

September 18 ,2022

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 16:1-13

This is a very odd teaching moment that Jesus gives His disciples! Upon first reading and hearing it we might wonder, what is the message He is trying to get across to them? Is it stewardship, faithfulness, or the lure of money? Yes to all of it and much more.

Most people are generally good by nature. Nobody is completely good and benevolent. There is always a bit of mischief in us. As someone told me, "You can be good and lead a good life, but leave a little bit of space for the devil." The opposite is also true. Nobody is completely evil. There has to be some good in these people somewhere. So it is with the steward in this morning's Gospel. He is doing evil by stealing from his master. He knows how to do good only when he is challenged. The unjust steward's actions are not condoned by Jesus. The thing that is condoned is his shrewdness. This is the lesson for the disciples. The Christian believer should be shrewd in their pursuit of Godliness. Take the lesson of the steward's shrewdness and apply it to your faith and pursuit of God.

Faithfulness and trust are very interchangeable in this story. It is absolutely essential for the Christian disciple to be trustworthy in small as well as great things. If you cannot be trustworthy in small matters, then the big ones will be too much for you to handle. Jesus uses money as a great example of this. If one cannot handle money, how can you handle the precious spiritual treasures Jesus offers to us. Those are the true riches that are greater than money.

I have often said that we need to be the masters of our money and wealth. Keep it and put it in its proper place. You cannot let money be your master. If that happens one will never be satisfied or at peace. This is another aspect of good stewardship. Good stewardship is managing your money well. Putting it in its proper place and context. Managing it so that it does not become Number One. That place is reserved for God only. Managing your loyalty well. One's loyalty cannot be divided. Our lives are devoted either to God first or money first, but not both.

Reflecting more on the topic one scripture passage jumped out at me. The one where Jesus said, "first seek the Kingdom and all else will be given to you." So if you seek God first all other things will be given to you and fall into place. The Gospel this morning is talking about putting the cart before the horse. The horse being God. I also thought that this was a strange teaching moment and what was being said that was not actually uttered. I came to wonder if this teaching moment was directed at Judas Iscariot. The one who would betray Jesus for

thirty pieces of silver. Was Jesus giving him a heads up that He knew what he was going to do. Was it directed at Mathew the tax collector. Was he being honest with how he collected the taxes? I also thought about the Zealots in the ranks of the disciples. We are told that there was at least two of them. Was Jesus telling them to put God first and not their political ideologies? There is so much here to explore.

So let me be the mischievous devil. As I so often am. Are there places in our lives where God is not present and how do we make Him present? Do I pray in my combine on Sunday morning? Is God truly Number One in my life? I am trying to just make you think. Ultimately that is between you and God. I am such a smarkatch. Pastor D