

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time - C

I have admit, the plan that the dishonest steward comes up with to save himself from ending up on the street does not seem all that foolproof to me.

What's to keep the people from simply doctoring their invoices as he instructed and then forgetting about the steward somewhere down the road?

Apparently, however, the master does seem to think that the unjust steward has acted in a wise and effective manner.

He's given thought to what to do when the day of reckoning comes and the master gives him credit for being enterprising, and that's really the point.

The steward has made use of his position and knowledge to assure a future for himself.

Jesus tells this parable so that we will give some thought to the resources that we have at our disposal and how they can be used to help us toward eternal life.

There are a lot of different kinds of resources that come into play. The steward did not have money, but he did have particular information and influence and he brought that to bear on the situation.

We might have influence, charisma, material resources, time, a winning disposition—lots of different things we can bring to the table.

Are those resources being used for the sake of our brothers and sisters—are we befriending them with them—and by doing so, attending to our salvation?

As the reading continues, Jesus seems to hone in on the issue of one particular resource, material wealth, and what we are doing with that to foster our future in “eternal dwellings.”

We might be taken aback by the term “dishonest wealth” and wonder what Jesus might have meant by that.

From my reading of the commentaries it seems that the point is not about wealth per se, but about attitudes that can be attached to it.

What Jesus seems to be talking about has more to do with what we would probably call “truth in advertising” than is does with a position that everyone should be poor.

If we fall prey, for example, to the idea that money will make us happy, then Jesus would say to us, “Be careful, there! Money does not have that kind of power. And anyone who says it does is being dishonest.”

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Wealth is not an end. It can only be a means.

Which always brings us back to the question, “a means to what?”

And for Jesus, the “what” is always life in the kingdom of God. That’s where our true happiness lies.

The real question is how does wealth and all our other resources fit into that picture? They don’t have a picture of their own. They have to fit into the picture of God’s kingdom.

One thing that wealth managers do is they have a plan. The dishonest steward had a plan to keep himself out of the gutter: he would ingratiate himself with those who indebtedness he could relieve.

He would develop some goodwill with them in the hopes that they would remember.

What plans to we have? Do any of them give consideration to how our resources can be put at the service of others—those we hope to share eternity with?

If someone is struggling each day to secure their basic needs, that does not give them much time or energy left over to rejoice and give thanks. Can we bring our resources to bear on that?

Or if someone can only realize their potential with a little help from

someone else, it becomes a tragedy when that help cannot be found.

We can put our gifts at the service of those kinds of situations and be confident that the good that is done will not go unrewarded.

You could call this approach a form of “spiritual survival.”

Money is not permanent. It is a passing commodity. If we try to use it to secure our lives, it will fail us. It cannot protect us against death.

Its only legitimate use is as a resource to bind people together as we journey toward the kingdom. If we use it this way, the way God intended, we will have used it well and we will have no cause for shame when we approach the judgment seat of God.