



Bridging the Gap

FRIENDS, in his first letter to Timothy, Saint Paul points out “there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). A very important verse that I want to circle back to. Prior to that statement, Paul leads with the idea that we should be offering “supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings” for everyone, especially for kings and for all in authority. Why? So that we may lead quiet, tranquil lives of devotion and dignity.

This is important for us in today’s world where it seems our leaders and people in authority work so hard to divide us and segment us into various groups. With the noise of the “*children of this world*” clanging in our ears it can be very hard to remember that we are all of the same race, and are all children of God in light of our baptismal regeneration.

Make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth

The parable Jesus teaches in today’s Gospel is a very hard one to understand. When we are introduced to the “*dishonest steward*,” we see a man who is about to lose his job as the one in charge of keeping everything in order in the house of his master; a man who devises a way to hedge his bets on his own future so when he is turned out of his job he will have people on whom he can rely to return the favor he has granted them.



How much do you owe my master?

Listening to the words of Jesus, it’s impossible to think he is telling us to emulate the dishonest steward when he says, “And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently.” And yet that is what he is doing. So what gives? How can Jesus be telling us to try to be like someone who is obviously dishonest?

In his parables, Jesus frequently employs linguistic twists or tricks that can be especially hard for our 21st century ears to decipher. The original language of the scriptures is often the

first place to go for a deeper understanding, and I am not implying here that I am any sort of language scholar. But through the use of the internet and a variety of trusted websites and teachers, even I can find the meaning of these passages sometimes.

Dr. Brant Pitre, in his explanation of this difficult passage, explains that the word used in the Greek scriptures for steward is *oikonomos*. (It is from this word that we derive the English word *economy*.) I have written before about an economical view to our faith. In this sense I am talking about a complex of human activities in relation to production and use of divine (spiritual) goods to lead us to a relationship in which we can realize the saving, eternal life-giving act performed by our God.

In this sense then, we all become individual stewards hoping to trade on the great wealth of our master (God). Just as the dishonest steward in the parable is writing off debts owed to his master, that he has no right, or real authority to cancel, we too have access to the wealth of God to trade on for the benefit of our fellow travelers.

The dishonest steward is using his master’s wealth in a way that will secure his own future, “***I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.***” Our steward is using his master’s wealth to relieve some of the burden of debt owed him, so the debtors will now have a way of remembering what the steward did for them, so that when he is out of a job, they may be in position to return the favor. He, as a “child of this world” is taking wealth that is not his to ease the burden of those debtors who are also children of this world.

This is precisely what Jesus accomplished when he bore the burden of our sin and took it to the cross to be crucified so that our debt could be forever erased.

Remember I said I wanted to circle back to Jesus being the bridge that fills the gap between God and men. As the Divine Son of the Father, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, himself fully God, as an honest steward being also one of us by virtue of his human nature, took steps to erase our debt, not so that he would be preparing for his future, but that he would enable us to prepare for our own future.

When he says “***you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings***” this is exactly what he was referring to—our heavenly home. In his divine nature he is on equal footing with God in heaven; in his human nature he is on equal footing with all of us. Jesus is totally divine and totally human. No one else is so equipped to reconcile us in our fallen nature with our heavenly Father. In the *economy* of love that is the Blessed Trinity, let us imitate that dishonest steward and in so doing we can ease the burden of our fellow children of this world in order to prepare for our (eternal) future as we become “***children of light.***”