



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Lent (C)

April 7, 2019

Learning from Our Best Teacher

By Mary Katharine Deeley

At the climax of *The Miracle Worker*, the play about deaf and blind Helen Keller and her teacher, Annie Sullivan, Annie spells W-A-T-E-R into Helen's hand while water pours over Helen's other hand. Helen's face changes as she suddenly makes the connection between the signs Annie is making and the reality of the water. Helen starts touching things wildly while Annie signs the letters in her hand at an ever-faster rate. Finally, Helen points to

Annie, who spells T-E-A-C-H-E-R in her hand. The best teacher is not the one who can speak the loudest or the most, but the one who patiently does the same thing over and over until the student makes the connection and finally learns.

Jesus is our teacher, and in the Gospel story today he demonstrates it not with a wordy lecture but by drawing in the dust and inviting his reluctant students to think about what they are doing. We don't know what he wrote, and it isn't important. He neither engaged in the debate nor shamed the woman brought before him. He made the scribes and Pharisees look and wait. Then he asked them to judge themselves first. It's a good lesson for us all. Before we condemn anyone else, we should look at the ways in which we have sinned. The lesson continues for the woman as she is told to go and sin no more.

As Helen was attentive to Annie, let us be attentive to what Jesus spells out for us. His lessons lead us to new life and the knowledge of God. +

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Sunday Readings

Isaiah 43:16–21

Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; See, I am doing something new!

Philippians 3:8–14

Forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling.

John 8:1–11

[Jesus asked,] "Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you."

A Word from Pope Francis

Jesus...taught that the true battlefield, where violence and peace meet, is the human heart...When he stopped her accusers from stoning the woman caught in adultery, and when, on the night before he died, he told Peter to put away his sword, Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence.

—World Day of Peace, January 1, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Learning often requires persistence. Am I persistent in practicing the life lessons Jesus teaches me?
- When was the last time I put my sins behind me by participating in the sacrament of reconciliation?

Generosity in Forgiveness

By Gregory F. Augustine Pierce

The story of the Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1–13) is often used to justify operating by the rules of the marketplace. In that parable, Jesus praises the manager for being wise in the ways of the world. After he is caught and about to be fired, the steward begins feathering his own nest by calling the rich man’s debtors and offering them a deal to settle accounts. In this way, the dishonest manager figured—probably correctly—debtors would “welcome me into their homes” after he was terminated.

The lesson seems to be that if you’re caught cheating, you need only figure out a way to come out on top. Jesus even says, “The children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.”

But Jesus wasn’t promoting shady business practices, and his subsequent comments bear this out.

First, notice that the dishonest manager is never praised for his original “squandering” of the master’s property. We’re never told what his crime entailed, but presumably the manager was stealing the owner’s money for his own use. Rather, Jesus commended the manager for his subsequent actions. Let’s take a careful look at what the manager did:



The manager called in the owner’s debtors and got them to pay up by offering them reductions: “To the first he said, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ He replied, ‘One hundred measures of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Here is your promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.’ Then to another he said, ‘And you, how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘One hundred kors of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Here is your promissory note; write one for eighty.’”

Luke concludes the parable with, “And the master commended the dishonest steward for acting prudently.” So, what the manager was praised for was his industriousness in forgiving some of the debt, not for feathering his own nest.

Generosity Day by Day

This is all part of Jesus’ ongoing description of what the reign of God (his kingdom) is like. Generosity, forgiveness, and industriousness are hallmarks of that kingdom, which Jesus taught us to pray would come “on earth as it is in heaven.”

How does this relate to our lives on our jobs, with our families, and in our communities? We’re called to be industrious about forgiving others their debts and giving away the rich man’s (God’s) things! We’re not to emulate the

dishonest manager’s dishonesty, but to model his generosity.

Whom must we forgive, and what of God’s do we have to give away? One way of looking at it is that everything we have is God’s. He is the ultimate owner. And we are to forgive everyone—ourselves included.

Living God’s Reign Now

Yes, the money that the dishonest manager was forgiving belonged to the master (who clearly symbolizes God the Father in Jesus’ parables). But God is a different kind of owner, one who wants to give everything away. The manager finally “got” what the rich man was all about and started doing what his master had wanted all along. Instead of squandering the master’s money, the manager was expected to forgive and share with others.

If we are going to serve God in this world, then we must operate by God’s rules, which aren’t the rules humans are used to following. In God’s reign we do not squander the owner’s wealth for our own purposes. We are to forgive others’ debts and give away the owner’s wealth. +



*Lord, your grace and love
make me whole. Help me to trust
in the endless possibilities
of the present moment.*

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 8-13

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
Dn 13:1–9, 15–17, 19–30, 33–62 or
Dn 13:41c–62 / Jn 8:12–20

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Nm 21:4–9 / Jn 8:21–30

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:
Dn 3:14–20, 91–92, 95 / Jn 8:31–42

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:
Gn 17:3–9 / Jn 8:51–59

Friday, Lenten Weekday:
Jer 20:10–13 / Jn 10:31–42

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Ez 37:21–28 / Jn 11:45–56