

## The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR C September 18 2016

If you're intending to focus on the Gospel this week, you're in for a tough one. The Parable of the Shrewd Manager is a difficult one to make sense of, and a rough one to apply. But, at the heart of all of the readings this week is the idea of inappropriate grace, and releasing our inappropriate devotion to money – which opens the doors to moments of both amusement and seriousness.

May this week's worship teach us to be people of scandalous grace and generosity.

### INTRODUCTIONS

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

**Jeremiah 8:18-9:1**: Jeremiah grieves the destruction of his people, who insisted on worshiping idols, but for whom there is now no salvation.

OR **Amos 8:4-7**: A prophecy against the corruption and greed of the wealthy among God's people who exploit the poor, and whose wickedness God will not forget.

**Psalms 79:1-9**: A lament for the land of Israel which has been destroyed by foreign nations, and for the temple which has been desecrated, and a plea for God's forgiveness, compassion and restoration.

OR **Psalms 113**: A song of praise to the God who is over all nations, and who lifts up the poor and needy and includes them among influential people, and who removes the shame of the barren woman making her a mother of children.

**1 Timothy 2:1-7**: Paul calls for believers to pray for all people, including leaders, reminding them of Christ's pleading for us with God – for which Paul has been called as an apostle to the Gentiles.

**Luke 16:1-13**: Jesus parable of the shrewd manager who wins social capital and his master's commendation through the act of radical, inappropriate, forgiveness.

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### Collect One

Lord, we pray thee  
that thy grace may always prevent and follow us,  
and make us continually to be given to all good works;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### Collect Two

Almighty God,  
you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:  
Teach us to offer ourselves to your service,  
that here we may have your peace,  
and in the world to come may see you face to face;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Heavenly Father, it is hard for us to think of you as angry, against anyone, yet you despise infidelity. As you remind us of your commands to love you, and you alone, remember Isaac, Abraham, Israel and each of us as your faithful descendants.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Lord God Almighty, help us understand your hard commands against sin. We know you do not tolerate foolishness, evil, nonsense or ignorance, for you are not deceived. Spare us from our false hope of mercy, when we hide behind your goodness.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Holy Spirit, when we sin against one another, it is a sin against you. Help us confess our wrong doing, and seek forgiveness, for the sake of righteousness, and for the sake of peace.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Lord God, you alone are our refuge. Look down upon us and forgive us when we think that there is no God watching us.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Lord Jesus Christ, give us the faith of Timothy who knew he was the chief of all sinners, but committed his heart, love and soul to you despite his weaknesses.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Lord Jesus Christ, you rejoice when we repent. Help us admit our sin, receive your forgiveness, and begin again as children of the Heavenly Father.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Merciful God, healer of our every ill, we bring before you by name those who need you near \_\_\_\_\_.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Listening God, hear our prayers. **Amen.**

### POST COMMUNION

God our guide,  
you feed us with bread from heaven  
as you fed your people Israel.  
May we who have been inwardly nourished  
be ready to follow you  
all the days of our pilgrimage on earth,  
until we come to your kingdom in heaven.  
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

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### PRAYERS

God of power and justice,  
like Jeremiah you weep over those  
who wander from you,  
turn aside to other gods,  
and enter into chaos and destruction.  
By your tears and through your mercy,  
teach us your ways  
and write them on our hearts  
so that we may follow faithfully  
the path you show us. Amen.

Redeemer God, you heard the cry of your people and sent Moses your servant to lead them out of slavery. Free us from the tyranny of sin and death and, by the leading of your Spirit, bring us to our promised land; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Methodist Worship

God of all creation you call all peoples of the earth into your kingdom. Grant that we, with young and old of all nations, may boldly confess Jesus Christ as Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and praise, now and for ever. Amen. Methodist Worship

Almighty God, you called your Church to witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us so to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. Common Worship

Almighty God, you search us and know us: may we rely on you in strength and rest on you in weakness, now and in all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Common Worship Shorter Collect

O God, whose son Jesus Christ our Lord showed the world His majesty and His humility, keep us ever focused on you so that when we are tempted to show our own majesty we are instead stirred to demonstrate our humility; so that the glory of He whom we represent can be shown in all the world. Amen

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our needs before we ask, and our ignorance in our asking; have compassion on our weakness, and give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

As we sit at our tables and eat, remind us of those who have little to eat. As we are tempted to exalt ourselves, remind us of the humility of Christ. As we are tempted to ignore those who are not like ourselves, remind us that Christ ignores no-one and all are invited to His heavenly banquet. Amen.

O God, you resist those who are proud and give grace to those who are humble, Give us the humility of your Son, that we may embody the generosity of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

Lord, teach us that your Son died to save us, not from suffering but from ourselves; not from injustice, but from being unjust; and not from dying but so that we might die to

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ourselves; and this we ask through the same Christ our Lord. Amen *George Macdonald*  
1824-1905

O blessed Jesus, immortal and victorious, by the sorrow you suffered when all the powers of your heart failed you, have mercy on us and help us in our days of darkness and in our hours of weakness, that we do not lose hold of you either in this life, or in the life of the world to come; and this we ask for your own name's sake. Amen  
*St Bridget of Sweden, 1303-1373*

Gracious God, whose only desire it is that men and women will come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south and will sit down together at the feast of your Kingdom; have mercy on those of Abrahamic faith, whether they are Jews, Christians or Muslims, and grant that they may behold in you the one God and Father of all, and see in each other only those created in your own image and likeness; and that thus beholding and seeing they may turn aside from all evil and violence and, with one mind, undertake that ministry of reconciliation which you have committed to them; for to you belongs all honour, all glory and praise, now and for ever. Amen  
*Norman Wallwork*

Friends in Christ,  
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers  
as dear to us as our own needs.  
Loving our neighbors as ourselves,  
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions  
on behalf of the church and the world.  
Hear our prayers, God of power,  
and through the ministry of your Son  
free us from the grip of the tomb,  
that we may desire you as the fullness of life  
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,  
and guided them in the way of your love,  
so listen now to those who call upon you.  
Move us to praise your gracious will,  
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death  
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,  
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens  
and healed our spirits.  
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,  
those seeking healing,  
those in need within the church and the world.  
Hear our prayers  
that we may love you with our whole being  
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

Creator God,  
you call us to love and serve you  
with body, mind, and spirit

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through loving your creation  
and our sisters and brothers.  
Open our hearts in compassion  
and receive these petitions  
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.  
Holy One,  
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards  
of the fragile bounty of this earth  
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,  
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,  
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.  
We offer these prayers of love  
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors,  
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.  
Loving God,  
open our ears to hear your word  
and draw us closer to you,  
that the whole world may be one with you  
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,  
you who hear the cries of those in need,  
receive these petitions of your people  
that all who are troubled  
may know peace, comfort, and courage.  
Life-giving God,  
heal our lives,  
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds  
and offer you thanks from generation to generation  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,  
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,  
hear our prayers  
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,  
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings  
with your unending compassion.  
Redeeming Sustainer,  
visit your people  
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,  
that we may hurry to make you welcome  
not only in our concern for others,  
but by serving them  
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

When joy is gone and hearts are sick, O God,  
you give us Christ as our healing balm.  
He came in human flesh  
that he might give himself as a ransom for our salvation  
and anoint us with the Spirit of consolation and joy.

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Hear the cry of your people,  
that we may rejoice in the richness of your love  
and be faithful stewards of your many gifts. Amen.

O God,  
you call us to embrace  
both you and the children of this world  
with unconditional love.  
Give us grace to discern  
what your love demands of us,  
that, being faithful in things both great and small,  
we may serve you with an undivided heart. Amen.

### LECTIONARY NOTES

#### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

This is a week for lots of prayer and reflection – the Gospel reading is one of the toughest parables to preach, by all accounts! But, there are two clear themes that emerge when all the readings are placed together. The first is the obvious one – the subtle power of money to lead us into corrupt and exploitative practices. Jeremiah bemoans the people’s devotion to idols (of which money is a significant one according to Jesus in Luke); Amos speaks out against the corrupt business practices of wealthy merchants; Psalm 113 praises the God who uplifts the poor and needy. Clearly, how we use our money is a spiritual concern. The second theme this week is that of forgiveness and undeserved honour. Jeremiah pleads with God for grace for God’s people, as does Psalm 79; Psalm 113 praises God’s grace toward those who are most vulnerable, giving them undeserved honour; Paul reflects on God’s grace in Christ, extended to all people, and embodied in the prayers of God’s people; And Jesus tells a story of a master who, about to be dishonoured because of his dishonest (incompetent?) manager, decides to fire him, but has to reconsider when, through radical, inappropriate, forgiveness, the manager wins honour both for the master and himself, and a connected and secure future for himself. Put these two themes together and what emerges is the power of gracious, generous forgiveness to lift us to places of honour and connectedness.

#### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** The immediate thought that comes to mind when thinking about this week’s theme is the issue of foreign debt and the corrupt system of international finance and trade regulations that has left so many third world countries irreversibly impoverished. The call of God’s generous, inappropriate grace can not be mistaken – there needs to be a rising up of God’s Jubilee people calling for these debts to be written off, and for effective aid to be offered where needed. But, it also goes further than this. For those of us in wealthy countries there is a tremendous responsibility to watch how we use our wealth and opportunity. We need to avoid anything that is exploitative, using our buying power to ensure that fair trade practices are employed and fair wages are paid to those who produce what we use, and that the impact on our planet is likewise just and sustainable. When we use our opportunity to accumulate wealth for ourselves, we are essentially “dishonourable”, but when we use it to uplift others, we bring honour and dignity both to them and to ourselves. As Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala once said: “The opposite of poverty is not wealth. It is dignity.”

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**LOCAL APPLICATION:** In many communities, the Church is among the wealthiest organisations. But, unfortunately that wealth is often taken for granted and two important aspects of its coming to us are easily forgotten – that whatever wealth we have is attained through the generosity of our people, and that our wealth is not a sign of God’s blessing for us to aggrandise ourselves, but is a resource to share and use to uplift the least. This means that we need to ensure that we have not fallen into the temptation to accumulate money for its own sake. It means we must ensure that we do not engage in exploitative practices (think of how some prosperity preachers receive the offering!), and that we are quick to use our money for grace – forgiving, helping and uplifting the needy in our communities and neighbourhoods. If we take this call of the Gospel seriously, we may well find ourselves using our money in ways that “the world” would consider inappropriate, and we may find ourselves seeking connection with and offering grace to those who are considered to be undeserving. This may be a good week to do an ‘audit’ of your community’s use of money – and the priorities it reveals – and to make some gracious, inappropriate, and dignity giving choices.

### SERMON OUTLINE

#### **Luke 16:1-9 There was a rich man..**

Jesus tells the Parable of the **Dishonest Manager...** Absentee landlords were common in the East – would employ a steward to manage their estate – post required loyalty & honesty...

**1. The Dishonesty of the stewardship 1:** charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property.

**2. The Discipline of the master 2:-** he summoned him & said to him, “What is this that I hear about you? Give me an account of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.” *About to be sacked!* - “You’re fired” (Alan Sugar)..

**3. The Decision of the Manager 3-4:-** What will I do – *no regret or sense of shame – bemoaned his plight!* I am not strong enough to dig, & I am ashamed to beg - *but not of his dishonesty!* 4I have decided what to do so that when I am dismissed as manager people may welcome me into their homes.

**4. The Debts of the clients 5-7:-** as he summoned them...

**a) owed 100 jugs of olive oil** - reduced to 50 - 50%;

**b) owed 100 containers of wheat > 80** – still a considerable reduction of debt – would be pleased at the deal! The master got some return on what he was owed; the manager had made good friends with the debtors – under obligation to him in the future!

**5. The Declaration 8-9:-** 2-fold response – the Master & Jesus

**a) of the Master:** *commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly* – for his foresight & resourcefulness...

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**b) of the Lord:** *the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light<sup>9</sup> 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 – the eternal heavenly dimension!*

*By Norman Porteous*

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"The Dishonest Manager in all of us," the Rev. Whitney Rice, Sermons that Work, Episcopal Digital Network  
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/09/09/18-pentecost-proper-20-c-2013/>

"Jesus' Weirdest Parable?" Rev. Ian Punnett, Day 1  
[http://day1.org/5220-jesus\\_weirdest\\_parable](http://day1.org/5220-jesus_weirdest_parable)

"[Jesus the Rogue Rabbi](#)," the Rev. Thomas Brackett, Day 1  
[http://day1.org/2196-jesus\\_the\\_rogue\\_rabbi](http://day1.org/2196-jesus_the_rogue_rabbi)

"[Intercession](#)," the Rev. Geoffrey Hoare,  
<http://day1.org/1075-intercession>

### CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](#), Ordinary 25C, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Ordinary 25, Carolyn C. Brown  
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2010/09/year-c-25th-sunday-of-ordinary-time.html>

"[Sermon of the Week](#)," / "[Mensajes para ninos](#)," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.  
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

[Dylan's Lectionary Blog](#), Children's Homily, Proper 20C. Biblical Scholar Sarah Dylan Breuer looks at readings for the coming Sunday in the lectionary of the Episcopal Church.  
[http://www.sarahlaughed.net/lectionary/2004/09/for\\_panicking\\_c.html](http://www.sarahlaughed.net/lectionary/2004/09/for_panicking_c.html)

[Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity](#), Ordinary 25, at *word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary* by Larry Broding.  
<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>