

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Nov 7th 2014

Today's Gospel tells the parable of a rich man whose steward was reported to him for squandering his property. I was somewhat confused by the rich man's reaction in this text until I read one of the commentaries. It appears that the dishonest steward would normally have been the beneficiary of a portion of a payment. In reducing the size of a promissory note, he was in effect giving up his surcharge. The steward's reduction of the debtors' responsibilities was prudent (in making friends for the time after his dismissal) rather than exemplary. He was basically acting in his own long-term interest.

I think about the personalized address stickers that we receive unsolicited in the mail. I have been told that this little gift significantly increases the donation rate to an organization that sends these labels along with their solicitation. The steward's method has even been adopted by non-profit fundraisers. When we receive something we want to respond with something of similar or greater value.

I tend to respond to receiving a gift from another person with a desire to give back. I worry that this response grows more out of an aversion to feeling indebted than from real desire to act out of good will. I am concerned that my response to God's gifts is not much better. Too often I take for granted the things that are gifts. Too often I start to feel a sense of entitlement. I find that the day-to-day events take precedence over a daily examen and a response of gratitude. This leaves me worrying about the quality of my relationship with God.

I find the role of a giving parent easier to assume than that of a grateful child. I like being the one in control of a situation. I am uncomfortable in the role of the receiver. When I was young I benefited from generous parents. As I got older they continued their unconditional generosity. I began to feel a need to pay them back, an aspiration that I could never meet. I think that I share this with all of my siblings. When we are out together the most stressful part is the fight over who will get to pay the bill.

We are a truly blessed people. Perhaps it is because some of us have so much that we fail to recognize the really important gifts that we receive. My prayer today focuses on these gifts and the gratitude that they deserve.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for one more day with your love and your grace. Thank you for the people and things of this world that reveal your glory. Help me to remember to take the time to notice. Help me to

remember to take the time to feel appreciative. In thankful praise, I ask for the ability to respond in a way that is cherishing and respectful of these gifts.

Mike Cherney - Creighton University Department of Physics