



Field

1 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. 2 So 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.' 3 Then 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. 4 I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' 5 So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, "How much do you owe my master?' 6 He answered, "A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, "Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' 7 Then 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.' 8 And 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. 9 And 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. You cannot serve God and wealth." Lk.16:1-10 & 13b

Thoughts

It's challenging to delve into a novel or movie that doesn't have at least one likeable main character. That's probably even truer for a parable. In Luke's Gospel with whom do you connect? The landowner who seems to be overcharging his debtors? The manager who swindled his boss? Has anyone repented? It's hard to tell. What we know is that the manager is in a corner when fired with no other job options, so he made use of the dishonest wealth he still had access to and ingratiated himself to the people he could impact via his position. His boss pretty much said, "Well done!" What? Good job at securing less money for the boss? Did the rich man suddenly empathize with his debtors? Dr. Barbara Rossing suggests that the rich man was in a conundrum because he may have tried to maintain the image of a religious man in his community, and so he wasn't supposed to charge interest. Maybe the landowner was suddenly in a corner, from where he had to measure his public response.

Perhaps if we saw the faces of the debtors being relieved of their debt, they would be the ones who would draw us more into the story. Overcharging people was an issue in Biblical times just as it is today. When visiting a congregation that started a ministry of offering loans to people to pay off their payday loans, I learned about just how high interest rates on payday lending can be. Martin Luther also recognized the need for a moral response to cheating people. The Common Chest, the idea for which Luther has been credited, provided help to people who were underprivileged; that included funding to pay off high interest loans that held people captive to debt, with low interest ones.

We don't know if the rich man and manager were intentionally exercising a new moral response. Each of them simply may have been scrambling in a corner, with their god of money suddenly crumbling. Regardless, the manager using his position with dishonest wealth cracked open a window to fairness and a reminder of who is our God. All were in need of grace. Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy