

HOMILY SUNDAY 25-C (Homily 02)

“Living the Gospel Shrewdly”

(Amos 8:4-7; Psalm 113; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 16:1-13)

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A young man found out he was going to inherit a fortune when his sickly father died, and decided he needed a woman to enjoy it with. So one evening he went to a single's bar where he spotted the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Her natural beauty took his breath away. “I may look like just an ordinary man,” he said as he walked up to her, “but in just a week or two, my father will die, and I’ll inherit \$20 million. Come home with me and I’ll make you a wealthy wife.” The woman went home with him that evening, and three days later, sure enough, she became his stepmother.

“The children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.”

These words of Jesus in the Gospel today reflect the shrewd lady in the story, and the shrewd steward in the Gospel. Both carry a message for us today. We are invited to check our priorities; to put God first, and to use material things to help the needy, strengthen relationships and build up the Kingdom of God.

In the first reading, the prophet Amos pulls no punches. He bluntly teaches that God detests dishonesty, injustice, unfairness and especially taking advantage of the poor. It seems that this was the great sin of the chosen people over the ages, the way that they were most unfaithful to the covenant to be a just, holy nation, a people set apart to show others the benevolence of God. They were called to greatness, but kept sliding into a narrow, selfish, self-serving religiosity that actually oppressed the poor and needy.

The Gospel of Luke, for its part, is basically about a spirituality of money. According to Brenda Hildebrand, in her commentary in the Living With Christ on this Gospel, listeners would have understood that the steward was simply finding a creative solution to his difficulties. He was correcting the wrong that he had done. He was seeking relationship and friendship, hoping to be welcomed later.

She goes on to say that these readings remind us to turn away from self-

serving attitudes and behaviours, and to turn towards fairness and justice. Jesus speaks loudly and clearly: we cannot serve two masters. If we choose to live as children of light, we must be creative and resourceful in finding solutions that are just and fair to all. In correcting our mistakes, wealth must be put to good use, correcting injustice and restoring relationships with others. We must be as astute in the spiritual realm and with small things, as the steward was in the material realm and with bigger things.

Joan Chittester, writing on Thomas Merton, shares some interesting thoughts on justice. “In Jewish spirituality, two concepts dominate and are intertwined: The one, *devekut*, translates as “clinging to God” or contemplation; the other *tikkun o’lam*, translates as “repairing the world,” the work of justice. One without the other - contemplation without justice, clinging to mystery without repairing the real world - is unfinished, the tradition teaches; is dark without light, is grand without great, is soul without body.

Another definition of justice is very simply a right relationship with God as creator of this universe, and then a right relationship with all others through forgiveness, respect and reconciliation, our selves through self-worth and self-esteem, and all of God’s creation through ecological responsibility and care for the earth.

A simple saying of Mother Theresa of Calcutta applies here: what we would like to do for Jesus, whom we cannot see, do for the person in need next to us, whom we can see, and we will be doing it to Jesus.

All this to say that we are compelled by faith in Jesus Christ and love for God to use the material things that we have been given for the sake of loving others and building up the reign of God here on earth.

Someone who learned that lesson well is Wesley Jamieson, former partner of Tri-City Surveys. Just after landing his first job, Wesley was not allowed to attend the priestly ordination of a friend by his boss who was a work-a-holic and gave him a choice – the ordination or his job. Needing the job, he dared not attend the ordination but regretted that decision ever since. Years later, his boss died of a heart attack brought on by stress and over-work. Wesley took over the company and when his friend was made a bishop, attended that celebration. He told his friend that he has never refused a legitimate request by any of his employees to attend a family event, drawing

good out of his own negative experience with his former boss, and living out the Gospel for today.

The Eucharist that we now celebrate is an intimate moment with God that money cannot buy. We are nourished by God's Word and the Body and Blood of Jesus, who calls us into ever deeper relationship with God, others, and all of creation.

So, in response to the Word of God today, let us put God first and use material things to build up the kingdom of God by helping the needy and fostering genuine, warm human relationships.