

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

[Reading I: Amos 8: 4-7](#)

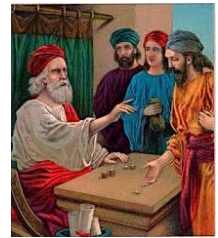
[Responsorial Psalm 113: 1-2, 4-6, 7-8](#)

[Reading II: 1 Timothy 2: 1-8](#)

[Gospel: Luke 16:1-13 or 10-13](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/091822.cfm>



Unknown artist, 1906

The parable that Jesus presents opens up a way of viewing life. The focus of life can either be realities of daily life or those of the ultimate goal of life. The daily needs of life symbolize the short term. While the long-term is exemplified by serving God. Jesus uses irony in presenting this to the disciples.

The disciples are the stewards. They have many concerns about their well-being; like most people, they can become fixated on having enough. When one looks for value and worth in assets and possessions, one is focused on the temporal that will pass away. A person cannot serve both "mammon" (money and property) and God, the source of eternal life.

There are a variety of ways to understand the actions of the steward. Generally, stewards received a commission from those who rented the owner's land. The steward may be renouncing his commission, which would have been favorable to the renters. In a society where the expectation was if I do something for you, you owe me something in return, one form of debt to him (his commission) is replaced with another debt (you owe me something). The amount that rental farmers owed a landlord could also be renegotiated depending upon the growing season and expected harvest. The steward shrewdly has the renters rewrite the terms so that his hand is not involved.

The ancient view was that there is a fixed amount of resources. If one gains wealth, one has taken it away from someone else. New wealth cannot be manufactured; it can only be stolen or defrauded from someone. This understanding gives background to the title, "dishonest wealth." Jesus teaches that wealth should be used to benefit others. Deuteronomy and the prophets place an obligation to assist the poor. Wealth is also transitory; it is not permanent in anyone's life. Using it to benefit others and build relationships expresses Jesus' ideal.

The steward in the parable does this, and Jesus calls the disciples to approach wealth similarly. It will not be a source of safety and security, but it can be used to help others and build relationships. Wealth needs to be seen in terms of the temporal, while the disciple's attention should be on the eternal. Jesus praises those who know how to use wealth for the greater good.

For disciples, the central question is whether one lives fully or just gets by. It is a question for contemporary society. Does one's work bring life or sap life out of a person? Is one's life bringing forth the best, or is it shutting a person off? The work of many in corporations is just filling a slot in a bigger organization. This leads to a focus on what one has. Focusing on meaning, purpose, and fulfillment of goals is done in harmony with the Spirit, who draws people closer to God and one another.

Amos was a prophet in the eighth century before Jesus. He lived in the southern kingdom of Judah, where he worked as a farmhand. God called Amos to travel to the northern kingdom to open them to the dangers of greed and abuse of the poor. He confronts them with making the measurements smaller in selling things and making their payments less than the just amount. They include the inedible portions of the plants in the grain that they sell. Even on feast days and the Sabbath, when their attention should be on God, they focus on new ways

to make a bigger profit. Amos's words raise the same issue about the real value of wealth and its use, as does Jesus' parable. Abuse of the poor is shortsighted, while care for the poor builds relationships and strengthens life.

The second reading addresses stewardship differently. The author presents all in authority as being stewards. God ultimately holds power, and all in any position are stewards of God's power. Whether great or minimal, God has entrusted us with power and resources for a mission. Everyone should therefore pray for those in authority that their use of power may be for the common good. In this way, God's reign will be manifest in life. Thus, everyone will be free to pursue the mission of Jesus and the goal of eternal life when people can live in peace and harmony.

Reflection Questions:

How are the poor being trampled by the wealthy? What can you do in your life to avoid doing this?

How do possessions limit your availability to family members or others?

What is the difference between being a steward of possessions and owning them?

What is your attitude about praying for civil authorities?

How do you understand the actions of the unjust steward?

Themes

Economic and Social Justice

Wealth and the use of possessions

The messages of Jesus and the Prophets on care for the poor

Prayers for Civil leaders

Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that we may be good stewards of the gifts that God has given us, use them for God's glory, and never be possessed by our possessions

For the grace of diligence: that we may follow the command of Christ and use our gifts to bring forth God's reign by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and caring for the sick

For the development of ethics and honesty in business: that the Spirit will guide all business leaders in implementing just practices and products that are beneficial to the common good

For the President, Governors, Mayors, and all who exercise civil authority: that they may faithfully fulfill their obligations and nurture peace, justice, and good order in society