

HOMILY 25TH Sunday Ordinary Time
September 21, 2025

We hear Jesus tell a parable in the Gospel reading today. A parable is a story that Jesus tells to illustrate moral or spiritual lessons. The parable that we hear today is rather surprising and deliberately so. I think Jesus wants us to think outside of the box through these parables. A steward is fired by his boss, a rich man, because he was squandering his boss's money. It appears that this was true because the steward does not object to the allegations. His boss asks for an accounting when he fires him. The steward goes to a number of the debtors and cuts their debt in half, hoping to find future employment with them. His boss commends the dishonest steward for acting prudently. That is not what I expected. I expected the boss to condemn the steward for cooking the books. Let's look at this a little more closely. Part of the steward's job was to collect the debts. He probably was authorized to do what debt collectors do today. He could make a deal with the debtor to pay a reduced amount and have the whole debt forgiven. If he collected the full amount, he would get a percentage as a commission. As he reduced the amount he collected, he would be reducing his commission. By reducing the debt by 50% as he did in the parable, he was probably losing his whole commission, but he was possibly gaining future employment. This was a win/win situation for him and his boss.

First of all, I think this is a lesson about accepting forgiveness. The steward admitted his wrongdoing, hopefully learned from it, and then moved forward. That is what God wants for us. That is what the sacrament of Reconciliation is all about. We admit our sin, God forgives us, hopefully we learn from the past and then we let go of it and move forward. We do not always do that. Sometimes we cannot believe God forgives us or we cannot forgive ourselves and we get stuck in the past. We continue to beat ourselves up for something we cannot change and ruminate about the past. We sometimes say horrible things to ourselves that we would never say to someone else. "I am a horrible person; I am never going to be able to get over this

firing; I am worthless; I will never get another job; no one will ever hire me again; my friends and family will abandon me. Stop that. We need to accept God's forgiveness and forgive ourselves.

The next lesson Jesus gives us at the end of the reading "You cannot serve both God and mammon." In the beginning of the parable, it appeared that the steward was all about the money. But maybe with his firing he is beginning to learn that people, his customers, his boss are important also. This is a movement toward God. Maybe he will be more responsible in handling his future boss's money. Maybe he will care more about his customers and forego his commission for people who are really in need and cannot pay their bills. Maybe he will stop taking advantage of the poor and the vulnerable.

And I think we should periodically look at the role that money plays in our lives. Certainly God should always be the most important, but when we are young and dependent upon our parents for financial support or are otherwise unable to provide what is needed for ourselves and for our families, we should focus on money. As we get to the point in our lives where we have enough, we need to reassess that focus. Maybe we do not need to focus so much on making money and focus more upon the people and the causes that we value in our lives. For many of us, as we get older, we need to let go of accumulating wealth and focus upon spreading it around and letting it go. Maybe we need to focus upon helping our friends and relatives who are struggling. Maybe we need to focus more upon paying for family vacations and focus on strengthening our family relationships making memories. Maybe we need to focus our time and our money supporting charities that we value. It can be difficult to make that shift from saving and accumulating to letting it go. To quote the play *Hello Dolly*, "Money is like manure. It is not worth a thing unless it is spread around encouraging young things to grow." I think this is a shift we need to consciously make throughout our lives.

So, always put God first. When you make a mistake, admit it, ask God for forgiveness, he will forgive you, learn from it, reconcile with the people in your life if you need to and move forward. That is what God wants. And periodically have a look at the importance you are placing on money. Have other things become more important? Is it time to make the shift from saving to letting it go?