between serving God and making wealth the centre of one's life.

We need to be astute in our use of material things and not become a slave to them. 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

We know that money makes the world go round. We know the power of Wall Street and big business. We know how seductive it is. Today's Gospel challenges us to think about our attitude to money, power and material things. Jesus is not opposed to money, power or material things. He knows they are necessary. But he says they are dangerous because they can easily lead us astray. They can become our obsession, our goal, our number one focus. They can become false gods. So, like the smart steward, we need to take stock, to rethink our priorities, to consider what's really in our best interest going forward. The steward sought to protect his future by making friends for his forced retirement. We also must protect our future by making sure that it is God – and not money, possessions, fame, self-indulgence or anything else – that comes first in our lives. ■

SAY

"Lord, help me to put you first whatever the cost. Amen."

PRAY

Pray for business and government leaders, that they will use their power and wealth for the common good.

DO

In today's first reading, the prophet Amos castigates the greedy who buy up the poor for money and abuse others for their personal gain. Think about your attitude to money. Do you abuse it? What comes first in your life?



LEARN

Every disciple must make a decision about which she or he loves more: God or wealth.

Christians must never let the love of material things draw them away from God.

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.*

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.
Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end, saying, 'When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances, that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals, and sell the chaff of the wheat?'

The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: 'Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.'
The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 113(112):1-2. 4-6. 7-8. R. cf. 1a. 7b

R: 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 blest 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 dwells on high, who lowers himself to look down upon heaven and earth? **R.**
3. From the dust he lifts up the lowly, from the ash heap he raises the poor, to set them 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 Saint Paul to Timothy.

Beloved: First of all, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

For this I was appointed a preacher and an Apostle – I am telling the truth, I am not lying – a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarrelling.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL 2 Corinthians 8:9

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL Luke 16:1-13

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

(for shorter form read between > <)

> At that time: Jesus said to the disciples, <
'There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, "What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager." And the manager said to himself, "What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses." So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, "How much do you owe my master?" He said, "A hundred measures of oil." He said to him, "Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty." Then he said to another, "And how much do you owe?" He said, "A hundred measures of wheat." He said to him, "Take your bill and write eighty." The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.'

> 'One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful with the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.' <

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

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.*

Or

*I am the Good Shepherd, says the Lord;
I know my sheep, and mine know me.*

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.