

The Gospel, the parable today, perhaps the most shocking of all parables. The manager's stealing from his master. The master discovers this, gives him notice of termination. Then the manager steals more; buys favors at his master's expense. We'd expect the Master to condemn him, you certainly would; but instead commends him for shrewdness- that is: smart judgment, sharp practical sense, clever awareness in a difficult world.

Parables of Jesus reveals the heart of God and His Kingdom. They're meant to proclaim the Gospel; bestow the theological virtues: faith, hope, and love. Fervent zeal is the point. We are to be generous and forgiving, merciful and hospitable. **Go and do likewise.**

The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. See, the unrighteous sons of this world are better at living according to unrighteousness than the people of God at living Godly lives. Mimic this zeal. Like when unrighteous Muslims are offended by misuse of their god's name, how often are we offended when God's name misused?

Look at you, as with the manager. Has the Lord not given enough to you -your body and soul, money, time, property, vocation and family—all of these you've abused, misused. To deny this is to deceive yourself. Repent. Work to be shrewd as a child of the light.

Do not to behave as the world does by accumulating wealth to serve yourselves. The love of money, love for things never satisfies. Use worldly gifts in service to God, to others. You own nothing. Be faithful managers of the things you're given. Be generous and forgiving, merciful and hospitable. Jesus commends, **Go and do likewise.**

Will you be faithful in what you are given? Pray you will. You have nothing to earn by doing good. That's what makes you free, free to do good. The Lord has provided all things; suffered for every single greedy, self-centered, idolatrous, money loving narcissist in the world; paid what you owe.

For by this parable you see God's character, the Kingdom of God- where goods are given away for free, debts canceled; liars, cheats, thieves as you -are forgiven and loved.

Has God not done enough, given enough to you? In a love consuming sacrifice, a love that suffers your constant abuse and betrayal, a love so pure it has no limits, a love that cancels your countless debts, ends death, adopts you rebels, as sons and daughters as dear children of

light. Be shrewd -You are to be generous and forgiving, merciful and hospitable. **Go and do likewise.**

We need to think like St. Lawrence, pastor, 1970 years ago this week. A time when Christians could be summarily executed in the world. Roman Emperor Valerians orders Lawrence, in 3 days bring all the treasures of the Church to him. Lawrence then returns, "here are all the treasures." It was people- the poor, sick, lame, people the church serves. Lawrence spent 3 days giving away all the Church's money. Valerians wasn't amused, orders him burned. While the flames were reaching, Lawrence, mockingly said, "you can turn me over, I'm done on this side." His last words, from Nehemiah, **the joy of the Lord is my strength.** Someone who you will meet in heaven. His memory emboldens so many.

You see this even in your life, when life-changing events happen, how the priority of what truly matters in life takes a different, sharper focus. On Christ, His gifts, His care. True eternal treasures.

Who will entrust you with true riches? He tells you where true riches are found, so you don't have to wonder, search for them. True riches poured out for you here- Word, Sacraments. What other true treasures are there?

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? You are appointed to die then comes judgment. Yes, the day will come that you, as His manager, will give an account of your work before the Master. You're like the dishonest manager in the parable. Caught red-handed, caught wasting the master's goods. Should the manager be punished? But that's precisely the point. Like the shrewd manager, you are dependent on your Master's means for salvation. He is merciful.

For you have a mediator between God and man. What will you say before the Almighty? You will rejoice and have nothing to fear before the Master. For you will say, "I am baptized! I belong to Christ. His works are mine. A ransom paid for my debts. He made me His own. He has named me. Holy Blood cleansing me." And touch the nail scarred hands, fall down and cry, **my Lord and my God.** And after judgment, come the words, **Welcome, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Welcome, dishonest manager, justified completely by Me.**

The shrewdness Jesus commends is centered in, defined by His mercy and forgiveness, faithful and generous. **Go and do likewise.**