

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST C 07

Today's Parable is an interesting one - not least of all because why Jesus told it is not always clear to our modern ears.

In some ways it forms a good "pair" with the parable of the "Prodigal Son" which precedes it. The young son and the steward both squander or scatter what they have been given. They both talk to themselves in trying to hatch a way out of their fixes, and both are saved in the end by mercy, compassion.

Anyway let's take a closer look at this parable.

In setting the scene, we need to remember that in Israel, you could not lend "with interest" It was against the law. So those with wealth found neat ways around it.

e.g. you want to borrow 80 units - be it dollars, bags of wheat - whatever, that's fine; I will lend that to you, and in 12 months time you can give me 100 units; agreed, ok - so we write out a bill of exchange and the only figure on it is 100 - the amount to be repaid and the time at which it should be repaid - simple, shrewd and naughty.

It is with this background that we can understand the skill of the cunning steward.

The rich man is about to dismiss his steward or manager - because he had been squandering the wealth of the rich man.

So the manager plots to sort out a solution that will enable him to "have a life" once he has lost his job.

So he does the rounds of those who owe his employer - he writes down their debts to the amount that was "interest free" - and the rich man can do nothing - or he will be caught out!

Very clever!

The rich man will get his rightful due, the manager has made some useful friendships – so he will do alright.

Jesus' listeners would have understood the parable quite easily.

He is challenging them as stewards of greater riches to exercise their stewardship properly. And behind the parable is the constant Lukan theme of the generosity and compassion of God – even when we do the wrong thing!

Jeremiah wails tears of bitter grief over the suffering of the people because the leaders of Israel had not exercised their stewardship properly and now everyone is suffering – especially the poor.

And isn't it always the same – the “little ones” are the one who suffer for the failures of the leaders to exercise their leadership in a proper manner.

The plight of the Indigenous people of the N.T. (and Australia generally) is because successive leaderships – Federal, State, Local and Indigenous leaders themselves have not exercised a proper stewardship. And who suffers the most – the children.

As Christians we are called to exercise a good stewardship of the gifts we have been given.

How can we best use our parish resources, together with our own, for the service of God in the parish of Box Hill?

How do we best share the Gospel values with a society that +Rowan Williams (A/Bp of Canterbury) describes as “Trivial, obsessed with celebrity, damaging to children and marked by a moral vacuum”?

We are faced with great challenges, but we also have the greatest power in the universe guiding, strengthening and inspiring us.

St Paul reminds us that God desires all people to enter into his Kingdom – our call is to help people respond to that invitation.

Pray for our Vestry as we look to our future – the future God gives us.