

Sermon September 21, 2025
Luke 16:1-13

Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management because you cannot be my manager any longer.'

Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.'

So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.'

Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.'

And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly, for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.

And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone they may welcome you into the eternal homes. "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If, then, you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?

No slave can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Wisdom Calling

Today we hear Wisdom calling. Her words echo through city streets and church sanctuary. Our reading ended as she began to speak. Here now her prophetic call:

Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.
At the busiest corner she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?
Give heed to my reproof;
I will pour out my thoughts to you;
I will make my words known to you...
those who listen to me will be secure
and will live at ease without dread of disaster."

Thousands of years later, this call beckons us to do things in a new way. Too many people still don't listen to God's holy words of justice, peace and wholeness. Too many people live in poverty; too many people die in violence... too many wars, too many people left behind. And our leaders? Like those in the prophets' time... and Jesus' time and Paul's time... they seem powerless to bring about the change we need. From the national level to the local level, no one heeds the warnings of prophets and people of faith, as we cry out for true justice and kindness.

The problems that face our society seem overwhelming: high poverty rates, increased tensions that divided families, congregations and our country, job

insecurity, rising heroin addiction, mass shootings, and global migration spurred on by climate changes.

As we look around in despair, we listen for Wisdom's calling voice, wondering what we can do.

Now you may ask, what does this have to do with rejoicing and welcoming? Today is supposed to be a day of celebration. Why all this bad news?

Look around... here we are, a community woven together in faith. Some here have family roots that reach deep down into the history of this community... others found this place more recently. We are a congregation that embodies extravagant welcome. There is so much to celebrate. Even in these troubled times... especially in these troubled times! God needs us for such a time as this.

I think if we stop and listen, we will hear Wisdom calling... urging us to keep the faith... calling us to a time of radical transformation.

And that sacred transformation occurs in the most unlikely places. Jesus tells the story today of a dishonest manager who has cheated both his boss and the poor families who lived on the land for years. This is a man in need of radical transformation, and he doesn't even know it. When his job is threatened, he realizes that he must act quickly. All of his actions are meant to save his own skin, and yet he is able to change the day-to-day lives of the poorest in his community. Through the forgiveness of debts, he is able to "do justice," as the prophet, Micah, proclaims, "and to show kindness." He isn't quite ready to walk humbly with his God, but he's closer than he realizes. He acts in the right way, even though he has the wrong intentions. No matter why he does it, people's lives are still changed for the better. This selfish man was able to bring about wholeness.

If he can do it, imagine how much we could do for our world! God needs us to act!

Wisdom calls out to those who are foolish or deny information or knowledge. Wisdom calls out to those who stay within their own bubble and react with anger or hatred towards their neighbors. Wisdom calls out to us to do things in a new way.

"I will pour out my thoughts to you;
I will make my words known to you...
those who listen to me will be secure
and will live at ease without dread of disaster."

God's Wise Spirit knows that all over the world –in Ukraine and Russia; in Israel and in Gaza. In Haiti and Rwanda... and right here in Maryland... there are parents and grandparents longing for a different way for their children and community. They are turning to people like us, hoping against hope that we can find new and creative ways to change the world. They want us to use our hearts, but also our brains and our voices and our ears and our hands and our feet... your whole body. They want us to use the whole Body of Christ to bring about God's vision of a Beloved Community of Justice, Kindness and Sacred Love.

Today Jesus sides with those mothers and fathers crying out for their children, and for the world in which that child will live or die. Jesus tells a story where "the master" begins by going along with justice for the poor because the crowds cheer and thank him, and suddenly finds himself changed for the better, forever.

It is here, in right action, that we encounter the One who was present at the moment of Creation, and who wants every child to have a chance to live and love and be a part of God's mission in the world. To do justice, show kindness and walk humbly with our God.

It matters. It all matters. What's in my heart matters and what's in your heart matters. Our hearts are a gift from God... But it is not enough. Our hearts are not God's only gift to us. God gave us brains to think and voices

to call for change; arms and legs to go out and do the hard work for the Kingdom.

We have the opportunity to change the world and to change people's lives, with everything that we do.

If a dishonest and selfish manager can do it, how much more can we do as the people of God who have already received real Grace? How many lives can be changed in the light of Jesus' love for us?

Wisdom is calling out to us... will you listen to her sacred voice?

Amen