

Daily Office Devotional, Friday, November 13, 2020
Proper 27, the week of the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings

AM Psalm 88; PM Psalm 91, 92

Joel 2:28-3:8; James 1:16-27; Luke 16:1-9

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, Book of Common Prayer

Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, Book of Common Prayer

Compline (Night Prayer), Page 127, Book of Common Prayer

Daily Office Gospel, Luke 16:1-9

16:1 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. 2 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." 3 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. 4 I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes." 5 So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, "How much do you owe my master?" 6 He answered, "A hundred jugs of olive oil." He said to him, "Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty." 7 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." 8 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. 9 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.

David's Reflections

This parable presents us with a scene quite reminiscent of contemporary life and the ways in which power gets exercised and abused. The manager found himself accused of dishonesty or incompetence by his peers to his superior. The parable cites no evidence to support that slander; off stage, beyond our vision, the manager's adversaries made their accusations. On stage, in our vision, he stood accused. We do not know the facts of the case.

He realistically assessed his situation. He would not survive as a day laborer; his lack of physical conditioning would make him no match for peasant workers, and he would be reduced to begging and to an early death by hunger and disease. And, begging offended his pride. His response was to call in vendors who owed the owner principle plus interest (the interest was hidden in the principle because of the Old Testament prohibition against charging interest). He had the discretion as manager to set interest and principle, so he used that discretionary power while still in possession of the accounts to write off the interest and reduce the debts.

This set up an offstage reaction. Those so blessed went to the owner to praise him for his generous spirit; this is not related on stage, but we can infer it from the owner's praise. That in turn generated an onstage response from the owner, praising the manager for his shrewdness. What could have been the manager's goal? Perhaps to win his job back by demonstrating his forethought? And, he well may have gotten it back, given the high praise of the owner.

This story highlights the ways in which we exercise and abuse power in our offstage maneuvers. If we do not have power to effect change onstage, we can exert our influence offstage to manipulate events and people for our advantage. You no doubt have felt yourself victimized by offstage talk and actions. Perhaps Jesus' warning here has to do with our resisting the temptation to distort reality offstage to control what happens onstage, a most appropriate caution for those living in Christian community.

Collect of the Day, Proper 27, the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

O God, whose blessed Son came into the world that he might destroy the works of the devil and make us children of God and heirs of eternal life: Grant that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that, when he comes again with power and great glory, we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 236)

A Collect for Fridays

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 97)

For Peace

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with

your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 258)

In the Evening

O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. *Amen.* (BCP, 833)

A Collect for Mission

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 280, 515, 528, 540)