

### **Jeremiah 8: 18-9:1, 1 Timothy 2: 1-7, Luke. 16:1-13**

A businessman who leads his own company interviewed three applicants for a job.

As a test, the businessman asked to the first applicant, "if you divide six by two, what is the result?"

The first applicant said, "three." He was not hired for being too honest.

The businessman asked the same question to the second applicant. The answer was, "two." Again, he was not hired because he was dishonest and for being an ignorant fool.

The third applicant answered, "Sir, if I were to divide six between you and me, I would rather give you four and take two, myself."

He was hired for being clever.

In today's gospel passage we see a dishonest manager who in the end was commended for his cleverly performance. Instead of giving his utmost commitment to job and the master, this manager cheated his boss. Instead of getting angry this boss found about it good, and he commended his manager for using his head, for thinking fast on his feet, and collecting all that money.

Let us look at the function of stewards in the ancient economy. Luke the evangelist describes in chapter 12 about the most basic duties of a private steward as being responsible for overseeing the owners' workforce in his absence, and the distribution of duties. Rich landowners had employed estate managers, often a slave born in the household, and such managers were given right to rent property or give loans or liquidate debts in the name of the master to manage their estates. The manager was able to represent his master and act on his behalf and enter into contracts. The master had entrusted them to attend the legal matters as well. They were highly paid employees since the master relied on the steward to manage his estate and to yearn a large profit to sustain his lifestyle and to provide the resources needed to fund his competition with others. It is very interesting to know that a steward could not be prosecuted for wrongdoing but could be shamed or dismissed from his position. The studies about the socio-political context of the Jews in the first century AD reveals that the landowners, priests, and scribes engaged directly or indirectly in business activities and in politics with the service of stewards.

Here referring to the shrewd manager, Jesus highlights his creative reckless approach in dealing with his crisis. By pointing out his creative

reckless approach Jesus said that the children of this age are shrewder in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. The steward made strategy that what he had to do and how to do it. When he knew he was in trouble, he started to work on making his future possible and making sure it would be a good one.

If we look at that from the perspective of living out our Christian life, can we be as creatively reckless in bringing about the reign of God to the world through our lives? If our answer is yes, then, we must be creatively responding to God's possessions such as love, grace, and forgiveness, by sharing all of that with others. Can we be creative stewards in channelling our worship, music, prayer, and our church building to love and care for others in our own time? Jesus used this humorous and ironic parable to let his disciples know that dark forces in the world were defeating the light, and therefore, Jesus wanted them to measure up in wisdom to manifest their commitment to discipleship.

Here we see the children of the world and the children of the light. The Children of the world do whatever it takes to gain more material possessions, move up the ladder of success, and make crafty decisions to make themselves look good. But the children of the light receive the grace of God and apply it to extending the gospel to all nations. They make use of the blessings, gifts, talents and resources of God to take his message to the world, and thus, make him the focus and give God glory in everything they do.

Our Christian mission becomes real and successful when we spend as much time, effort, and money on it as we do our worldly activities. I am happy that you have shaped your Christian life in line with discipleship of Jesus Christ, and through which you are doing Christian ministry diligently. In our vestry meetings we take decisions creatively with the guidance of Holy Spirit. I would like to tell you story of a woman who interestingly recollects one of the moments of her decision making.

Once a woman opened the door of a building, and when she was about to step outside, she heard a voice saying, "Don't take the next step, if you do, you will regret it." She paused and a brick came crashing to the pavement right where she would have been standing. She looked around and there was no one nearby.

The next day when this woman was about to step into the street, she heard the same voice, "Don't take the next step, if you do, you will

regret it.” As she paused, a truck came racing by and smashed into a nearby vehicle. She knew if she hadn’t listened to that voice she would have been hurt badly or may be even killed.

She looked behind her and there was no one nearby. She asked, “Who are you?”

The voice replied, “I am your guardian angel.”

The woman said,” Oh, if that’s the case, where were you on my wedding day?

Sometimes we have regrets over decisions we have made. Or perhaps we may regret about our failure in taking right decision on right time. Therefore, Jesus demands us to measure up in wisdom to be creatively wise in the pursuit of stewarding. The shrewd steward had a great thought that he could use the resources of his master to benefit others and make friends so they would remember him later. I think what Jesus was saying here is to use the blessings of God for eternal purposes. There are people around us living without proper food, proper health and proper shelter. God has blessed all of us with wealth and abundant life. Therefore, let us take considerable efforts to help the needy and spread the gospel of Christ to all the nations.

We are the debtors in the parable. Our debt is graciously reduced and finally totally cancelled (cf. Col 2:14). It is a huge debt: 800 gallons of olive oil, 1000 bushels of wheat, hardly repayable. An experience of the continued awareness of God’s extravagant grace, opens the door to a restored relationship and a new home for a united family of God. Let’s measure up in wisdom to live out our faith effectively by forgiving, loving, and caring. Amen