

Sept. 22, 2019 Lk. 16: 1-13 & Amos 8:4-7

www.theark1.com

Connie May © 8/19/19

Drawing with permission by Fr. Robert Beck

Fr. Robert Beck ([subscription](#))

[More Fr. Beck](#) (With permission)

Stone, Naomi. [Listening to the Whispering....](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Private Integrity](#)

[New Melleray Abby Homilies](#)

[Parable of the Unjust Steward.](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

The old saying that those who have the gold make the rules. I wonder with the climate situation we are now in if that holds true anymore. Mother Nature does not care who has the gold and she will make the rules from here on in. The days of putting our thumbs on the scales seem to be waning. Choices have consequences. The old method of making unholy alliances has never worked. Just look back at what the prophets like Amos and Jeremiah preached. When the wealthy are building bunkers to ward off threats to their hoarded wealth, can they breathe the air and drink the water left behind by those of us who only looked to the short term goals? Now is the time to look within to see how trustworthy we are in serving the God we say we believe in. What/who is our "master"?

Luke 16:1-13

1 Jesus told his disciples: "There was a **rich man** whose **manager** was accused of **wasting** his possessions. 2 So he called him in and asked

him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an **account** of your **management**, because you cannot be **manager** any longer.' 3 The **manager** said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My **master** is **taking away** my **job**. I'm not **strong** enough to **dig**, and I'm **ashamed** to **beg**-- 4 I know what I'll do so that, when I **lose** my **job** here, people will **welcome** me into their **houses**.' 5 So he called in each one of his **master's debtors**. He asked the first, 'How much do you **owe** my **master**?' 6 **Eight hundred gallons** of olive oil,' he replied. "The **manager** told him, 'Take your **bill**, sit down **quickly**, and make it **four hundred**.' 7 Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you **owe**?' "A **thousand bushels** of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your **bill** and make it **eight hundred**.' 8 The **master commended** the **dishonest manager** because he had acted **shrewdly**. For the **people of this world** are more **shrewd** in dealing with their own kind than are the **people of the light**. 9 I tell you, use **worldly wealth** to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be **welcomed** into **eternal dwellings**. 10 Whoever can be **trusted** with very **little** can also be **trusted** with **much**, and whoever is **dishonest** with very **little** will also be **dishonest** with **much**. 11 So if you have not been **trustworthy** in handling **worldly wealth**, who will trust you with **true riches**? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's **property**, who will give you **property** of your own? 13 No **servant** can **serve** two **masters**. 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** both **God** and **Money**."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Could our families, friends, neighbors testify to who is my master? How?

PRAYER: Master story teller, you continue to stretch me beyond my comfort level. You know full well that I have my 'thumb' on the scale when I use my privilege to get what I want. Those like the ones in this story have to take what they get also go along with the 'way things go' in order to survive. We collude with each other in order to get along. Help me to recognize when I choose only things that benefit me at the expense others and betray my truth. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

RICH MAN / MASTER: A rich man or a master is a person who has power and can be free to make his own decisions.

How can this parable make you a "rich man" or a "master"?

MANAGER / MANAGEMENT / SERVANT/ JOB: A manager, or a person who has a job, has less power and is delegated to do the will of the one paying his wages.

Are you a manager? If so, what do you manage? How are you getting paid? Who is paying you?

WASTING: To waste something is to squander or neglect something of value.

When was the last time you wasted something? What made you realize that you did that?

ACCOUNT: The manager was called upon to give his reasons for this wasteful behavior.

What is your usual response when someone asks for an account of your wasteful choices? Did you resent the person who called you on it?

TAKING AWAY / LOSE: The master lost because of the wasteful behavior of the manager, now the manager is facing an even greater loss.

Why is wastefulness always a loose/loose situation?

STRONG / ASHAMED: The manager now faces his impotence and shame as he realizes his lack of strength and humility.

If he would have refused to be honest with himself, what might have happened? How does this enable him to take action? Can you remember a time when you were in his shoes? What did you do?

DIG / BEG: The manager now takes a good look at himself and his options. He is realistic about what he is facing unless he does something creative with his situation.

How do you feel about his “solution”? Have you ever found yourself admiring someone who was “worldly wise”? How does your faith prevent you from choosing like the manager did?

WELCOME: When we welcome someone, we say, it is well that you have come. Those who were given the chance to radically reduce their debt because of the manager’s shrewdness, will open their doors when he knocks in the future.

When was the last time you knocked on a door and someone greeted you with; “it is well that you have come”? How did that make you feel?

HOUSES / ETERNAL DWELLINGS: In other translations we find “lasting reception” is used instead of eternal dwellings.

How does the different wording help you to understand this parable?

DEBTORS / OWE / BILL: To be in debt, owe, or receive a bill, means that we have been given something of value and now we have to render payment for that thing or service.

What have you received from this parable? What debt do you owe to this parable?

EIGHT HUNDRED GALLONS / FOUR HUNDRED GALLONS: This debtor was able to cut in half his bill because of the manager’s instructions. Some suggest that the manager cut his commission that he would have made in this transaction.

How can this teaching help you to “cut in half” the time and effort needed to become a “child of the light”?

QUICKLY: Because of the urgency of the situation the manager needs to move swiftly and decisively. Many of Jesus’ parables now have this urgency about them. Time is running out for delay in making up your mind about whose understanding of God to go with.

Where are you in the process of accepting Jesus’ understanding of God?

ONE THOUSAND BUSHELS / EIGHT HUNDRED BUSHELS: Another “break” for another debtor, and another future “friend”.

How many “breaks” have you been given by God? How has this deepened your friendship?

COMMENDED: The rich man recognized quick thinking of his manager who probably increased the rich man’s honor by giving the people a bargain with his shrewdness. Like recognizes like.

How does this affect your feelings about this parable?

SHREWDLY: Shrewdness is a “this worldly” concept. The manager probably wrote off his commission or altered his invoice so that the debtor’s gratitude would pay off for him in the days to come.

Why do we seldom if ever use the word, shrewd, when speaking about faith?

PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD / PEOPLE OF THE LIGHT: If you think this “world” is all you really have the manager’s solution makes perfect sense. If you have “seen the light”, you realize that such expediency is foolish.

How does this parable help you move toward “the light”?

WORLDLY WEALTH / TRUE RICHES: Jesus constantly chips away at the “truth” that this world is the source of our identity and well-being. He points with his parables and teachings to the “true riches”.

In what ways are you worldly wealthy? Does this wealth keep you from the true riches? How?

HATE / LOVE / DEVOTED / DESPISE: In Semitic languages, you often have only this or that types of words to express things. This often sets up an either or situation.

How does this parable set you up for an either or situation?

TRUSTED / TRUSTWORTHY / DISHONEST: Once again we face the either or kinds of words. Jesus invites the listeners to examine themselves, like our manager examined himself.

In what ways does this parable help you to examine yourself? Are you able to be honest with yourself, or do you take refuge in some form of denial? Do you have someone in your life that you can trust to help you in situations where need to look at something honestly? If so, who are they?

LITTLE / MUCH: A third time we face choices. In choosing to open ourselves to Jesus' understanding of God, we can move from little-ness to much-ness.

Has this study time helped you to move from less to more understanding of the parable? Yourself?

GOD / MONEY: Both these realities are sources of affirmation and security. Jesus is setting them alongside each other to make very clear the nature of our choices.

What are your sources of affirmation and security? Where are you at in your process of choosing?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Lk. 16:9 // Lk. 12:33; Sir. 29:12; Lk. 16:10 // Lk. 19:17; Mt. 25:21; Lk. 16:13 // Mt. 25:24;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Amos 8:4-7; [Ps. 113: 1-2, 4-8](#); 1 Tim. 2:1-8; Lk. 16:1-13;

Revised Common Lectionary: Jer. 8:18-9:1; [Ps. 79: 1-9](#); 1 Tim. 2:1-7; Lk. 16:1-13;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

“. . . freedom to choose does not mean freedom to choose the consequences of our choice, for we are living in a universe, not a chaos: we can choose to do this or that, but the consequences of that choice will be governed by the laws of the universe in which we are. It is only if we use our freedom of choice—that is, our freedom to choose without coercion—to make choices in harmony with the reality of things—in harmony with what God is, with what we are and with what all other things are—that we achieve freedom in its sense as the fullness of being.” - Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity*

Lk. 16.1–9: Parable of the dishonest manager. 1: Rich man, see 12.16n. Squandering, see 15.13. 6: Make it fifty, some commentators, but not the parable, suggest the manager was removing the interest charge (Ex 22.25; Lev 25.36–37; Deut 23.19; Ps 15.5). 8: His master (Gk “kyrios,” “lord,” with no possessive), scholars disagree as to whether this “master” is the rich man, or the “lord” (i.e., here, Jesus; 1.17n.). Children of light, Jn 12.36; Eph 5.8; 1 Thess 5.5; 1QM. 9: Wealth, lit., “mammon,” Gk transliteration of a Semitic word for money. The parable defies any fully satisfactory explanation. 16.10–13: Fiduciary fidelity. 11,13: Wealth, see v. 9n. 13: See Mt 6.24. Pg. 134. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

By the mysterious forces of destiny mankind is confronted with a stern dilemma: either to continue its predatory policies of individual and tribal selfishness that lead it to its inevitable doom, or to embark upon the policies of universal solidarity that brings humanity to the spirit for heaven on earth. It is up to every one of us which of the two roads we prefer to choose. Pitirim Sorokin

We are at liberty to be real, or to be unreal. We may be true or false, the choice is ours. We may wear now one mask and now another, and never, if we so desire, appear with our own true face. But we cannot make these choices with impunity. Causes have effects, and if we lie to ourselves and to others, then we cannot expect to find truth and reality whenever we happen to want them.

Thomas Merton, in *New Seeds of Contemplation*

In our Lord's time, a rich landowner generally had a steward that oversaw all of his land, crops, harvest, workers and wealth. It might be somewhat similar to a general manager or an investment broker in today's world. The steward wasn't really dishonest, just basically incompetent, for which the master was about to terminate his employment. John Pilch tells us that there were three kinds of renters in Jesus' day. Some owed a portion of the crop, others were charged a fixed amount of produce, and some paid in money, though that was a fairly scarce commodity at that time. The folks in the story today were obviously those who were being charged a fixed amount. The ingenious steward reduced the amount owed, in order to ingratiate himself to his master's debtors. The debtors were obviously overjoyed, and very happy that they owed the master less. The master could have invalidated the new contracts, but that would have made him look like a scrooge, and the people were already singing his and the steward's praises. In a culture of honor and shame, his honor status would have grown from his generosity. Everyone was a winner. The master had more honor, the steward was commended, and the people owed less debt! The bottom line lesson to the apostles and us seems to be that we are to use our resources and talents, all of which are gifts from God, to make sure that the Lord's kingdom gets extended as far and wide as it possibly can, thanks to our work and cooperation.

Christian ethics is born out of the Bible's promise of the new that is to come, not out of protecting or preserving the old in its inherited and unredeemed state. Ted Peters. *Zygon*. 12/05 Pg. 848

Wealth, which leads men the wrong way so often, [should be] seen less for its own qualities than for the human misery it stands for. The large rooms of which you are so proud are in fact your shame. They are big enough to hold crowds -- and also big enough to shut

out the voice of the poor! ... The poor man cries before your house, and you pay no attention. There is your brother, naked, crying, and you stand there, confused over the choice of an attractive floor covering. ... St. Ambrose of Milan

Trust is the basis of life. Without trust, no human being can live. Trapeze artists offer a beautiful image of this. Flyers have to trust their catchers. They can do the most spectacular doubles, triples, or quadruples, but what finally makes their performance spectacular are the catchers who are there for them at the right time in the right place. Much of our lives is flying. It is wonderful to fly in the air free as a bird, but when God isn't there to catch us, all our flying comes to nothing. Let's trust in the Great Catcher. Henri Nouwen

One of the marks of spiritual maturity is the quiet confidence that God is in control - without the need to understand why He does what He does. - Anonymous

No soul can be really at rest until it has given up all dependence on everything else and has been forced to depend on the Lord alone. As long as our expectation is from other things, nothing but disappointment awaits us. Feelings may change, and will change with our changing circumstances; doctrines and dogmas may be upset; Christian work may come to naught; prayers may seem to lose their fervency; promises may seem to fail; everything that we have believed in or depended upon may seem to be swept away, and only God is left, just God, the bare God, if I may be allowed the expression; simply and only God. - Hannah Whitall Smith

In a country well-governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of. Confucius

Therefore wealth is a hindrance, because it leaves us unprepared for the hardships of life. So, let us raise our children in such a way that they can face any trouble, and not be surprised when difficulties come; let us bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Great will the reward in store for us, for if artists who make statues and paint portraits of kings are held in high esteem, will not God bless ten thousand times more those who reveal and beautify His royal image (for man is the image of God)? When we teach our children to be good, to be gentle, to be forgiving (all these are attributes of God), to be generous, to love their fellow men, to regard this present age as nothing, we instill virtue in their souls, and reveal the image of God within them. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

In Luke's community, the master could be the merciful God, the steward is the Jews, and the debtors are the Gentiles. The implication here is that the Jewish leaders would do well to make amends and build bridges with the Gentiles because their own positions of authority and structure are about to end. Better to have the Gentiles to fall back on than to continue to hold them off as unclean while reaping the benefits from their culture, even if it is in the name of gain for God. In that sense, it is "dishonest." Recall, Luke is desperately trying to get Jew and Gentile to let go of religious and cultural norms for separation so they can sit down together around the common table of faith in his local community, the most real experience of the Kingdom of God. Mr. Rodney Bluml

II Clement 3:5 For thus sayith the Lord, No servant can serve two masters. If therefore we shall desire to serve God and Mannon it will be without profit to us. For what will it profit, if one gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"— 3:17 For the Lord says in the Gospel, "If you have not taken care of what is small, who will give you what is great? For I tell you, that he who is faithful in a very little, is also faithful in much." (Clement was a disciple of Peter, and afterwards Bishop of Rome. Clemens Alexandrinus calls him an apostle. Jerome says he was an apostolical man, and Rufinus that he was almost an apostle. Eusebius calls this the wonderful Epistle of St. Clement, and says that it was publicly read in the assemblies of the primitive church. It is included in one of the ancient collections of the Canon Scripture.)

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies II.34.3* – Therefore the Lord said to those who were ungrateful to him, "If you have not been faithful in a little, who will give you what is great?"

In an article "What Jesus Learned from the Essenes" Magen Broshi says: "Jesus viewed the Essenes as pious simpletons. In the parable of the unjust steward (Lk. 16: 8-9), he says: "For the sons of this world are wiser in their generation than the sons of light (a reference to the Essenes). And I tell you make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitation." Biblical Archaeology Review. 1-2/04. Pg. 64.

Letter of Herod to Pilate the Governor: For the children of the light shall be cast out, for they have not observed the things which were preached concerning the Lord, and concerning his Son. (Contained in a Syriac manuscript of the 6th–7th century in the British Museum)
There is enough in the world for everybody's need but not enough for everybody's greed. Mahatma Gandhi

A society in which consumption has to be artificially stimulated in order to keep production going is a society founded on trash and waste, and such a society is a house built on sand. Dorothy Sayers

The smart ass represents the "people of the world" in Yeshua's story. They start and run the wars, smuggle guns and slaves, and sell drugs. They kidnap and transport women and children around the world for the sex industry. All their products pass seamlessly through customs and immigration. They run the gambling syndicates and other shady deals. Those who use their services provide them with billions. Beehive

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2012. Pgs.166-169.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2010. Pgs 136-139.



Notice our steward in the upper right corner accosting fellow servants to pay what they owe. Both the rich man and the steward appear to be working in collusion.

The Parable of the Unfaithful Steward (oil painting)

Marinus van Reymerswaele (c. 1490-1567)

Bible Review. Summer 2005. Pg. 56.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Mitchell, Stephen. *The Enlightened Heart*. NY. Harper & Row. 1989.

WHAT LASTS: Page 134. **RADISHES:** Page 99.

Aurelio, John R. **Colors**. NY. Crossroad. 1993. **BROTHERS:** Page 127. **THE FISH:** Page 145.

White, William R. *Stories For the Telling*. Minneapolis, MN.

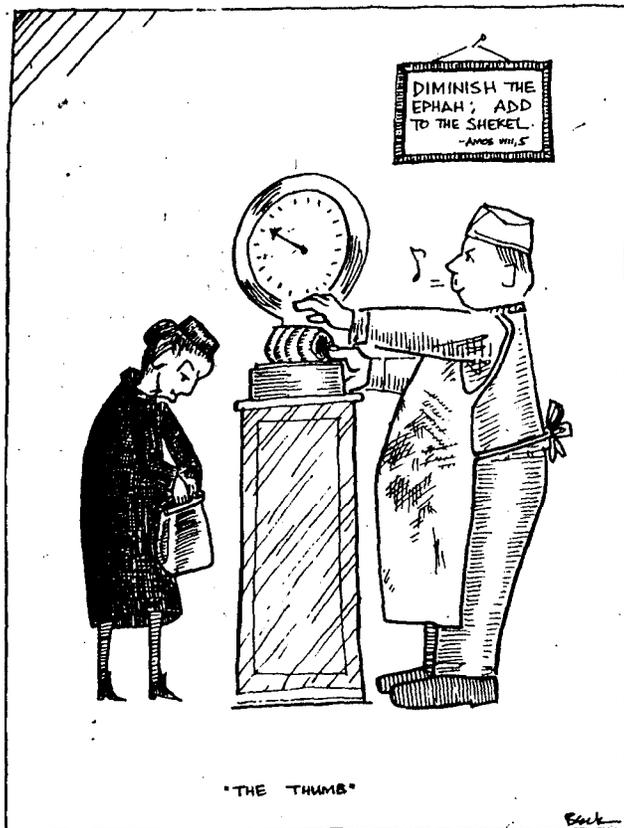
Augsburg Pub. House, 1986. 1986. **THE MISER:** Page 101.

PAINTED GOLD: Page 102-3.

Greeley, Andrew. *When Life Hurts*. Chicago. Thomas More Press.

1988. **LEARNING TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER:** Page 157f.

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/spiritual-reflections/spreading-mercy>



Handout for week of 9/16/19 Lk. 16: 1-13 & Amos 8:4-7

www.theark1.com

Connie May © 8/19/19

Drawing with permission by Fr. Robert Beck

Fr. Robert Beck ([subscription](#))

[More Fr. Beck](#) (With permission)

Stone, Naomi. [Listening to the Whispering....](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Private Integrity](#)

[New Melleray Abby Homilies](#)

[Parable of the Unjust Steward.](#)

Amos 8: Amos 8:4 Hear this, O ye that would swallow the needy, and destroy the poor of the land, 5 Saying: 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? and the sabbath, that we may set forth corn? making the [ephah](#) small, and the [shekel](#) great, and falsifying the balances of deceit; 6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the corn?' 7 The LORD hath sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their works.

COMMENTARY:

Last week I made much of the notion that the prophets, and Amos in particular, were precise in their judgments of the Israelites. They regularly targeted specific groups, charged according to their set responsibilities. Today's passage from Amos seems to belie that idea since the part that identifies those charged has been neatly clipped out of our liturgical selection. The full account of the first verse, including the missing second part, reads thus:

"Woe to the complacent in Zion, to the overconfident on the mount of Samaria, Leaders of a nation favored from the first, to whom the people of Israel have recourse!"

The complacent ones that upset the prophet turn out to be the leaders of the nation God favors. The rationale for Amos's charge is already contained in this snippet, which points out that the leaders are those whom Israel must rely on. They have failed this duty, lining their own coffers at the expense of the people. Their stewardship of the national treasure has been turned to private profit.

Without this information it would give the impression that the prophet is disturbed by fine living, maybe considered to be decadence. It would appear that he dislikes sophistication and aesthetic qualities. Which is nonsense, given the fact that his little poem is a masterpiece of Hebrew poetry, operating in at least three levels of parallelism, the main trope of biblical verse. It doesn't get more sophisticated than this.

But once we know the context, we can see that he is charging those entrusted with caring for God's people with exploiting them instead. It concerns a complacency of power, and not simply a complacency of wealth.

Complacency was Amos's theme, since he could see on the horizon the dark clouds of the Assyrian empire on the rise. And he understood that this could mean difficulties for the Israelite nation. He was correct, but he was ahead of his time. Always a problem for prophets. Fr. Robert Beck. Witness: 6/2/07