

SUNDAY OF THE STEWARD

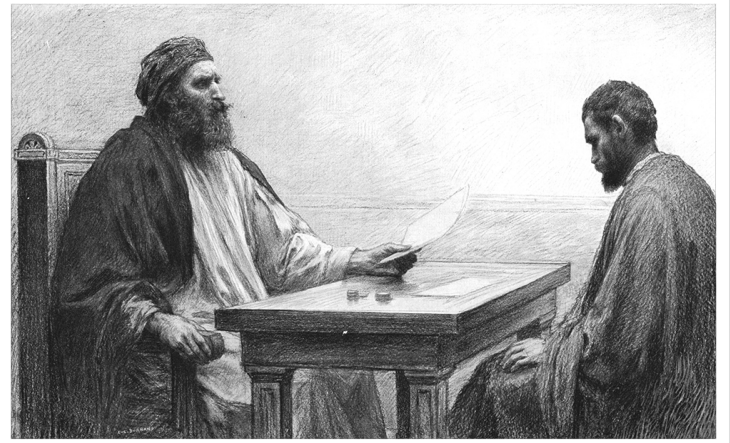
(LUKE 16:1-13)

The steward is the highest class functionary of the great and noble families of ancient times; he controls the entire finances of the family and administers almost all the affairs of the house.

In this parable, the sin of the steward is the same as that of the prodigal son: spend-thrift-ness; that is, using for other purposes properties entrusted to him. Both the prodigal son and the steward spend the belongings of others for their personal use.

The parable of the steward is rightly considered to be one of the most difficult parables of the Gospel to understand. In order to understand this parable one has to differentiate as between the explanation of the “sons of light”, from the “sons of this world”. There exists for Jesus but two classes of men. The first class is composed of those who live just for this world and according to its laws. The people of the second class are those who live for heaven and consequently in accordance with the laws of God. By this parable, Jesus takes an example from the life of the “sons of this world” to give the “sons of light” a lesson and instruction.

The steward of the Gospel is a fraudulent person and is qualified as “unrighteous”. He is a typical “son of this world”, very clever, smart and far-sighted. He is a man who knows how to make profit from all the opportunities provided him for personal benefit. He wastes the possessions of his landlord for his personal use, instead of using them for the family. The landlord, having been informed of the fraud, decides to dismiss him and, therefore, invited him to give an accounting. The shrewd steward uses even this critical situation for his material security. To gain their friendship, he discounts the debts of his landlord’s debtors so that, when he is put out of office, he may be welcomed to their houses. The landlord learns about this new unfaithfulness, too, but he acts like a “gentleman son of the world”. The Gospel says: “The Lord commended the unjust steward for his prudence”.



The parable ends at this point and Jesus, in further elucidation, makes this remark: “For the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light; and I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations”.

The Sunday of the Steward also urges us to use “the mammon of unrighteousness”, that is, material fortune and brain, to buy “eternal tabernacles” or mansions. Besides, the ability to use “the mammon of unrighteousness” correctly is a guarantee that we will be able to utilize beneficially “the true one”, that is, the lasting riches – our spiritual capacities. For if we can not make use of the material which is “foreign” to our nature, no one will give us that which is “our own”, namely, the “talents” of the “sons of light”.

The central instruction of this parable is encouraging also for those who, though “not far from salvation”, but being occupied by worldly problems, can not yet devote time to lay up spiritual treasures for themselves. We may have friends in heaven by performing benefactions in this world; for each person is an intercessor for his benefactor by the throne of God. However, if one of the conditions for our admittance into the “eternal tabernacles” is the good management of the worldly riches, derived from a good stewardship, the other condition is the prayer.

To that idea is dedicated the next Sunday, the Sunday of the Judge.