

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
18-09-2022  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1    Jeremiah mourns for the people  
Psalm 79:1-9         A plea for forgiveness for Jerusalem  
1 Timothy 2: 1-10    Instructions concerning prayer  
Luke 16: 1 13        The parable of the dishonest Manager

### Introduction

What makes us rich and what makes us poor? We normally answer this question in terms of material wealth, but I would like to look at it more wholistically this morning. I believe we are only truly rich when we have encountered Jesus and seeking to follow Jesus, in our lives.

Knowing Jesus like this, being a Christian, involves our whole being. It involves our hearts and our minds. Today I would like to explore how it involves our hearts by looking at the Old Testament readings from Jeremiah and the Psalms. I would like to explore how it involves our minds by looking at the New Testament readings from 1 Timothy and Luke.

And I would like to explore today's parable of the dishonest manager and how it might help us to know what it is to be truly rich.

### Hearts – Jeremiah and Psalm

The readings from Jeremiah and the Psalm today are not easy readings. They talk about pain and grief and suffering. These emotions will come to us all at different times in our lives, but there is a particular context to these readings today.

God's people had abandoned God. Their hearts were far from God. They were suffering the consequences. From the pages of the Old Testament today we have a warning about where our hearts are at.

We need to have our hearts right with God, if we are to know the richness of God's peace and presence in our lives.

As you hear these words today, what is your hearts true desire?

### Minds – 1 Timothy and Luke

Once our hearts are right with God, we need to engage our minds. Both the readings from 1 Timothy and Luke are about how we are to live lives if our hearts are truly with God. It is of course our minds, which control our actions, so we need to ensure our minds are in tune with God.

This week at the Diocesan Ministry School we were reminded and challenged to look afresh at Romans 12:2:-

“Be transformed by the renewing of your minds.”

Do we focus on the good in our lives or do our minds get stuck on the negative? I have to say that I am very familiar with Romans 12:2 and yet I was engaged to refocus on it in a fresh way.

There have been a number of challenges, both locally and globally over the last couple of years and it has become quite a temptation to dwell on the negatives. But, if we are to experience true richness in our lives then we should be focused on the goodness of God. This is not to diminish the difficult things and the challenges, but to tackle them from the perspective of a right mind, orientated toward God’s love and goodness.

### 1Timothy - Instructions

So how might Paul’s instruction to Timothy today help us in reorientating our minds toward the goodness of God.

Paul is encouraging Timothy to pray for the whole of society so that they might live quiet and peaceable lives. And he is letting Timothy know that the mediator for our prayers is Jesus. The more time we spend with someone the more we get to know them. So, quality time spent with God in prayer will help our minds to be more in tune with God.

And we are to pray without anger or argument. How challenging this is to get our minds around because our world is filled with anger and argument. What are you doing in your life to try to reduce anger and argument?

### Luke – Parable of the dishonest manager

Let us now look at the parable of the dishonest manager.

But firstly, what is a Parable? One dictionary description says it is:-

“A short allegorical story designed to convey some truth or moral lesson.”

Jesus was not the first to use parables, but he certainly made it a feature of the way he taught. He wanted people to use their minds in understanding the way to God. Jesus used parables to attract interest, and to help his hearers to remember what was being taught.

Today’s parable is a bit of a challenging one to get our minds around. It’s not so easy to understand. We have to remember it is not direct teaching.

Jesus is not telling us to be dishonest, but rather in this parable, the objective is the Kingdom of God, and Jesus is encouraging followers to consider how they use initiative and stewardship to work for God’s Kingdom.

## Initiative – Parable (Luke 16:1-9)

Firstly, let's look at how Jesus talks about initiative.

This first part of the parable sounds unbelievable, it seems like Jesus is praising a crook. I have been helped in better understanding this parable by reading what New Testament scholars have had to say about it. In the culture of Jesus time, it was illegal to charge interest on loans. The rich man was probably charging interest, so the manager was most likely just allowing the debtors to pay what they owed and avoid the illegal interest. The manager was seen as shrewd, because he did something that he would get favour for, but that he couldn't get in trouble for.

The questions before us is, how shrewd are we in dealing with our faith and how do the decisions we make help to further God's kingdom?

We spend time and energy on the things of this world, like seeing financial planners and making sure we have superannuation. These worldly things are important, but where we will spend eternity is far more important.

How shrewd are we with building up the kingdom of God? We need to examine our lives as to how shrewd we are in being resourceful for God's kingdom.

As Christians' we aren't called to be dishonest, but we are called to be shrewd in working to further God's Kingdom. We are called to use the brains God has given us as how to best build up God's kingdom, so that we can know God's riches.

## Stewardship – Minds with God as Ruler (Luke 16:10-13)

The final part of the parable draws a very strong and challenging conclusion:-

“You cannot serve God and wealth.”

To fully appreciate and experience the riches that God offers us, we need to be good stewards of all that God has given to us.

We need to be faithful in the littlest of things, and if we can do this, we will be enabled to be faithful in greater things. We need to develop our characters so that everything we do aligns with the building up of God's Kingdom.

Likewise, we are challenged that if we are dishonest in little things, then this may lead to being dishonest in much.

God has to be our primary consideration if we are to know God, otherwise we risk missing out on all that God offers. If we are seduced and blinded by the things of this world, we miss out on where true riches are to be found.

## Conclusion

So how are we to live lives that are truly rich?

We first need to ensure our hearts are right with God. Have we repented? Have we accepted Jesus as Lord? Is serving God our primary desire in life?

And then we need to ensure our minds are engaged in what it is to follow Jesus.

What are we putting into our minds so as best to follow Jesus? How often are we engaged with the Bible so we can hear God speaking to us through his word? How much time do we spend in prayer each day? How are we seeking to help others?

We need to work out how best we use our initiative, and the resources God has blessed us with, to building up God's Kingdom, not only as individuals, but also as a faith community.

Our minds are wonderful things. God gave them to us to use. The big question for us today is, how well are we using them to build up God's Kingdom?

It is only when our hearts are truly turned to God, and when we are using our minds to be filled with the knowledge of God's love, that we will be best placed to follow Jesus, and understand and experience what true riches are.

Amen.