



Sunday, Sept 21, 2025

15th Sunday after Pentecost

You're fired. Do you remember those famous words pronounced always by Donald Trump in the TV show called The Apprentice? Yes, well Mr. Trump now has bigger fish to fry. But for the person who is fired, the opportunities are stock. The plug on the dream is pulled and the rug is yanked out beneath you.

Today's gospel lesson is one of Jesus's most unused, unusual parables. People have tried to make heads and tails of it for centuries because it appears as if Jesus is applauding the actions of a crooked man who cheats his employer. How can this be? The story is clear. A rich man with lots of properties and wealth has a competent manager who is squandering his employer's business. He's mismanaging the business and losing money and resources. So, the rich man learns of this and he calls the manager in on the carpet and reads them the riot act and he calls for an audit. And by the way, he says, don't let the door hit you on the way out. The manager sees the writing on the wall and the boss is going to find out the extent of his subpar work and how he's been slacking on the job all the time. So, the manager faces his dilemma. I got a bad back so I can't dig ditches. I'm too proud to beg. I need to keep these business contacts. So, I can be welcomed by them bed and clothed and I can still live comfortably. So as the parable tells us the manager comes up with this ingenious plan, one by one he goes to all the debtors and gives them generous discounts. He reduces their debt by 20%, 50%, the olive oil guy, the weak guy, the carpet guy, the grape juice guy, the big man, all the vendors, he earns their gratitude for the discount and he knows he can bank on their support in the unforeseen future.

Jesus is something important here that the children of this age are shorter in dealing with their own generation than the children of the light. Amos also paints a vivid picture about the corrupt generation that permeated his society, people robbing the poor and needy, leaders who can't wait for the Sabbath to be over so they can return to cheating the helpless, dishonest



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measures and scales, common, the rich enslaved poor people for one piece of silver or a pair of sandals. Not much has changed hazard over the centuries.

Yet Jesus says to learn from this dishonesty, put as much energy into planning for good as they are putting in planning for evil. Jesus wants us to see ourselves as managers of God's wealth which includes everything from our very bodies to nature, the goods of the earth, our talents, our wealth, our money. It all belongs to God. So, will we be good shrewd managers or four managers? The good managers are those who invest their talents in the world and double the return. God wants us to be good managers, to work hard to get a return on the investment. Managers who are honest, generous, hard workers even shrewd clever for the kingdom, willing to invest and keep the kingdom running well in healing the world and making it prosper by gospel standards. So, we are to take risks and invest in the world, not just here in our church or where it is safe, but out there in the world in the community, in the homeless shelters, in our neighborhoods and however we can advocate for righteousness, mercy, justice and peace. We reach out to those who are unchurched because God wants us to invest in this way. We take risks with our resources. We don't hoard them from that person on the subway, help him. The woman with the grocery cart of bottles, stop by her lunch. That hurting, acting out team find a way to get involved because the world's view of riches is self-centered and corrupt.

But, how are we to encounter true riches as we kick off a new season in our church life? How are we to live well as good managers in the kingdom? We are called to be sources of new life for bearers of hope to bring forth the wealth of God's kingdom to all of God's people. These are the true riches that for all of us as managers of the kingdom we need to sign up for. It's either one or the other, Jesus says. We can't serve both God and Man. You know, we live in profoundly disturbing times. There is great disparity between rich and poor. The deeply divided political divisions of our land, the killing of a conservative



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commentator, the firing of outspoken critics under the guise of business. And no matter how you shake it or stand with it, we live in a country that is out of joint. The love of money and greed and power leading us off the edge. Recently, Pope Leo criticized corporate pay packages that offered executives much higher salaries than their employees. And he cited Tesla's possible one trillion compensation package for CEO Elon Musk. The Pope added that the news of Elon Musk going to be possibly the first trillionaire in the world. He says, what is happening? And what's that about? And the Pope adds, if that is the only thing that has value anymore, we are in big trouble. What's big trouble? That CEO pay has soared over 1,000% since 1978 with only a 24% rise in typical workers' pay. What's big trouble? That the percentage increase in the cost of living since 1978 has been close to 400%. And have wages kept up with that? No. Bottom line, we can't serve two masters. One will be loved, the other despised. We cannot serve both God and wealth. We must choose either the world or the kingdom. We must choose what Jesus says true riches. And this is the message underneath all that Jesus leads us to. The worldly cleverness of this honest manager may be admired in the world, but it doesn't cut it by kingdom standards. So today we hear God's voice saying, "You're hired to be my servants in the world." God says, "Be hired to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in both word and deed." God says, "You're hired to bring true riches forth that will proclaim God's love, mercy, and justice and salvation to the world."