

9/21/25
15th Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from September 14th – September 20th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: God among us, we gather in the name of your Son to learn love for one another. Keep our feet from evil paths. Turn our minds to your wisdom and our hearts to the grace revealed in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 15:1-10) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Luke 16:1-13

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Who are the main characters in this parable, and what roles do they play?
2. What problem does the manager face, and what options does he consider?
3. What contrasts to you notice between being "faithful" and being "dishonest" in this text?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What are the most helpful lessons you have been taught about money in your life?
2. What is your greatest struggle in regard to money?
3. Where have you witnessed or experienced generosity recently?

Memorize this verse: "No slave can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." (Luke 16:13)
What does Jesus mean when he says, "You cannot serve both God and money"?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 113. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

Talking about money is difficult. Talking about money and faith is even more convoluted. And looking at scripture (especially confusing parables like this one) can only complicate the matter. After all there is no simple “biblical” view about economics. Because our relationship to our wealth is pretty complex, and “sound bite” theology doesn’t work. At the same time, there are a few themes that seems to run across the Gospels and make an appearance in this week’s text.

First, wealth is both a blessing and a responsibility. Throughout Scripture, we are blessed to be a blessing, and we are held accountable less for what resources we have accumulated than how we use them. From this point of view, perhaps the shrewdness or prudence of the manager comes through his recognition that he has privileged amassing wealth to developing relationships. It may be that he earned his money by charging interest on the amounts his lord loaned out to others. Finding himself between a rock and a hard place, he cuts the amount others owe by his surcharge, avoiding further accusation that he is defrauding his master but strengthening, perhaps even establishing, relationships that will sustain him in a time of need.

Second, wealth – along with status, power, and privilege – is fleeting. One day this manager is on top of the world; the next he is faced with disaster. We have seen and heard stories about people losing fortunes in the blink of an eye. When faced with the pronouncement that we cannot serve God and Mammon we might remember that whereas the Lord’s attention, care, and providence are constant, Mammon proves to be a pretty fickle, and ultimately untrustworthy, master.

Finally, in times of crisis, God often appears where we least expect God to be. There are lots of “crises” in Luke that turn on receiving help from unexpected places – the Jewish traveler left for dead along the road who is saved by a Samaritan; the rich man who begs for help from Lazarus, the slave he ignored; this manager now suddenly dependent on those who used to look to him for loans. From Mary’s Magnificat through the beatitudes to Jesus’ death on the cross, God regularly shows up in those places where we least expect God to be so that we are not tempted to place our faith in the wrong place.

And perhaps this is the key to this passage: we are placed on this earth to love and care for each other, not to separate ourselves from each other with wealth, status, or privilege. I’ve heard it said that St. Augustine asserted that God gave us people to love and things to use, and original sin manifests itself in our penchant to confuse those two, loving things and using people. Let’s take seriously that God gives us people to love, that we are given all of our resources to care for others, and that none of us know how much time we may have to do that. Still puzzled by this parable? I’ll admit that I am too, though less with what the parable means and more with how – or, probably more honestly, whether – I will embrace and live it.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen