

The 15th Sunday after Pentecost

“A shrewd reveal!”

Luke 16: 10-12

September 21, 2025

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 15th Sunday after Pentecost is from Luke 16:10-12.

“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will you commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, how will you give you what is your own?”

So far the text:

Our loving God and Master, Father, Son and Holy Spirit truly is the giver of all riches – temporal and eternal. He provides us with our daily bread and enjoyment of earthly wealth for the short time that we are on this earth. But more importantly, He provides us with true riches that **“where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”** These true riches are the gift of salvation of knowing Jesus as your Lord and Master – Your Good Shepherd as we heard last week, who willingly laid down His life for the lost, lovingly seeks out the lost, and restores them to His Kingdom of grace.

As we heard last week, all people are lost because of sin, conceived in sin, and serve the master of all sin, the devil until the True Master rescues them with His true riches of the Gospel of forgiveness.

So, we heard Jesus tell the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin in chapter 15. There was much rejoicing in heaven with all the angels over one sinner who repents and rejects the false master of the devil and the false god of mammon, and turns to the true Master, the Triune God, and the eternal riches of heaven!

Jesus told one more parable of lostness in chapter 15, the parable of the prodigal son. This son made his inheritance his god, left his father and spent it all on wild, sinful living. With his money he gained friends who were all glad to use his money as well. But when it was gone, for temporal riches will end, so also his friends disappeared and he was left with nothing, wishing to eat the pods that the pigs ate. God's law shrewdly reveals the end result for all people who put their trust in the false god of mammon.

Yes, there was some "breaking in and stealing of riches" going on. The master of this parable found out about it and called the wicked servant to give an account. He was fired for stealing. He was in a predicament. How will he survive now? Shrewdly he comes up with a plan. More deception. More stealing. Before the debtors can find out about his firing he calls them in and talks like he still serves his master. "How much do you owe my master?" Without authority or approval he reduces the debt, further stealing from his previous master. Why? To gain earthly friends who will help him when he's out of work. Scratch your back, and you scratch mine.

Well, news of this got back to the master and the steward's shrewdness is revealed. His cleverness is noted. Such is the deceiving heart of the unregenerate person who cares only about himself, and will do anything to try to advance his cause legally or not. We hear about it in the news all the time – just this week drug lord ships were bombed. There are so many examples of "shrewdness" and corruption that happen every day – insider trading, hacking and theft of peoples' money, and sadly theft of another's life by the hand of a sniper.

Yes, Charlie Kirk's memorial is this afternoon. The man who asked people to prove him wrong in spirited debate, and used God's word as his authority, was stolen from his wife and children and many others who loved him. Unable to counter the truth, a sniper shrewdly thought that he could get away with it. His justification for murder – "some hate can't be negotiated out". Tyler Robinson made himself a god who thought he had the right to take another's life that only God can do.

Of course, nothing gets past our true Master, God. And all people must give an account to Him. Sinful living results in the ultimate dismissal. You're fired! You're excluded from heaven and must spend eternity with the devil in torment. All of us have come short of God's law. The pharisees themselves, who were lovers of money, heard this parable also and it hit home for them. Does it hit home for each of us? It should, because we have also at times served ourselves rather than God, and not used His temporal riches according to His God pleasing ways.

God shrewdly reveals His law to our hearts. And that causes us much grief and consternation. The goal of God's law is repentance...that there may be much rejoicing in heaven.

And in the parable of the prodigal son, there was repentance. He returned home, not expecting to be welcomed into the family again, but only hoping to be a hired servant. But then comes the shrewd reveal of God. Then comes the glorious reveal of the Gospel. For the father welcomes his son home, hugs him and kisses him and throws a party for him! The son that was lost is found! Let's rejoice!

How could God possibly love us and throw a party for us after we have not been faithful with the gifts He has given us? The answer is that God has been faithful – always faithful! And in His loving heart, He shrewdly came up with a plan to welcome us back into His family. He gave us His only Son, Jesus to pay for all our sins. The cost of this sacrifice was immeasurable – the blood of Jesus was shed for us on the cross. And God shrewdly defeated the devil and his power over us because of the law. For Jesus kept the law perfectly in our stead.

God offers these true riches to all people. He calls us to repentance. And through His Word and Sacraments God calls us to believe in Jesus and then serve Him alone. What a shrewd plan. What foolishness! But the wisdom of God is foolishness to the world, to the unbeliever, but gladness and joy for all who receive His mercy.

Who becomes our friend through this gift of mercy? Jesus, friend of sinners. He is the only true and faithful friend. He calls us by the Gospel of salvation in our baptism and puts His name upon us...baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through simple water and His divine Word, God makes you part of His family. Baptism is the shrewd reveal of God's love for you. He does all for you. 100%.

There are some signs that have been held up at Charlie Kirk's vigils by those who loved him and want to take up his mantel and continue his work. The signs say: "I am Charlie Kirk". His legacy lives on through me. And that is to be commended.

But in a more important sense, in our baptism, we proclaim "I am a child of God". And God lives through me. In baptism one receives God's name. One is adopted into God's family. Jesus is my Brother, my Friend. He shrewdly reveals His true riches of salvation to the believer through through simple water and divine word.

Forgiveness of sins, new life, freedom from the accusations of the devil, freedom from your guilty conscious, freedom from death...all this is given to you by Your true Master, God. And then God calls you to be faithful with these riches. Be shrewd with them. Not squander them. Not bury them. Use them for your own good and the good of others.

Faithfully use them, by coming regularly to church, receiving the sacrament of the altar, the other sacrament that Jesus instituted to convey His riches which He won on the cross. Your remission of sins! Sometimes we think we are strong enough that we don't need what Jesus knows we need, and commands us to receive. Do this often. Shrewdly plan to make this the priority of your week, coming to His table and hearing Him say to you, "Take eat, this is My body given for you. Take drink, this is my blood shed for the remission of your sins. Go in peace." Through simple bread and wine with His divine word, God shrewdly reveals His forgiveness to you!

He has given you true riches and calls you to be faithful now in all you do. He calls you to be shrewd in your service to Him and others, making friends with the Gospel riches by supporting the work of His ministry. He calls us to use our riches, our time and our talents for the good of others, not just myself, that His kingdom would come to others and others would repent. And that there would be much rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents, one prodigal son who comes home to God!

There are only two masters and you cannot serve them both. In gladness, let us serve the one True Master, our Triune God who has given us all things in this life and eternally through our Friend and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)