

The Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 8, 30, 31, 394

The INTROIT

(Ps.54:4,5,1)

P: Behold God is my Helper;

C: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.

P: He shall reward evil unto my enemies;

C: cut them off in Thy truth, O Lord.

P: Save me, O God, by Thy name;

C: and judge me by Thy strength.

The COLLECT

Let Thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of Thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please Thee; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

1 Chronicles 29:10-13 (NKJV)

Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said:

“Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness,

The power and the glory,

The victory and the majesty;

For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours;

Yours is the kingdom, O LORD,

And You are exalted as head over all.

Both riches and honor come from You,

And You reign over all.

In Your hand is power and might;

In Your hand it is to make great

And to give strength to all.

“Now therefore, our God,

We thank You

And praise Your glorious name.”

The GRADUAL

(Ps.8:1; 112:1)

P: O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth:

C: who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord:

C: that delighteth greatly in His commandments. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

1 Corinthians 10:6-13 (NKJV)

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Ps. 119:124)

P: Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding:

C: **that I may know Thy testimonies. Hallelujah!**

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Luke 16:1-9 (NKJV)

He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'

Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'

So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.

And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.

Luke 16:1-9 — “Into the Everlasting Tabernacles”

INTRODUCTION

I. THE UNJUST STEWARD

II. AND I SAY TO YOU-ALL

III. INTO THE EVERLASTING TABERNACLES

CONCLUSION

καγω^{G2504 P-1NS-K} υμιν^{G4771 P-2DP} λεγω^{G3004 V-PAI-1S} ποιησατε^{G4160 V-AAM-2P} εαυτοις^{G1438 F-2DPM}
φιλους^{G5384 A-APM} εκ^{G1537 PREP} του^{G3588 T-GSN} μαμωνα^{G3126 N-GSN G3126 ARAM} της^{G3588 T-GSF} αδικιας^{G93 N-}
GSF ινα^{G2443 CONJ} οταν^{G3752 CONJ} εκλιπητε^{G1587 V-2AAS-2P} δεξωνται^{G1209 V-ADS-3P} υμας^{G4771 P-2AP} εις^{G1519}
PREP τας^{G3588 T-APF} αιωνιους^{G166 A-APF} σκηνας^{G4633 N-APF}

And I to you-all say: make to yourselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness in order that when you-all should fail they should receive you-all into the everlasting tabernacles.

The Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 8, 30, 31, 394

Luke 16:1-9 — “Into the Everlasting Tabernacles”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The appointed reading of the Gospel for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity is Luke 16:1-9:

He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’

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So he called every one of his master’s debtors to him, and said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ So he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.

And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

During His ministry, the LORD Jesus often took the false accusations that were thrown up against Him and masterfully directed these right back upon those who bore false witness against Him. In doing so, He always points to the mercy of God. His object in reversing the false accusations is not to condemn His accusers, but rather, to point out the fallacious nature of their thinking so that His disciples may learn rightly to discern the Truth and that the false accusers may be turned from their errors. Such a masterful redirection is what we hear from the Lord Jesus in today’s Gospel reading.

I. THE UNJUST STEWARD

Today’s Gospel reading is often labeled as “The Parable of the Unjust Steward” or simply “The Unjust Steward.” The first 8 verses tell the story of the activities of the unjust steward and then in the very last verse the Lord Jesus turns this story towards His disciples.

Today’s Gospel begins, saying, **“But He said also toward His disciples, . . .”**

By this Luke records that a shift is made by the Lord Jesus in His preaching and teaching. In chapter 14 the Lord Jesus speaks to all who are present, but in this chapter He speaks toward His disciples. This is an important shift. To understand it, we need to consider what Luke records at the beginning of chapter 15.

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

Here Luke records the false accusation of the Pharisees and scribes. They were accusing Jesus of being an unjust steward. They were accusing Jesus of misusing the things entrusted to Him by the Father. This is the reason for the parables that Jesus tells. Notice that the first parable deals with the true purpose of the office of the ministry with the parable of the ninety-nine sheep with one wandering sheep and the parable of the lost coin. Next Jesus corrects the misunderstanding of who is truly obedient to the Father, the son who wanders and squanders what the Father has provided him and then repents and comes home again versus the son who imagines that he has obeyed the Father in everything and then hatefully rejects the son whom the Father has joyously received home again.

After speaking these parables to all who were present, Jesus directs the words of today's Gospel reading toward His disciples. The disciples are the ones whom Jesus has chosen to be His stewards of the mysteries and His apostles. They are the ones who are to stand and face the same false accusations after Jesus has fulfilled all righteousness and has returned to the Father. Jesus wants them to understand what it means to be a true steward in God's household.

In the parable, Jesus shows what the unjust steward really is. The unjust steward is one who does not use the goods entrusted to his care for the purposes that the master has given them into his care.

The Greek word for steward is *oikonomos*. It is formed by two words which mean *house-law*. So then, the steward is the one who is appointed to stand in the stead and by the command of the Lord and to carry out the Law that has been declared for the Lord's house.

Now, it is fascinating to learn that *nomos* or Law comes from the word *nemo*, which means to allot or apportion or distribute. So, the steward is one who is to stand in the stead of the Lord and distribute those things that the Lord has ordained for His house.

That is a rather different understanding of the Law than what the Pharisees and scribes were teaching. This correction creates a stark contrast between what is commonly understood as the purpose of the Law and what God means for the Law to convey. This is the contrast that the Lord Jesus presents to His disciples in the words of today's Gospel reading.

So then, who is the unjust steward? The Pharisees and scribes accused Jesus of being the unjust steward for receiving the publicans and sinners who drew near to Him to hear Him. They obviously did not understand the office of Gospel. The Law, the declaration of God to His people, which was given through Moses to the house of Aaron to distribute to those who drew near as the chosen people of God to hear the Word of God, this Law the Pharisees and scribes refused to give to those who needed it. Jesus, on the other hand, preached freely to everyone who came to Him to receive from Him the testimony and food of God.

The accusation that is made against Jesus is that He is wasting the things of God by giving them to publicans and sinners. What these Pharisees and scribes have forgotten is that the means of grace are ordained for those publicans and sinners who hear the Word of God and are converted by it to be regenerated as sons of God. What these Pharisees and scribes also forgot is that they are sinners who stand in need of this food from heaven, too.

In the parable, the unjust steward is commended for his shrewdness. He at least realized, after abusing the office entrusted to him, that he was really no different from those who were indebted to his master. When the steward realized this, he began to seek to make friends with those who could befriend him and help him to survive his own debt. Notice that Jesus maintains the contrast between the faithful steward and the unjust steward. The unjust steward was shrewd among those who were likewise unjust.

II. AND I SAY TO YOU-ALL

Nevertheless, Jesus turns to His disciples and tells them that a lesson can be learned from the unjust steward.

And I to you-all say: make to yourselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness in order that when you-all should fail they should receive you-all into the everlasting tabernacles.

The Lord Jesus is the Lord of the Church. He is the one to whom those entrusted with the house-law are to obey. He is the one who ordains what is to be administered within His Church and to whom this administration is to be made.

Therefore Luke records Jesus saying to His disciples: **“And I to you-all say.”**

There are two parts to what the Lord of the Church says to those who are ordained as the administrators of the things of the Church. The first part is that those who hold the pastoral office are to make friends for themselves from or out of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Keeping in mind that the unjust steward was called wise or shrewd among his own generation, what does Jesus mean when He says that His ordained house-lords are to make friends from the mammon of unrighteousness?

Perhaps a brief glimpse at the modern church growth movement will help. Within the church growth movement the modern Pharisees and scribes search the Scriptures for ways to make friends for themselves and to gather them around them. They build mega-churches and centers of community outreach. By this they establish themselves as gurus of godliness and surround themselves with people who support them. St. Paul writes to the Philippians regarding such church growth leaders:

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) (Phil 3:16-19)

They mind earthly things, or mammon, building churches rather than making friends from the mammon of unrighteousness.

The Lord Jesus is contrasting the Pharisees and scribes, who were lovers of money, as St. Luke records in verse 14, to those who make friends for themselves from the mammon of unrighteousness. Now remember what the unjust steward did. First he acted as a lover of mammon, but then he realized that this would not help him and he quickly acted to make friends for himself rather than depending upon the earthly things. Now consider what the Lord Jesus says. He says that His disciples should make friends for themselves from the mammon of unrighteousness.

In other words, the disciples should convert the mammon of unrighteousness into friends. This includes trading whatever things that are given to them for friends as well as actually making friends from the mammon of unrighteousness. For the people of the world are included in the accounting of the mammon of unrighteousness. Consider how often people refuse to do what they know is right and true because of the fear of losing friends or family. Yes, friends and family are counted as the mammon of unrighteousness.

The Lord Jesus is saying that His disciples should make true friends of their friends and family. He is saying that these earthly relationships are temporal and will fail us in the end. He is saying that we should count our place in the True Church as more important than our worldly friendships and family ties. He also is saying that we should look to our worldly friends and family as those whom we desire to make our everlasting friends.

Now consider what Jesus says in Matt 25:34-40.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Truly, the friends that we are to make are those who are Christ's brothers. We are to look to those who are entwined with the mammon of unrighteousness and from them we are to make true friends through the administration of the pure means of grace. We are to preach the pure Gospel so that through it brothers of our Lord Jesus shall be gathered together into His name, baptized into the holy name of God, joined into the Holy Communion of the Saints.

III. INTO THE EVERLASTING TABERNACLES

It is rather amazing the twist that the Lord Jesus makes in the final part of His statement. He says:

And I to you-all say: make to yourselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness in order that when you-all should fail they should receive you-all into the everlasting tabernacles.

Throughout the parable of the unjust steward or house master, Jesus uses the word *oikonomos* or house-law and then says that the unjust steward determines to take actions that will cause his neighbors to receive him into their *oikous* or houses. But regarding what the disciples of Jesus are to do, He says that they are to make friends from the mammon of unrighteousness so that they should receive them into the everlasting tabernacles. A tabernacle is a tent. Tents are not made of everlasting materials and they are not established as unmovable structures. They are made of cloth or canvas rather than wood and brick and stone. But Jesus calls the places into which the disciples will be received *everlasting tabernacles*.

In John 1:14 it is written, **“And the Word flesh became and tabernacled in us.”**

The body of Jesus is THE everlasting tabernacle, even as He rose from the dead with His body. Through Baptism we are crucified and buried with Him and raised with Him to have our own everlasting tabernacles. He came to us and took upon Himself a tabernacle of flesh and blood. When we are joined with Him through Baptism, our tabernacles are converted to everlasting tabernacles in Him. This is what the Lord Jesus is saying to us as His disciples and especially to those who are His house-lords or pastors. We are to use all that God gives us, especially the means of grace, to make friends who will receive us into their own bodies that have been joined together into the body of Christ.

Jesus says that this will happen when we fall. Oh how marvelous! Each of us are simultaneously saint-sinners. By God’s grace we are saints. By our own thoughts, words, and deeds we are sinners. Those who have been made to be our true friends in Christ receive us into themselves again and again as together we gather to confess that we each have fallen short and desperately need God’s absolution. Together, we hear this blessed pronouncement and rise up to partake of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus. Yes, in these tabernacles, both of our own personal bodies and in the little tabernacles of our gathering into the name of Jesus, we receive each other. And because these tabernacles of ours are in Christ, they are everlasting tabernacles. Our mammon of unrighteousness is converted into everlasting tabernacles of righteousness and we embrace one another as true friends of our Lord Jesus, friends for whom He gave His body into death and rose again to be the True Steward over the everlasting house of God.

CONCLUSION

Is it not marvelous to behold the way in which God takes what is unrighteous and turns it into righteousness? Is it not marvelous to behold the way in which our God receives us in our sinfulness and converts us into true friends who abide in His Word and in His love? This is what is held before us this day in the Gospel reading. This is what is held before us every time that we gather to receive the administration of the pure means of grace. This is what we receive together again this very day: In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.