

Sunday September 18, 2022
25th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Parishioner Reflection

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A challenging set of readings! Jesus puts a difficult scenario in front of His disciples. Our main character, the steward of a wealthy man, is trying to establish new prospects given that he will be shortly out of work. His action to ensure his master's debtors are now indebted to him is celebrated by his boss, the rich man. This quality of shrewdness or ingenuity is seen as positive by the rich man. And the quality is also seen as useful in the eyes of Jesus. Jesus is aligned with the view of the rich man. Not what we would expect? What's the lesson here?

Perhaps we need to look more closely at what Jesus might be pointing us to. We always forget that what we have – our strengths and all our possessions are gifts, despite what we may think about how hard we've worked or studied to achieve these. Everything is pure gift, the overflowing generosity of God. Can we apply these gifts with as much ingenuity as the steward did but in the service of a greater good, not our personal ends or projects that fill our own barns? If we harness our energy and determination and apply our gifts to God's purpose, to the care and uplifting of others, what could be accomplished? Contemplate this - if with complete devotion, each of us used our gifts for only the good of others rather than ourselves, would not our families, communities and world be completely transformed?

Amos points to the fact that our deeds that hurt and take advantage of others are not forgotten. They have lasting impact and reverberate far beyond the deed itself. With how much ingenuity and effort are we acting to address the difficult situations of those around us? Do we note the problem, say a prayer, and move on. Or do we offer up our resources and talents in ways big and small to truly live the commandment to Love one another.

No slave can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and wealth. We get so turned around and caught in our own worries, agendas, and perceived needs. And as we accumulate even a little power or influence – in families, in friend circles, or at work – how do we use it? And in our institutions of government, health care, education – how do we use our power and influence?

Timothy reminds us that we must pray for kings and all who are in high positions. Such timely words with the death of Queen Elizabeth and King Charles assuming the throne. Power and wealth can do good but the temptation to use it to feather our own nests is so strong. And the stories we tell ourselves to justify our actions keep us locked away from truly challenging ourselves on who the master of our heart truly is. It's a humbling moment when we gain insight into our unconscious motives that drive our use of power, our pursuit of wealth. And what a

grace to hear and absorb the difficult lessons of this week's readings and move a little closer to living the demanding call to give all we've been given in service of Love.