

REFLECTION OF GRACE

A Weekly Reflection on Stewardship from our Members



Sunday, September 18 | Gospel Luke 16: 1-13

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. 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.' 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. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' 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.' 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. 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.

"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. If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

ARE TWO HEADS BETTER THAN ONE?

By Herb Kadane



There was a very rich man who employed a manager to run his stores. This was a very significant enterprise. Many would have wanted to have this job. The manager sold huge amounts of olive oils, wheat, and many other products. He was building quite a network of contacts and business relationships. He was doing very well, but at some point, he got lackadaisical with his work and not taking seriously what he was tasked to do by the rich man. His work must have become a lower priority in his life. Maybe he got busy feeling important, was at the chariot races all the time, or just sat by the stone pool drinking wine and talking all day. We don't know for sure, but we know that he was not doing his job. This led to losing business, squandering profits, and neglecting the work. It probably lasted a while or it took place long enough that someone brought it up to the rich man. The shrewd manager tried to make amends after he was told he would lose his job, but it was too little too late.

So, how does neglecting one's job and doing too little too late connect with our desire to convey concepts of grace and stewardship? What is grace? What is stewardship? How do these two words that mean so much and bring so much value guide us in our parish life?

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There are times when I can relate to the manager in this parable. I don't think I'm alone in this attitude of just taking an easy approach to solving the task when spending more time might be the better answer. Sometimes it works to take the easier approach, but sometimes it does not yield good results, and I need to start over. These are the times when I need to offer myself some slack which could also fall under allowing myself to feel God's grace of forgiveness, love, and guidance. Allowing my focus to turn to him and away from the daily grind and frustrations just may be the thing that can get me back on track. I need to be willing to take a break and a breath and say it is okay not to have all the answers. Allowing this grace in my life will help me to experience more of God's love and compassion, even when I am not at my best.

I wonder if the shrewd manager would have benefited if he would have just stopped and thought about how many opportunities the Rich Man had given him. He got caught up in the weeds of everyday life and could not or chose not to step back. Even though he was trapped in the weeds, his life still could have been turned back around if he had just remembered the guidance and framework of what the Rich Man had shown him.

We may all at times need to look around and see if we are in the weeds. If we are, then God's grace is ready to help us out. Grace frees us up to do more for his Kingdom that we live in and brings forth a desire for stewardship just out of being thankful and appreciative of what he has done for us. We can unlock our talents and treasures to serve him and others in our everyday life. We each have something to give and to offer our parish fellowship and to the world around us. Try and find your talents and treasure to share. It could be an incredible and exciting happening for you.

Our church body knows we have foundational differences. Any diverse gathering will have differences of opinion. It is okay to have these differences, whether it is under political or race, or understanding of gender. By showing each other kindness and understanding we can extend grace to one another, even when these differences may challenge us. Recently, the church has wrestled with differing understandings of marriage. Ascension aligns with the national Episcopal Church's belief that same-sex couples can marry here, whereas the Diocese of Dallas holds the traditional view of this sacrament. I favor the more traditional view held by the diocese and like others in our parish and diocese. However, even though I am more traditional and conservative in my philosophies I have always tried to understand other perspectives on the issues. The most important thing for me is that I enjoy this parish and as such will choose community and friends over differences.

So, by recognizing each other as God's children we choose to respect each other for our differences. In conclusion, having God's grace will encourage us to work together as one body. This is the essence of grace in action. Letting go of the judgments, mistrust, and attitudes that keep us at odds. If we can do that, we will each bring forth forgiveness and tolerance that will help us to endure the uncomfortable differences and at times hard conversations. This will allow us to get on with the getting on of becoming a church that is made up of one body.

I believe this can bring a renewal of talents and involvement to the church. This is that oneness that God wants for us. It is the core of the message from Luke today as it is teaching us that we cannot serve two masters. God is God. I am I am.

I grew up in Dallas. I was confirmed at St Matthew's. I went to high school at Woodrow Wilson and college at Texas A&M; My parents are Hoover and Nita Kadane and currently live in Hope Arkansas. I have three sisters, three children, two sons and a daughter, and eight grandchildren. I have lived in Garland since 1985. I have been married and divorced now for about the same amount of time, 20 years. I have been in field sales for about 40 years. I have been with my current employer, Industrial Equipment Co. of Dallas for about 17 years. I have enjoyed this church and have met some outstanding people. I have been a recipient of excellent teachings, great books and have had the opportunity to facilitate some of the discussions. I have had a commitment to the church and the operation of the church for many years serving on the property, plant, and equipment committee. It was an area where I could see how vision and dedication could and did make a difference. I encourage all of us to continue to seek and renew our vision that will energize us in the many different areas that are available working as one body in him.

