

**Pentecost 17 23rd September 2007,
Rev. Rob Lamerton**

Readings:

- Jeremiah 8:18-9.1
- Psalm 79:1-9
- 1 Timothy 2:1-10
- Luke 16:1-13

Text of readings is available at <http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu/lectionary/CPentecost/cProper20.htm>

Sermon given at 8am (with additions); then talk to children (and congregation) at the 10am children's service on prayer.

This gospel reading must be one of the most confusing as Jesus appears to use crooked and crafty behaviour as an example of how to behave — it is NOT quite as clear as that.

The audience is critical to our appreciation of the story.

It appears that the disciples are the primary audience, BUT that the Pharisees are also there.

In the story, Jesus challenges his listeners with the critical nature of the situation and encourages similar action (not unscrupul...)

He suggests that at a critical time the importance is to act boldly, resolutely and prudently — He decides to risk everything — and his plan is based **UPON HIS KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF HIS MASTER.**

So Jesus points his hearers to a knowledge and understanding of the Father.

Kenneth Bailey says (p.43)

"God (the Master) is a God of judgement and mercy. Because of his evil, man, (the steward) is caught in the crisis of the coming of the kingdom. Excuses will avail the steward nothing. Man's only option is to entrust *everything* to the unfailing mercy of his generous master who, he can be confident, will accept to pay the price for man's salvation. This clever rascal was wise enough to place his total trust in the quality of mercy experienced at the beginning of the story. That trust was vindicated. Disciples need the same kind of wisdom."

The manager is a child of this age and has acted wisely.

The religious (Pharisees etc.) are (or saw themselves as) the "children of light" but they act as if they were in darkness.

Three things come out of the story:

1. Material wealth should be used to cement true and lasting friendships — Christians are to use material blessings for spiritual purpose.
2. Jesus also focuses on the issue of faithfulness:
Faithfulness in the use of material goods
Faithfulness in small things as well as large.
3. The choice is about devotion — is to God
OR is it to Mammon.

Leads me to the discussion about Prayer:

If we are all in some way to be Managers of what we have and the world around us;

If we are to be faithful in small as well as large:

If we are to be sure in our devotion:

Then we need to keep in constant communication with God who charges us with the management of all that is!

Prayer — prayer is about keeping in touch!

NOT to keep demanding of God, BUT to keep the relationship going and to be aware of what God wants of us.

Prayer — we hear of Jesus praying in so many places and situations and in our second reading today we hear (Paul?) encouraging Prayer for EVERYONE but especially for people who have the responsibility of leadership.

PRAYER — keeping in touch

like any friendship it needs to be

FAITHFUL: Adoration

Confession

Thanksgiving

Supplication — as Paul says: for ourselves, for others

Also the silent prayer of meditation

Jesus prayed...

and taught prayer — The Lord's Prayer

Learning to pray: Just do it

and we will begin to see new attitudes and outlooks —

we will approach people differently as we pray for them because we begin to want to understand them and love them.

Prayer is about managing our lives ...and keeping in touch with the ways of God.