

25th Sunday: Poverty and Possessions, are they perennial enemies?

What do we treasure most in our heart? Jesus makes clear that our hearts must be possessed by God's love, or it can be easily possessed by the love of something else.

In today's gospel, Jesus seemed to praise a steward who misused his employer's money. What did the steward do that made Jesus praise him? The steward was responsible for managing his wealthy landowner's property. The steward very likely overcharged his master's tenants for their use of the land and kept more than his fair share of the profit. When the landowner discovered the steward's dishonest practice, he immediately removed him from his job, leaving him empty-handed and ashamed to beg or do manual work.

Before the news of his dismissal became public knowledge, the shrewd steward struck a deal with his master's debtors, which won him great favor with the debtors. Since the steward acted as the landowner's agent, such a deal made his master look very generous and forgiving towards those who owed him money. Since the master could not undo the steward's cancellation of the debts without losing face and making his debtors resent him, he praised the steward for outwitting him and making him appear as a generous and merciful landowner.

Jesus obviously thought that the example of a very clever steward would be a perfect illustration for a *spiritual lesson* about God, and how God treats those who belong to him. What's the point Jesus is making through this parable? The dishonest steward is appreciated, *not for mishandling his master's wealth, but for his shrewd provision in averting personal disaster and in securing his future livelihood*. The original meaning of "*shrewdness*" in Greek is "*foresight*". A shrewd person grasps a critical situation with resolution, foresight, and the determination to avoid serious loss or disaster.

Jesus is concerned here with something more critical than a financial crisis. *His concern is that we avert spiritual crisis and personal moral disaster through the intentional exercise of faith and foresight.* If Christians would only have as much foresight and energy to *spiritual matters*, which have eternal consequences, as they do to *earthly matters* which have temporal consequences, then they would be truly better off, *both in this life and in the life after to come.*

Therefore, the central message of the gospel today is that *faith and prudent foresight can save us from moral and spiritual disaster.* As we live in a world of growing spiritual indifference, anger and hate against spiritual and moral values, or desiring to destroy those who promote such values, how much more courageously should we need to stand up for spiritual matters and gospel values? (Charlie Kirk)

The tragic killing of Charlie in Utah 10 days back was motivated by contempt for religious and moral values that he upheld, inspiring many young men and women in college campuses. Many interpret his killing as a statement against Christianity. Those who hate faith think that the Church is weak, asleep and unwilling to resist. This could be a wake-up call. It calls us to strengthening of faith, truth and courage to witness. If we keep quiet and trade conviction for comfort, our silence and inaction would result in our children and theirs future would be left with empty void, lacking purpose and values.

The gospel teaches us today that - true wealth consists not in what we keep, but in what we give away. Our possessions are a great blessing as well as a great responsibility. *Our God loves good stewardship and generosity.* The Lord expects us to use them honestly and responsibly, and to put them at His service and the service of others. We belong to God and all that we have, is His as well. He expects us to make a good return on what he gives us, as gifts and talents.

Today, Jesus makes us clear that our hearts, above all must be possessed by God's love, otherwise it will be possessed by the love of things that last very short.

Amen.