

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
(Amos 8:4-7 / Luke 16:1-13)
21.09.2025

Dear brothers and sisters,

The parable that we have just heard is one of the most difficult parables in the gospels to interpret. Sometimes it is called the parable of “**the dishonest steward**”, but this title does not help the comprehension of the parable, because, even if it is true that the steward is dishonest, Jesus does not commend him to us for his dishonesty, but for his ability to turn a situation of crisis into an opportunity, a personal disaster into a shared opportunity. “I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes”. A better title for this parable would be: “**the crafty steward**”, or “**the astute steward**.” This steward has been mismanaging the affairs of the estate confided to his care by his master. When the master learns about it, he convokes his steward and gives him a notice of dismissal. At this point, the steward reflects on his new situation of crisis and thinks how he can face the future now that he is unemployed and has no further income. After having rejected the possibility of digging or begging as a means of income, suddenly he has the idea of making friends with his master’s debtors by reducing their debts. After these transactions they will be in his debt, and he will be entitled to rely on their future kindness.

So it is clear that Jesus is not offering uncritical support of dishonesty, but rather focusing on the urgency and the energy with which a worldly man secures his future at a time of reckoning. Jesus would like to see the-children-of-light-we-are being as astute and even more astute than this steward when a crisis arises in our lives of faith in order to make of these crises opportunities for a better future.

Among the children of this world, we might think, by way of example, of athletes and the training they endure. This is all about discipline of life. It demands of them renunciations of so many things, and requires of them perseverance in order to win! We might also think of those who submit themselves to a mad work schedule in order to succeed... Christ’s disciples are much less exacting with themselves in their run towards “the finishing point, to win the heavenly prize to which God has called us in Christ Jesus”, to quote St Paul in his letter to the Philippians (3,14).

Whether we be single or married, monks, religious or ministers of the Church, the gospel invites us to be as dedicated as athletes are, in our discipleship to Christ who leads us towards the kingdom. To allude to the letter to the Hebrews, we have not yet fought against sin to the point of bloodshed (cf. Heb 12,4).

The gospel asks us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and our neighbour as ourselves (cf. Luke 10,27). What is required of us not so much “to do things” but “to love”. It is love which will tell us what we have to do and which will give us the strength to fulfil it. But the discovery of true love requires from us that we renounce to take everything for ourselves; that we learn to give, and to give freely. The steward of the parable gives, but he does so in order to receive. He is more skilful in making

himself lovable than he is in freely loving others. We are called to freely love others. That is not easy. It requires of us commitment and energy.

It remains that this **astute** steward was **dishonest** with his master's money. How difficult it is to be honest with money! In today's gospel passage, it is stated that money is "tainted". Jesus knows that money in itself is neither good nor bad, especially when it is the fruit of our work, but it becomes good or bad in accordance with what we do with it.

Money is a means, a means which permits us to live, to subsist, to relate to one another, to care for our loved ones, and which permits us to share with those in need. The Monastic Fathers were unanimous to say that monks have to work and sell the work of their hands in order to look after themselves and give alms. But we have to be careful about the way we use our earnings. Money can also be a means which gives us power over others and even affords us the possibility to dominate or manipulate them. So, far from making friends with money, we make slaves out of others. And along the way, we are not far from becoming slaves ourselves, slaves of money!

It is interesting to note that the word "money" which is the common denominator between the different sayings of the second part of today's gospel passage is used as a translation of the word "Mamom" which is a Semitic word which literally means "that in which you put your trust".

"You cannot be the slave both of God and of money or Mamom". Jesus puts us on our guard against those who put their trust in money. They want always more, they are never satisfied. They are enslaved by money. Money is their petty god.

On the contrary, Jesus invites us to put our trust in Him; He who does not enslave us, but sets us free. Jesus invites us to use money according to God's will, that is to say to benefit other people, especially those in need, without manipulating them. Money should help us to love and serve our neighbour.

Money seems to promise more than it is able to give. We count on money to secure our lives, but in fact money is powerless when it is question of giving us happiness or protecting us from death. To be honest, it is not money which is the problem and which deceives us, but ourselves, we who make a wrong use of money. When we make of money an idol, we become its slave. In this case money ruins our relationship with God and with others. Money becomes our master, our god, instead of remaining a means.

All that to say that money is something we have to use but, at the same time, something around which we need to be vigilant. We have to keep a watch over how we relate to money, in case it gets a grip on us and destroys us by becoming our god. At the end of our life, what will count is the person we have been and the good we have done, and not what we have accumulated in material possessions. When money dominates our lives, we easily forget the distant goal of life's destiny: the kingdom of God. Our values become confused and our Christian commitment to God is drained of all its strength. Greed creeps into our hearts, deadens our conscience and dulls our sense of responsibility to the poor. We must ask: Is God taking the first place in our lives? Or is the pursuit of riches a more important consideration for us?

Today's gospel reminds us that we have to get our priorities right. We cannot serve two masters: God and money. Money is a means. God is the one from whom we come and to whom we go; He is our Creator and our Saviour, the reference for our lives. Let us strive to follow Him without compromise.