

Homily. 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.C 21/22 September 2019.

The way that stewardship worked was that the steward took care of the everyday dealings of his master; his boss. In Jesus time, it was common for a steward to add a little to the boss's debt, charging the debtor this extra so as to supplement the steward's income. Cheating like this wasn't supposed to happen, but it often did. Not a lot has changed, has it?

In the parable, this time directed to His disciples, the steward's dishonesty and cheating came to the notice of his boss who decided to sack him from his employ. Nothing new here either, except today if we're caught we'd probably end up in court on fraud charges. This particular steward, however, was street-smart. He knew he couldn't take up the physical demands of manual labour, nor would his pride let him go begging on the streets at a time without any social security. Using his wits, he called in the debtors and reduced their bill by the amount that he'd added for his own gain, in the first case by 50% and in the second by 20%. It's this practical wisdom, this astuteness in his dealings, that the master praises.

Last weekend I said to you that every parable of Jesus has a twist in its tail and that we need to be on the lookout for this twist, when we read and listen to them. In many ways this is the most twisted parable of them all; a thief, cheat, fraud and scam artist who ends up being praised not, obviously enough, for his cheating and scamming, but for his foresight and common sense in looking after his own future. He was a flawed person in an imperfect world, but he was also astute enough to navigate his way through the maze and mess in which he found himself living.

Jesus says that we, His disciples today, need a good dose of this astuteness, foresight and common sense as we make our way through and have our dealings in this same far from perfect world.

Money and possessions, what Jesus calls 'these tainted things' and our proper use of them is part of this equation. We're not being asked to defraud and cheat our way through life, but we are being put on notice, that our money and goods are temporary gifts entrusted to us. They are most wisely and astutely used to ensure that we have friends to welcome us when our cash dries up and our possessions lose their relevance.

I've long believed that those people who have not, will one day rise up and take from those who have. History has shown us this much, time and again. Helping the 'have nots' now is both a generous and a smart move. It's clear that our climate is changing. We only have to stick our heads out the window to see that much. Investing today in goods, services and policies that will help mitigate our input into this environmental crisis is at the same time both a responsible and astute course to take. Human life from its beginning to its end, is being challenged and legislated away as we speak. Advocacy through prayers and our practical care, our petitions, marches, votes, and by making the cause of life and what's needed to properly protect it known to our political representatives, is morally just as well as a wise defense of our own rights to life. Justice demands such things of us. Now is our time for such astuteness in our worldly dealings as the trustworthy stewards of Christ and His Good News.