

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

YOU'RE FIRED!

Luke 16:1-13

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost Analysis by Marcus Felde

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. 2So 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.' 3Then 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. 4I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' 5So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' 7Then 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.' 8And 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. 9And 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.

10Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much;

and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. 11If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? 13No 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.”

DIAGNOSIS: You're Fired!

[In the first three steps, we move from 1) a superficial indictment (charges of squandering), by way of 2) an underlying confusion of the heart to 3) the inevitable consequence of expulsion (you cannot be my manager any longer.). Life under the unrelenting laws of economics is not elastic. You make your bed, you lie in it. Do stupid things and you end up paying, sooner or later.]

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : Squandering

Let me guess. Not embezzling and putting in a Swiss bank account. No, this guy was spending it at the tavern on the corner. Buying rounds for Romans. Somebody would have to go and ruin it by telling on him. Ostensibly, what we have here is just somebody who got caught breaking the rules, who is about to get what he deserves.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : Suiting Himself

The game he was playing was, to say the least, imprudent. He was thinking only of today, and taking for granted the position he had. He was eating, drinking, and being merry even though he didn't have the wherewithal himself to do so. Doing so broke the universal laws of economics. That he was willing to do so allows us infer that he was obeying what to him was a higher law: take

care of yourself.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *You're Fired!*

Laws cut. If you take and use what is not yours, you are going to have to pay, one way or another. You will lose your job. Plus you might lose your house. And your family. You could die a pauper. "He who will not work (and put some away in a 401(k)), neither shall he eat (or have health care)." Call it expulsion or termination; either way your connection to the boss is severed.

PROGNOSIS: You're Welcome!

[Steps four through six say that the parable discloses the sort of weird power in Jesus' mission of forgiveness (a la Psalm 130:4: "There is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared," power with which God transforms our situation and our selves, so that we who were getting pink slips are now being fitted for white robes.)]

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Giving It Up for Us*

Enter stage right our Lord, who "could not save himself." Giving his all on the cross, he made common cause (purse) with us who are lost. Defending his welcome of the lost, Jesus has put himself in the story as a wily forgiver of debts.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Advanced Solution) : *Hock and Awe*

Those of us who are lucky enough to be in hock to this fellow are amazed, when we take our IOU tickets to him, to be forgiven. When he says "Take your ticket and write fifty," we waste no time doing so. This is almost too good to be true, but we'll take it.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Lavishing on Others*

Moved by the love we have experienced at the hands of our Lord and Savior, we ourselves become spreaders of the same type of unstinting charity towards others, sharing what we have, forgiving as we have been forgiven, knowing that we are welcome in the eternal homes.