

Pentecost 15 9/18/22
 Luke 16:1-5 20C

“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.’

I ain't rich, but I sure [do] wanna be
 Workin' like a dog all day ain't workin' for me
 I wish I had a rich uncle that'd kick the bucket
 And I was sittin' on a pile like Warren Buffett
 I know everybody says money can't buy happiness

But it could buy me a boat
 It could buy me a truck to pull it
 It could buy me a Yeti 110 iced down with some silver bullets
 Yeah, and I know what they say, money can't buy everything
 Well, maybe so
 But it could buy me a boat

So, what can money buy you? Oh come, on now, don't be shy!

This morning, we hear Jesus say, “You cannot serve God and money” (v. 13). And we see in the example of the dishonest manager one who serves money, earthly riches, rather than God. And then we hear those words of Jesus, “The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness...make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth (vv. 8-9).

And it's all just plain confusing, isn't it? The Parable of the Dishonest Manager, as our lesson is commonly known, can be a difficult passage of Scripture to understand. It may sound to us that Jesus is telling us to covet, lie, steal, and cheat to get ahead in life. But notice, Jesus is not commending the actions of the dishonest manager nor teaching us that we should follow in his dishonest ways. The focus of the parable is the mercy

of the master. Even when the manager coveted, stole, lied; the master did not even demand that the dishonest steward be punished. Even though his steward is an outright scoundrel, the master is merciful. Jesus is teaching us that like the master in the parable, God is merciful!

“All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee,” we sang in our hymn {LSB 781:1}. But not really, right? What’s the first word any child learns to speak? What was the first word you spoke? “Mine!” And it’s still the word your heart speaks today, when it comes to obsessing over the things of this world.

When you hear these words of Jesus about the dishonest manager, do you know what you see? You see yourself! You are quite shrewd in dealing with the things of this world. We are called to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. But, it’s so easy to fear, love, and trust in the things of this world, isn’t it? God opens His hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing, including you, but you hoard and ignore your neighbor in need. In the weakness of your unbelief, you worry and stew and, because you think God will not give you your daily bread.

You will recall that I mentioned the parable before us this morning can be a difficult passage of Scripture to understand. But, we remember that a parable is a story told to teach a point and the POINT Jesus is teaching us is that God does not treat us as our sins deserve. He is merciful, loving, and forgiving.

Look at the words of Jesus, “If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches” (v. 11)? You and I, My Friends, were the most unfaithful in the true riches that God entrusted to us. And that is called sin, and the wages of that sin is death.

The GOOD NEWS of the Gospel is that Jesus was faithful, for us and for our salvation. Jesus gave up all the true riches of heaven to be born of a virgin and take all true human flesh. And upon that human flesh was laid all our sin and all its wages of death. The very Son of God carried to the cross, upon His own body, all those times you feared, loved, and trusted in money and material goods; all the times you hoarded and worried because you did not trust God to open His hand to satisfy your every need; all the times we obsessed over earthly things; all our sin; and upon the cross extended, He paid the debt of all our sin. And that means you are forgiven.

Did you notice in the parable what the master did after his wasting and his dishonesty? “The master commended the dishonest manager... (v. 8).” That’s what the Father did to His Faithful Steward. The 3rd day, He raised His Son to life again and highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, (cf. Ph 2:9). Risen and ascended, He comes to give us the forgiveness, life, and salvation that He won for us with His innocent suffering and death.

In the water and Word of our Baptism, God the Holy Spirit works faith within us, faith so that we trust, rejoice, and find comfort in Christ alone. And, every day we live out that faith in our thoughts, words, and deeds, serving our neighbor and glorifying God in that service to our neighbor.

We come to the Lord’s Table that we may be fed with the life-giving Body and Blood of Jesus, to be forgiven and strengthened that we may believe God’s Word and live a holy life according to it. And we gladly hear and learn God’s Word, in worship, our private devotions, teaching it to our children, for the words of Jesus are spirit and life.

Which is why, you will recall, you were asked in your Confirmation vows, “Do you intend to hear the Word and God and receive the Lord’s

Supper faithfully?” You were asked that because that is how God does His work in you. And to be a faithful steward of Christ’s righteousness means that you will be faithful in your use of His Word and Sacraments, so that Christ can do His work in you.

Maybe the best way we can think of it is to remember God’s words to Adam in the Garden, before sin ever ruined God’s paradise. God created everything for one reason – to serve the crown of creation, man himself. God breathes life into the man and says to him, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Ge 1:28). That is just another way of saying, in faith, “All that I have is but a trust, O Lord, from Thee”.

There is nothing wrong with having a boat, a pickup to pull it, and a yeti iced done with some silver bullets. Just as there is nothing wrong with having a hot water heater in your home, purchasing eye glasses, and trust me on this one – a winter parka! These are the gifts we receive from the hand of God to ease the burden of life in world cursed by sin and that help us to have fun, enjoy, the gift of life that God has given us, which God meant for us from the very beginning of creation.

The problem begins here – in your heart. There’s this great myth – I would even dare to call it a lie of the devil – that goes like this, “Money is the root of all evil.” Lie. That is not what the Bible says at all. What it really says is this, “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6:10). The “love of money,” that’s the heart that is never grateful, thankful, or content. That’s the green-eyed monster of envy and jealousy when your neighbor gets what you don’t have. That’s why you fear, love, and trust in the riches and material stuff of this world. That’s why you worry and stew and fret and hoard, because you don’t believe God will give you your bread for this day, today.

The Christian life is the life of repentance, which is why we cry in faith with David of old, “Create in me a clean heart of God”. And God does. He gives us a heart free from sin so that we rejoice, give thanks, and are content with the daily bread God has given us for today. In faith, we see all that God has entrusted to us and we sing, “All that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee” (*LSB* 781:1).