

Seedling Group Questions for the sermon of September 22 – The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The sermon for September 22, “Survivor Contestant,” can be found at www.saidanotherway.org

Questions for opening up

What was your most valuable possession as a child? What made it so valuable?

Which household item or supply do you use most sparingly? Why?

Read Amos 8:4-7

Based on what the prophet says in this passage, how would you describe Israel’s main societal ills at that time? Is there anything comparable in our time?

Why doesn’t God tolerate the types of practices mentioned here?

In your opinion, how often are a person’s or society’s business and commerce practices an indicator of spiritual health?

Read Luke 16:1-13

This parable has been described by many scholars as the most difficult of Jesus’ to understand. What jumps out at you as peculiar, both in the parable and in the follow-up comments Jesus makes?

“You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.” How does this adage apply to the dishonest manager? In what ways is that adage at work in today’s business world? Is it healthy or unhealthy?

Some interpreters have suggested that the dishonest manager is actually a parallel figure for Jesus Christ. In what ways might that make sense?

Putting things together

What are some of the “masters, “ other than wealth, that compete for our allegiance?

Pastor Phillip says, *“Jesus wants the same cleverness, ingenuity, and grit among his disciples but with a key twist: they should be focused on bearing Christ’s light, on advancing the kingdom. Like a shrewd ‘Survivor’ contestant, the disciples should quickly assess what sacrifices are required in any given circumstance and readjust in order to get the world to revolve around Jesus.”* Do you typically think of craftiness or cunning as a Christian virtue? Why or why not?

Why do you think Jesus says it’s impossible to serve God AND wealth? How, then, should we treat wealth?

Making it personal

What types of businesspeople or business and economic practices do you tend to admire? Why?

Do you tend to apply as much grit and creativity to your life of faith as you do your financial/career/extracurricular life? Why or why not?

Amos 8:4-7

⁴Hear this, you that trample on the needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,
⁵saying, "When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain;
and the sabbath,
so that we may offer wheat for sale?
We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,
and practice deceit with false balances,
⁶buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
and selling the sweepings of the wheat."

⁷The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

Luke 16:1-13

¹Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.' ³Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' ⁵So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' ⁷Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' ⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

¹⁰"Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."