

Homily for the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

I tell you what, that Gospel we just heard in some ways reminds me of what's going on today in our pre-election political climate. We have presidential candidates representing the rich man in the parable. And we have their campaign leaders similar to the steward. There's a lot of dishonesty and corruption going on. And on top of all of that the message of this Gospel at first glance might seem just as muddled or convoluted as some of the policies and health reports of certain leading candidates today.

So, what in the world is going on in this Gospel we just heard? Well, Jesus is telling a parable to His disciples where a rich master had a dishonest steward, who was squandering the master's property, apparently for personal gain. But upon having his cover blown, before he gets fired, the steward sits down the master's debtors and reduces what they owe the master. Essentially, he's buttering them up, so they'll hopefully remember the favor when he's out of a job. The problem though is that he's doing it seemingly at the master's expense – of what's owed to the master! And yet, we hear that the master commended this dishonest steward for acting prudently!

What was so prudent about what he did? Well, Scripture scholars tell us, that like tax collectors of the time, stewards, such as this, would often heap on a surcharge to whatever was owed legitimately to the master so that they could line their own pockets with more. So, by reducing what was owed, this steward was probably cancelling the excessive interest he demanded for his own personal profit. And that's actually prudent, because he was extorting from them in the first place!

The greater moral here for us, the children of the light that we are, however, is to learn from those children of this world that we need to be good stewards of what we have and prudently use our wealth. Yes, as Scripture says, we are not of this world – we belong to God – but we certainly do live in this world. Therefore, on the one hand, we ought not squander the wealth we have; but on the other hand, we ought not be so greedy, living for money and the stuff money can buy.

Jesus goes on to teach further that whoever is trustworthy in very small matters (like when no one is looking) will also be trustworthy in great ones (like when everyone is looking). And similarly, He says that whoever is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. I think here we can draw a comparison back to the whole election process unfolding before us. Trustworthiness is an important part of leadership. In order to trust someone, their words have to match their actions – all the way from the little things up to the greatest. I think it's safe to say that the trustworthiness of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are quite questionable. And that's precisely why we need to pray for them, and for all our elected officials and those in public office – the President and his Cabinet, our Representatives and Senators, our judges and courts – at all levels of government.

Clearly in our second reading today, Timothy says this is essential for Christians to do. He writes, “First of all, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity.” In other words, if we want our nation to be a land of justice, peace, and true liberty, then we had better get praying. There is A LOT at stake in our upcoming elections, A LOT. And while we might feel powerless amid our choices, God is almighty.

But, how do we pray for them, especially if we have a laundry list of complaints about them and their policies? First of all, ask God to help them. Ask the Lord to help them make wise, godly decisions, and to show them how to lead our country into peace. Ask God to surround them with righteous helpers and advisers too.

Also, we can intercede for them on their behalf. Regardless of their stance on God or their relationship with Him, we can help bridge any gap between them and God by interceding for them – asking God to give them wisdom, insight, and a heart to do the right thing.

And finally, we can give thanks for them. Yes, I know it can be hard to pray for those we disagree with, and maybe don't even like, and maybe even consider our enemies. But when we give thanks for God's plans for them, and that God has a purpose for their lives, we might just find ourselves becoming more compassionate for them. It's hard to become jaded and cynical when we are thankful and express gratitude for what we do have.

So there it is – my advice, and more importantly God's advice, on what to do when it comes to such situations. Pray, pray, pray. Imagine if we all took this teaching seriously? God bless you and our great nation.