

King of Glory Lutheran Church
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Year C: 18th Weekend after Pentecost: Luke 16:1-13
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Luke 16:1-13

Then Jesus said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ ³Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’

⁵So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ ⁷Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’

⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. ¹⁰“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No 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.”

I wonder if the disciples ever asked Jesus to repeat a story? Or asked him to pause a moment while they made some notes. It’s quite a story Jesus tells his disciples today. The Parable of the Dishonest Manager.

This story has a twist at the end of it as many of Jesus’ parables do. But first, we meet this manager just as he is charged with some questionable accounting procedures and fired by his boss. But this manager has a plan.

He quickly meets with everyone who owes his boss money and reduces their debt. He does this hoping that when he lands out on the street he'll have some friends to crash with for a while until he finds a new job.

Then comes the twist. The boss commends the dishonest manager for being so crafty, so practical, so shrewd. What is going on here?

In Eugene Peterson's translation of this story in *The Message* it goes like this, "Now here's a surprise: The master praised the crooked manager! And why? Because he knew how to look after himself. Streetwise people are smarter in this regard than law-abiding citizens. They are on constant alert, looking for angles, surviving by their wits. I want you to be smart in the same way—but for what is right—using every adversity to stimulate you to creative survival, to concentrate your attention on the bare essentials, so you'll live, really live, and not complacently just get by on good behavior." (Luke 16:8-9)

Jesus is not suggesting that his disciples should embezzle, steal or cheat. He tells this parable for us to consider that like this dishonest manager those who follow Jesus are called to be creative and wise stewards of what God has given.

Well, in my experience there is no one better at creative survival and wise stewardship than a grandparent.

My grandma was great at the things that made up everyday life and bare essentials: she could sew anything, she had the most beautiful rose bushes and she made wonderful Danish food from recipes that she had been taught from her grandma.

One of my favorite foods that my grandma used to make was Ebleskiver. What is Ebleskiver you say? Well, I don't think there is really anything like it. It's a round puffed kind of pancake that is simply delicious to eat anytime of day.

My grandma's recipe called for buttermilk – that's what makes them taste just right she would say. And then there was the special pan – cast iron with little round pockets to make the Ebleskiver. She would pour just the right amount of batter in and then she would watch until they started to bubble. Then she would carefully flip them with a knitting needle and they would turn into a perfect little ball that tasted kind of like a puffed up pancake but much better.

I must have been 8 or 9 years old when my grandma finally trusted me to take a turn at the stove making the Ebleskiver. After years of eating only, finally the day came when

my grandma decided to let me flip the Ebleskiver all by myself. I got to stand at the stove with the knitting needle and hover over the pan waiting for the right moment to flip.

Now I suppose that flipping Ebleskiver is a very small thing, but it mattered to me that my grandma trusted me to make them. It meant something to me that she trusted me with something so important to her, something that everyone else was counting on. I was responsible, I was entrusted with this special meal made from my grandma's own recipe in her own kitchen. And in this small way, my grandma taught me something that was important to her and our family and she entrusted that knowledge, that tradition, to me.

With trust comes responsibility in the small things and in the big things.

So what has been entrusted to you? Each one of us has been entrusted with something or many somethings. A recipe? A special skill? Traditions? Children, family or friends? Money? Property? Time?

And knowing that you have been entrusted with something special, how do you care for what God has entrusted you with? Have you been a good manager of what has been given into your care? After all, everything we have comes from God and we are the caretakers and stewards of what we have been given.

Maybe you're thinking that you don't have that much to care for, that you don't have much to manage. But Jesus says that you do that we all do. And even if what you have seems small, it might just be greater than you'll ever know.

Jesus said, "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much..."

We are to manage all of God's good gifts for God, not for our own gain or purpose, but for God. And we do so because God trusts us, has entrusted us with this earth, with resources, with one another and with the message of God's love and care for all.

But God doesn't leave us to do this alone. God has given us the Holy Spirit that we might have the wisdom and creativity and guidance to be good stewards.

When we take the time to look around we see when others suffer or flourish from our choices.

We can see that the way we manage our resources, whether that be time and money, water and energy, kindness and compassion, affects those around us. The way we manage

and steward what we have been given affects our family, friends and strangers we may never know.

But good stewardship isn't just about knowing that all that we do and fail to do affects other people. It's about serving God through our very lives, even in the smallest ways. Doing God's work through God's ways.

What did Jesus say? "I want you to be smart in the same way (as the manager)—but for what is right—using every adversity to stimulate you to creative survival, to concentrate your attention on the bare essentials, so you'll live, really live, and not complacently just get by on good behavior."

The manager in Jesus' story was daring when it came to taking care of himself and his future. Jesus is asking us to be as daring for God and the future Jesus gives us. What does that mean for us here in Loveland as this congregation of King of Glory Lutheran Church?

As people find more and more reasons to not be a part of the church or follow Jesus, we as the church and followers of Jesus must find creative and daring ways to share the life giving and life changing word of God.

This is not the time, Jesus says, to sit back, to abuse the trust God has placed in us, to remain silent or comfortable. Jesus said, "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much..."

Live out your faith in a very little way: smile at a stranger, surprise someone with an unexpected word of thanks, bring a can of food for the food bank, pray for someone in need. These are small acts of faith and discipleship but with these small things God can open hearts and bring healing and love to this world.

But don't be afraid to be faithful in a big way too! Start a new ministry using your passions and gifts, invite someone to worship or Bible study, share the story of your faith with a neighbor even if you don't think you have the right words.

You have been entrusted with God's greatest gifts – God's word, God's creation, and God's people. Live knowing that God calls you trustworthy this day and invites you to live out that trust, doing God's work in little ways and in big ways in God's name with God's help.

Amen.