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Friday's Gospel: Seek First the Kingdom of God

Gospel for Friday in the 31st Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 16:1-8*)

Jesus also said to the disciples,

“There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’ And the steward said to

himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.' So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' The master commended the dishonest steward for his shrewdness; for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light."

Commentary

Today's gospel passage presents a parable that can be disconcerting at first. In chapter 16 of his Gospel, Luke begins to talk about riches. The teachings contained there are not limited to warning against greed and wastefulness. Jesus wants the disciples to understand the need to take good advantage of time because the Kingdom is already near. And this is what they have to strive for above all: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (*Mt 6:33*).

The parable shows us a steward careless with the goods entrusted to him, like the prodigal son (cf. *Lk 15:13*). His master, on seeing that he was not acting responsibly, decides to dispense with his services and asks for an account in order to give it to the person who will replace him.

Finding himself out on the street, the steward does his calculations.

Considering what he is not willing to do, he suddenly has an idea: “I will make friends among the debtors, reducing the amount of their debts!” Jesus then surprises us (a surprise our Lord often tries to provoke through his parables) by praising that unjust man. But he doesn’t praise him for his dishonesty, but rather for the speed and shrewdness with which he has acted in the little time he had. That is, for the effort he has put into attaining what he wanted.

The parable passes judgment on being wasteful with material goods, teaching the disciples to be good stewards of them. They are to make do with what is necessary and put what they have at the service of others to the extent possible (cf. *Lk* 16:19-31). But Jesus by his words is also encouraging us to take

advantage of the present time for the sake of our salvation, knowing that the future is forged in the today and now. “For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?” (*Mt* 16:26). As Saint Paul said: “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time” (*Eph* 5:15-16). “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (*2 Cor* 6:2).

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