

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

Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said,

Blessed *be* thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.

Thine, O LORD, *is* the greatness,

and the power, and the glory,

and the victory, and the majesty:

for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is thine*;

thine *is* the kingdom, O LORD,

and thou art exalted as head above all.

Both riches and honour *come* of thee,

and thou reignest over all;

and in thine hand *is* power and might;

and in thine hand *it is* to make great,

and to give strength unto all.

Now therefore, our God,

we thank thee,

and praise thy 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!

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye 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

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am 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 lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

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:

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am 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 lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

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 15 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.

Do you hear the accusation? The Pharisees and scribes accuse Jesus of misusing the office of Rabbi and teacher. Jesus went about healing the sick and preaching repentance unto forgiveness. When the publicans and sinners came to hear Him and to receive His preaching, Jesus received them. He even ate with them, which was the common sign of accepting them as worthy of being called His friends.

Now consider what Jesus repeatedly stated as His purpose for coming to the world. Over and over He said that He came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). He said: **“They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”** (Luke 5:31-32)

Is this not the very thing that the Messiah was foretold to do? Is this not what John the Baptizer said that the Christ would do? So in what way was Jesus misusing the office entrusted to Him by the Father? The Pharisees and scribes accused Jesus of being an unjust or wasteful steward. Why?

Jesus begins this parable saying that the rich man's steward was accused that he had wasted his lord's goods. The word for wasted means scattered, like threshing wheat and letting the chaff be scattered by the wind. This is the accusation that the Pharisees made against Jesus, accusing Him of scattering God's gifts to no good purpose, wasting His friendship and kindness on the publicans and sinners. At this point in the parable the steward is merely labeled as wasteful.

But at the end of the parable, Jesus applies another term, bringing into the light the real intent of the accusation that was made against Him. He referred to the steward as the steward of unrighteousness or injustice. He brings forth the real meaning of the accusation of the Pharisees and scribes. They mean to say that by receiving the repentant publicans and sinners that Jesus is administering injustice and unrighteousness. Rather than proclaiming the Pharisees and scribes as the faithful who belonged to the kingdom of God, Jesus was befriending and receiving the publicans and sinners and telling them that their sins were forgiven them and that they were welcome in God's household.

This is exactly opposite of what the Pharisees and scribes were teaching. They were teaching that there was no place in God's kingdom for such people. They were not preaching repentance unto forgiveness. They were preaching that people were counted as God's children on account of their works of righteousness. They were preaching the necessity of tithes and of observing the rules of the Sabbath. Meanwhile, Jesus healed the sick on the Sabbath.

Jesus was going forth administering forgiveness and healing to those who did not deserve it while the church leaders were withholding forgiveness and demanding that people make themselves right before God. So who really was the steward of unrighteousness? This is the point of the parable. Even among the children of this world there was more wisdom than among those who claimed to be the children of light. The Pharisees and the scribes presented themselves as the enlightened ones to whom all should come for godly wisdom. Yet they laid burdens upon the people that could never be paid. Jesus came and reduced the bills, only not by half or by twenty percent, but to nothing. Jesus came and eliminated the debts of all sinners. For this He was accused of being a steward of unrighteousness.

II. AND I SAY TO YOU-ALL

Luke begins this account saying that Jesus told this parable to His disciples. Many others, including the Pharisees and scribes were present to hear what Jesus said, but He told this parable to His own disciples. Having told the parable, having contrasted the unrighteous stewardship of the Pharisees and scribes to the pure and holy administration of God's grace that He Himself administered, now He turns to His disciples and explains the matter for them. They are to learn from Him and do likewise in the ministry that He is entrusting to them.

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 makes it clear that the right administration of the means of grace is the sole purpose of the office of the ministry. These are His instructions to His disciples. This is the great commission given to the apostles of the Lord. This is the purpose of the Church which is to be carried forth into every generation until the Lord returns. This is the commission that the apostles were commanded to hand on to all who would be stewards in God's kingdom of grace.

Jesus says to His ministers: **“Make to yourselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness.”** Matthew records Jesus saying at the ascension: **“Having gone, disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to guard all things whatsoever I have charged to you-all.”**

This is what Jesus means when He commands His ministers to make friends to themselves. Do you hear how different this is from the way that friendship is normally understood? We ordinarily think of making friends with people. We consider friendship to be something that is entered into mutually. But here the Lord Jesus speaks of making friends from the mammon of unrighteousness. He commands that disciples be made of the gentiles, of those who are not friends.

What is the mammon of unrighteousness? This is whatever we count to be of value, most especially in this case, our bodies. After all, it is the lust of the flesh that tempts us to misuse the worldly mammon. It is service to our own bodies and the satisfaction of our bodily desires that causes us to seek to acquire wealth and power.

Consider the things that people consider to be the most valuable. To what are people bound with the strongest ties? Are not family and friends what people find themselves most needing?

Moreover, what is the biggest focus of those who promote church growth? What did the Pharisees and scribes seek for themselves most of all? Were people not what they desired most? Of those who promote mega-churches and big church bodies, what do they seek? Is it not followers and members?

Is this what Jesus means? Is this what He is teaching us?

III. INTO THE EVERLASTING TABERNACLES

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.

Jesus does not say that these friends will receive us into everlasting houses, but everlasting tabernacles or tents. This is the same notion as when John records that the Word became flesh and tabernacled in us. The Lord Jesus came to this world and became flesh and blood in order that He could die in our stead. He came to live as our brother so that He could make us to be His friends. He defined friendship in this way:

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.
(John 15:12-17)

Such friends are made through the preaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments. The pure doctrine of the apostles is how these friends are made. This is the fruit that is to be received and to remain. John records:

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:10-13)

Jesus commands His disciples, His apostles and ministers, that they should make to themselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness in order that when we should fail that they should receive us into the everlasting tabernacles. This is often interpreted as making friends of the Father and the Son who will receive us at our death into the mansions in heaven. But how can we make friends of God, especially from the mammon of unrighteousness?

No, as the Lord Jesus plainly teaches we do not make friends of God, but He makes friends of us. He comes to us and converts us from being His enemies, to become His very sons, His very closest friends. This we cannot do for ourselves through any means. God does it for us through the preaching of the pure Gospel. He regenerates us to be His sons through Baptism.

Consider St. Peter when the angel brought him out from the dungeon in Acts 12, whither did Peter go? He went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where the brethren were gathered and were praying for him. When he knocked on the door and Rhoda answered, she was so excited and happy that she forgot to let him in, but ran to tell the others, who then came and let Peter in.

These are the everlasting tabernacles where the ministers of Christ are welcomed when they fail. When the ministers of Christ suffer in this world and are at the point of despair, wherever the disciples of Christ are gathered, the friends who have been made through the preaching of the Gospel and Baptism, there the ministers are welcomed and comforted and strengthened. But also, upon their departure from this world, their doctrine remains with those who continue in these everlasting tabernacles, wherever the saints gather to hear the Gospel and to partake of Christ's Holy Communion. Even when the LORD takes His ministers out of this world, nevertheless, they continue to be received into the everlasting tabernacles with great joy and all of the friends who have been made through their ministry continue to benefit from their ministry. Even in death they continue to be received as friends in the everlasting tabernacles where the saints gather to the Gospel and the Sacraments.

CONCLUSION

Sadly the false accusations of the Pharisees and the scribes continue to this day. Even today the true servants of Christ are falsely accused as being stewards of unrighteousness. They continue to be falsely accused of wasting the gifts of God. When Christ's ministers stand up and denounce those who imagine themselves to be above others and righteous in themselves, these faithful ministers are attacked and accused. When these ministers exalt those who humble themselves and acknowledge their unworthiness, when even the little babies are admitted to the Lord's presence to receive His precious gifts, these ministers are accused of many things or are simply counted as worthless and unsuccessful. But God's means of grace have not changed. They are still administered freely to all who in faith receive them. They are still administered to those who by their own thoughts, words, and deeds are unworthy. They still lift up poor miserable sinners to the very heights of the courts of heaven where they are declared to be perfect and holy sons of God. Wherever the means of grace are so administered, there are everlasting tabernacles in which the ministers of Christ are received as true friends. Here the blessings of God flow and abound. Here the peace of God rules the hearts and minds of those who gather and together they rejoice in God's goodness. Yes, this little gathering is one of those blessed everlasting tabernacles, and the rich blessings of heaven are ours as we gather as true friends this 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.