

# Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 21 September 2025 - The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

**Lectioary Readings** (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Amos 8.4–7; Psalm 113; 1 Timothy 2.1–7; Luke 16.1–13

## Homily

**Today's homily has been written by the Revd Michael Wilcockson, Assistant Curate - Associate Priest, Linton (Benefice) and Rural Dean of Granta**

Because his ship was sinking due to the heavy storm, the captain of the vessel decided to throw all the cargo into the sea to save his crew and passengers.

Did the captain act wisely?

The answer is not necessarily an easy one. Could the captain have acted otherwise? After all he had a duty to look after the cargo – imagine it was your luggage he had thrown overboard containing something of great value to you. Of course, he also had a duty to his crew members and passengers and to preserve their lives. So, do we commend or blame the captain?

We might blame him because a more skilful captain might have negotiated the weather conditions better or have thrown some but not all of the cargo into the sea. We might blame him more so if he showed no remorse for the harm he caused to owners of the cargo.

On the other hand, we might commend the captain because he showed good judgement in a particularly difficult circumstance and moreover accepted the responsibility for the loss of goods. We might even hold him up as a moral example to others because he acted prudently and with courage. Amongst the ancient Greek philosophers, 'prudence' or the Greek word 'phronesis' is the essential skill for behaving morally.

So how do we judge the steward in the story which Jesus related and what do we learn from it? The steward, we are told, is 'dishonest' but in fact the Greek word says he is 'unrighteous' ('adikia') because he's been charging interest on the loan of goods he has issued on behalf of his master, which is against Jewish law (Leviticus 25:36–37). Charging interest may not be problematic for us today, but it is enough for the master to fire the steward for trying to make some money for himself on the side.

So, the steward has to think very quickly and practically. What would please his master, help the debtors and at the same time save his skin (for he has limited skills and is unlikely to find another job)? His practical solution is to summon each of the debtors and cancel the interest they owe on the proviso they deliver the goods immediately.

What might surprise us is the master's reaction. He commends the steward that he has acted 'shrewdly' – the Greek word used here is 'phronesis', prudence – the same word as the ancient Greek moral philosophers used. In other words, the steward has not merely acted out of self-interest but *morally* with everyone in mind as the situation demanded it. We might also commend him on his fortitude against adversity; that he has turned around his life and for a change acted righteously (only time will tell whether this will last).

But in terms of this particular moment Jesus makes a very telling comment when he says, 'for the children of this age are more shrewd [prudent] in dealing with their own generation than the children of light' (Luke 16:8).

What he means, I think, is that as Christians we often have to make difficult practical moral decisions in a complex world where applying absolute moral rules just doesn't work. Jesus is commending people of 'this age', who are worldly-wise and act prudently rather than those who are too 'religious' and self-righteous.

For example, as a general principle, no Christian should ever think that a war is *in itself* good. This leads some to become absolute pacifists and to interpret the commandment, 'Do not kill', to mean that all wars of any kind are always morally wrong.

But there are situations in our complicated world where the use of war may be the lesser of two evils, where *not* to act would cause greater suffering, injustice and death. Those who support the just war principle know that Christians have to use practical reason to work out whether the use of lethal force is proportionate to the outcome; that non-combatants are protected from harm; that the motive is to achieve peace and not some ulterior aim such as power or wealth or revenge.

Do the wars in Ukraine or Gaza or the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki satisfy the just war principle?

The criticism Jesus implicitly makes of the 'children of light' is therefore against idealists because idealism only works in an ideal world – and we're not yet living fully in the Kingdom of God.

The test of our worldly life is how well or how prudently we think and act. Jesus says, 'If then you have not been faithful with dishonest wealth, then who will entrust you to the true riches?' (Luke 16:11). By 'dishonest wealth' he means worldly wealth or any other day-to-day worldly matter. 'True riches' is life in the Kingdom of God.

The use of money or wealth is a good means of testing how we go about applying Christian phronesis or practical wisdom. Jesus states the principle: 'You cannot serve God and wealth'. Bearing in mind that Jesus has just rejected idealist morality, and that he praised the actions of the unrighteous steward, how should we act? One suggestion is offered by John Wesley, the great Methodist preacher, in his sermon given in 1760, 'The Use of Money'. His three practical principles are: 'earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can'. Take a moment to think whether you agree.

To be moral is to act wisely and always to ask ourselves, 'Could I act otherwise?' Prudence or practical wisdom is part of everyday life. Sometimes we'll get it right, other times we will

fail, because becoming morally good is a life-long project. What matters is that we always take responsibility for our actions and are faithful to one another and above all to God.

### ***Ways to Engage all Generations***

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

**Wondering Questions:** Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder if you thought the unjust steward acted wisely?
- I wonder how the debtors felt when steward told them to pay what they owed without interest if they paid immediately?
- I wonder whether the steward went on to live an honest life?
- I wonder what the master meant when he said, 'If then you have not been faithful with dishonest wealth, then who will entrust you to the true riches?'
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?
- I wonder how you feel about John Wesley's advice about the use of money ('earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can')?
- 'Because his ship was sinking due to the heavy storm, the captain of the vessel decided to throw all the cargo into the sea to save his crew and passengers.' I wonder, do you think the captain act wisely?

### ***Suggested intercessions***

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

○ God, the creator and preserver of all people, we pray for people of every race, and in every kind of need: make your ways known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

We cannot pray for those who suffer without being conscious of our own responsibility for some part of that suffering.

Lord, as we listen and watch the events unfolding in our world, especially in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan [add any other places/situations], we know our own failure as a nation and as a community of nations to prevent the violence and the starvation and the forced expulsion from their homes of so many of our human family.

Bring us to the point where we demand of our leaders that they put peace and justice and the care of the weakest first, so that we can help others to hold up their heads as people who are cared about, just as Jesus went to the poor and the helpless and the outcast of the world. We ask it for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*(Christopher Avon Lamb from The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer (2003) p. 153)*

Lord, in your mercy  
**hear our prayer.**

We pray for your Church throughout the world: guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. We pray especially for ...

Lord, in your mercy  
**hear our prayer.**

We commend to your fatherly goodness all who are anxious or distressed in mind or body; comfort and relieve them in their need; give them patience in their sufferings, and bring good out of their troubles. We pray especially for ... [or leave a time of silence]

Merciful Father,  
**accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*(intercessions based on The Alternative Service Book 1980 pp 166-167)*

### ***Suggested hymns/songs***

Praise my soul the king of heaven  
God whose giving knows no ending  
At the name of Jesus  
Teach me my God and King  
Meekness and majesty  
The kingdom of God is justice and joy  
Immortal, invisible, God only wise  
Jesus, lover of my soul  
What does the Lord require of you?  
Christ be our light  
This I believe (the Creed)  
Your grace is enough

**Activities to accompany the service**

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>  
(weekly@ lectionary resource)