

Faith Sharing Sheet for Sunday September 18, 2022

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time Cycle C

[Reading I: Amos 8: 4-7](#)

[Responsorial Psalm 113: 1-2, 4-6, 7-8](#)

[Reading II: 1 Timothy 2: 1-8](#)

[Gospel: Luke 16:1-13 or 10-13](#)

Opening Prayer by Anne M. Osdieck

Dear God,
give us big hearts.
Make us sly like foxes.
Sharp as two-edged swords.
Shrewd as lawyers.

Whatever it takes!

Let us
grow in
holy cunning:

stewards to help you bring
every single person
home to your
heavenly Amen

Reflection by John Foley, SJ

God in the First Reading is quite offended by his people's evil actions, just as we would expect. But in the Gospel parable we find the master of the house *rewarding a dishonest steward for cheating*. What is going on?

A question: are you shrewd? Can you get troubled circumstances to work to your advantage?

If you said yes, doesn't that mean you are un-Christian?

After all, we are supposed to dedicate ourselves to charity, giving always to others. Or at least that is the usual understanding of Christianity.

Start with the [First Reading](#). God sees that the merchants are actually agreeing to "fix their scales for cheating!" This is bad enough, but they have determined also to actually buy poor people, to purchase them and their lives for silver or even for a pair of sandals!

The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
never will I forget a thing they have done!

Such slavery no longer exists in the United States, for which, hurray! But aren't each of our own lives being bought off by luxury? Haven't you noticed that commerce wishes to buy you with cable TV, or a convertible, or prescription drugs, or real-estate plans, or weight reduction, beautiful teeth, slick automobiles, perfect wheel chairs, and even breath-freshening chewing gum (whose advertising portrays sexual promiscuity in order to sell their gum)?

God's reaction is very clear, and we should react similarly.

God hates it.

Reflection (cont.)

Yet in the [Gospel](#), a parable portrays God's attitude quite differently. The master comes back to find that his top steward has been squandering the master's property. Naturally he plans to fire the man, and in this he agrees completely with the First Reading, that cheating should not be tolerated.

But then comes the curve ball. The servant is portrayed as shrewd. He thinks up a plan. If I am to be fired, I had better acquire some friends so I will not be homeless. Since I will remain steward until I give an account, I will go to each of my master's debtors and make a deal. Give me half of what you owe and I will count it on the books as fully paid.

The master actually commends him for this plan! He tells the servant, you have been prudent in preparing a home for yourself!

Why does he treat this dishonest servant differently than the dishonest merchants in the First Reading? The answer is in Sunday's [Psalm 113](#), which says:

Praise the Lord, who lifts up the poor!

Do you think the merchants from the First Reading were "lifting up the poor"? Weren't they buying and selling them instead, purchasing them for even "a pair of sandals"?

Well, the Gospel's steward doesn't show disdain for the poor even though he is taking care of his own future (by making friends with the poor). He gets a portion of their debts back for the master. He never buys or sells them—he makes their life a little easier by cutting their debts in half, and he courts the master's favor by cutting losses to his property.

So he was shrewd.

He did good by being so clever. The remaining servants were happy. The master was happy. The steward kept his job. Good was served rather than evil.

Maybe the actual moral for Sunday is: be clever when you do good.

Discussion Questions by Anne Osdieck

- Israel's covenant mandated love of the neighbor. Was it on a collision course with the people's behavior in this reading? What drives people to be oppressive and exploitive? Is money evil, or is it the love of money that is—to the exclusion of everything else, including love of neighbor? Give examples from today.
- Was the unjust steward dishonest or just clever? How would the kingdom of God benefit if you were more resourceful on its behalf here on earth? Can you think of a way you can be more resourceful or more clever in your spiritual life?

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