

## Homily for the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time – September 23, 2007

If you find this gospel passage a little confusing,  
then that just means you were paying attention!

St. Luke seems to want to squeeze into one place  
a variety of sayings about wealth and money  
and he attaches them to this parable of Jesus  
the story of the shrewd steward.

So we might walk away,  
scratching our heads, wondering:  
what's the difference between dishonest wealth and true wealth?  
Who is the trustworthy steward and who is not to be trusted?  
Are we supposed to hate money or make friends with it?

It's not surprising  
that the words of Jesus in the parable are drenched  
in the customs and economy of ancient Mediterranean culture.  
Jesus always spoke out of his own times,  
but he spoke a word intended for all times.  
What, then, are we to make of his words in our times?  
You can boil the whole message in this passage down to three words:  
*Money Isn't Everything!*

Yes, these verses are filled with references to  
stewardship, wealth, accounting practices, debt and discounts,  
financial networking and even some retirement planning.  
But even while Jesus counsels us to be honest and even crafty  
in dealing with money, he's calling us to be wise in preparing  
- not for that retirement condo - but for that "eternal dwelling,"  
the place he has reserved for us in the kingdom.

In reminding us that we can't serve two masters,  
that we can't serve both God and wealth,  
he's asking us to look at the attention and time we give  
to the complexities of financial planning  
and to compare that with how we are prepare and plan  
for our spiritual health and future.

Another way of getting at that would be to ask,  
"If I were to approach my financial responsibilities  
the way I approach my spiritual responsibilities,  
what kind of shape would my finances be in?"

In which “future” am I most fully, carefully invested?  
The future reported in the Wall Street Journal?  
Or the future reported only in the balance column of my heart?

And here’s the really hard part:  
Jesus says we have to choose between the two!  
Only one master – and no option for co-masters.  
Not that we need to abandon the one:  
this passage green lights good stewardship of our resources.  
But Jesus does say we have to make a choice between God and money,  
and let one, and only one, be the master of our life.  
Which one... whom do I serve?

Making this difficult choice a little easier,  
Jesus invites us here, every week, to his table,  
to form us in his word and to give us a taste, in the Eucharist,  
of that peace that never depends on the market’s variables.

Our greatest wealth is love and love cannot be bought or sold,  
it can only be served and shared.

*- Rev. Austin Fleming*