

**Sermon on the Dishonest Manager**  
**Luke 16:1-13**

Yesterday I went with three other women to our synod's women's event in Albert Lea and while there I experienced three God moments. The first happened when I realized that the woman sent from the National Women's Organization was actually a woman from my home synod in Wisconsin that I knew.

The second happened at lunch. One of the women at our table was from a church in Austin and she asked me if I had ever preached in churches in that area. I said that the only other churches I had preached in were in Mankato and Wisconsin. We then talked about growing up and I mentioned that I had grown up and worked on a dairy farm. The woman from Austin asked me if I had gone to college for anything agricultural and I said that I had gone to Iowa State University as a pre-vet major. Her face lit up and she said, "That's where I know you from!" We had both been pre-vet students who graduated in 1981; had lived in the same dorm and had gone to the same Lutheran church on campus. You tell me how a woman from Wisconsin and one from Iowa go to college together more than thirty years ago and then end up in central Minnesota and meet at a women's event if God wasn't involved!

The third happened as I was listening to one of my class mates; who is now the campus minister at Winona State University talk about campus ministry and how it had a great impact on her life as a college student. One of the stories Pastor Corrine talked about was when she had gone to South Africa for a month. While there she became great friends with one of the natives. One day while they were talking this woman tells Corrine that she shouldn't be embarrassed of her privilege; that she shouldn't try to hide it, but to use it for good. And that's when I had my "aha" moment!

And to think; I almost didn't go because I was struggling with our Gospel reading for today and still hadn't written my sermon. I just had too much left to do yet, but I came away with so much from this event—more than reconnecting with old friends, but also a way to connect with

this reading. I now knew how to approach this reading. I just couldn't get past the fact that the person being praised had gotten his money by being dishonest; until I realized that he wasn't being praised for being dishonest, but for using the money to build relationships that would help him when he lost his job—and he was going to lose his job for being dishonest!

Part of the job of the church is to help us live our faith out in the world the other six days of the week. Too often what we do with a reading like this is to bash those who have money. Money by itself isn't bad; it's what we do or not do with it. Do we control it or does money control us. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 says, "But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the **love** of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains."

The point that I've come to about this parable; it's not about how the manager gets the money—it's what he does with it once he has it! He uses it to build relationships to support him after he's been fired. The early church couldn't survive without members who were wealthy because it was those wealthy members who sold their goods and lands to support those in the church who couldn't work or who worked spreading the Gospel of Christ without being paid.

What would our lives look like if we lived out our faith using our wealth for good instead of our wealth controlling us? I've read where some college graduates today are taking high paying jobs, but are living with the barest of necessities because they give the rest of their money to charity. What would happen if we were to donate money to the Women of the ELCA to give as micro loans for women who wanted to support their families, were willing to work, but couldn't get the capital to start a business? What would it look like if we were to pay a little extra for our coffee and cocoa to support small farmers in developing nations to grow these crops instead of being forced into growing poppies for drugs? What if we were to support Heifer International this Christmas and Easter to raise money for farmers to raise sheep, goats, ducks or chickens instead of depending on charity to survive?

You get the picture. We are privileged, but what matters to God is how we use that wealth. Do we use it to form relationships within God's kingdom? Or do we let our wealth rule over us and we become fearful and hoarding? We have a choice. We can walk out of these doors and try to live out our faith and change the world or we can walk out of here fearful and let the world change us. With God's help I pray that we change the world!