

During the funeral service of a stingy rich man when the casket was about to be closed his wife came forward and put an envelope inside the casket. Many were surprised what on earth she may be putting in the casket.

During the funeral dinner some of relatives could not hold their curiosity and asked the widow, "What was in the envelope you put in the casket?"

She explained, "On his death bed Tom had me promise that I was going to put all his money in that casket with him. And as a good Christian and loving and caring wife I fulfilled my promise."

"Are you crazy enough to put all that money in there with that stingy old man," some relatives asked.

Yes, I did, she told.

"You mean to tell us that you put every cent of his money in the casket with him?"

"I sure did," said the wife. Casket would have been too small to hold all the money in cash. So, I wrote him a fat check. It is up to him to cash the check."

We may laugh at the foolishness of this rich old man, who wanted to take all his earthly possessions in order to secure his future after death. Perhaps, some of us fall in the same category. On the other hand, we may praise the shrewdness of this widow - how she kept her promise as well as saved her husband's money for her own future.

Main theme of today's gospel is securing our future by proper use of god given resources.

Today's Gospel gives a similar example of the cleverness and shrewdness of this crooked but resourceful manager to secure his future.

By presenting the parable of the wicked steward, Jesus is not commending or praising his malpractices. The point Jesus making is that we all ought to be as foresighted and prudent in planning ahead for our spiritual futures as this steward did to secure his own material future. Jesus was presenting His followers with the example of the zealous foresightedness of the wicked steward and wishing that His own followers would be at least as enterprising in caring for the future of their souls.

Today's readings remind us that we are God's stewards and that God expects faithful and prudent stewardship from us. They challenge us to use our God-given talents and blessings wisely to attain Heavenly bliss. "I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."

Possessions are only on loan to us, and in time we must leave them all behind. "Naked I came from my mother's womb," (Job 1:21), "and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away."

St Paul once wrote that “The love of money is the root of all evil.” He does not say that *money itself* is the root of all evil, but rather the *love of money*.

Of course, money is needed as a means of exchanging goods in every organized society. But a person can become its slave through excessive love of money. It can become a substitute for God in one’s life.

As my story clearly tells no one can take the money in the casket. Even if, we stipulate in the last will that our wealth also should be buried with us in the casket our family members will find some way out to fulfill the last will and keep the money for themselves as this woman in my story did.

We are good stewards if we use our earthly wealth wisely - when we spend it for our own needs in moderation and when we love and help the needy around us, for those are the purposes for which God has entrusted all these things to us

Our stewardship should not be limited to helping our parish but rather extend beyond and include charities and mission works across the globe. With many international priests working in the diocese, you have many chances to expand your stewardship to the world.

Remember only check you can cash in heaven is the stewardship check, check showing how you used your possessions in helping and serving others.

May be verse 9 of today's Gospel may well have inspired the epitaph found on a tomb stone. "What I kept I lost. What I spent I have. What I gave I have." The Jewish book of Talmud has this saying, "We are born with our hands clenched. We die with our hands open. Entering life, we desire to grasp everything. Leaving the world all that we possess slips away."