

From the Old Testament of the Day: “And the afflicted people Thou wilt save; but Thine eyes are upon the haughty, that Thou mayest bring them down.” [2 Samuel 22.28]

From the Epistle: Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. [1 Corinthians 10.12]

From the Holy Gospel: “And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done shrewdly.” [Luke 16.8a]

**God, our heavenly Father, reveals in today's texts His eternal fatherhood over us. His goal is to raise up saints, as St. Paul teaches: “God gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: [1] for the perfecting [the healing, the mending] of the saints, [2] for the work of the ministry, [3] for the edifying [the up-building] of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.**

**God is doing this with every one of His children, that is, with every one who has been born again of water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism and thus turned from being a creature of God's creation to being a child of God' handiwork. In**

**Christ, God sees us as we shall be for all eternity. In Christ, we do not see ourselves, but we see Christ for us, Christ in our stead, and thus we understand God our heavenly Father's goal for us.**

**I.**

**It is for this purpose that our Lord Jesus teaches His disciples the lesson that you heard in the Holy Gospel this morning. It is a lesson that puzzles many, for it seems to present God praising sinful behavior. But when this teaching device is understood as Christ intends, the point is the manner in which God raises us up toward the fullness that is in Christ.**

**Today's teaching session from Christ to His apostles-in-training presents a lesson in which a wicked, self-serving, sneaking, and unjust steward, or manager, having been caught at his cheating, does some more cheating, and then Jesus states, as the puzzling point: “ and the**

**lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done [shrewdly].”**

**It appears that Jesus has the lord of the estate, the rich owner, praising larceny, stealing, cooking the books, all so that the wicked steward would make some friends among the rich owner’s debtors, that he might be hired by one of them, having been fired by the rich owner. It appears that the owner praises evil, but this is not so.**

## **II.**

**Every year we are given the key to this lesson, and we again pick up the key only to misplace it again, so that when the 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity rolls around again, our mind is searching itself to find that key again. Well here it is: the rich man displayed his character of mercy in that, when he was informed of his steward’s thievery, he confronted him, and he fired him – but, that was all! He did not follow up with the usual punishment of having the stealing**

**steward locked up in the debtor’s prison, until the man’s family and friends could raising up the funds to repay the rich man for the amount of his wealth which was stolen by the unjust steward. That is normal. That is how life is conducted.**

**But instead, the rich man showed mercy to this steward, who had cheated him. And – you still don’t have the key in hand, just the background, but here it is now – the steward knew that this is the character of the master, to show mercy; it was not just an occasional behavior pattern – it was the very center and core of the rich man to show mercy. Thus, the rich man would not change his verdict when he found the steward doing further cheating that he might be hired by one of the beneficiaries of his thievery. That is the bet, the wager, the only way that the unjust steward can actually pull this deal off.**

**And he was right! It worked! “And the Lord**

**commended the unjust steward, because he had done shrewdly!” You see, in an odd, earthly, story-land way, the steward has faith in the master’s mercy, and he acts accordingly, he lives by that faith.**

**Jesus tells this story specifically to His disciples as the capstone to the Lost and Found parables. You are lost – God searches you out. God finds you. God brings you to Himself. God restores you. God the Father sets you before Himself, already perfect in His eyes – by seeing you through His Son – and God promises you His love, His mercy, and His faithfulness, as He leads you through the childhood and adolescence of the Christian life, into the fullness of the manhood, which is found in Christ and which covers you now and always. That is the key that unlocks this mysterious teaching moment: and the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done shrewdly: for the**

**children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”**

### **III.**

**This is not an invitation to do whatever we are tempted by sin to do – that is twisting the story too far. Lest you do that, God warns in the Epistle: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall.” This warning simply says: Don’t abuse God’s grace! At every instance where God’s law shows you your sin, stop and flee to God’s mercy, for you are His child. He makes promises to you that you might live by faith – the seemingly crazy measure of faith! Here, He shows the basis for such faith. The basis is in Him. He will heal. He will mend. He will raise up. He will never let you go. He will for all eternity present you unto Himself in Christ. It is His character. It is His nature upon which He urges you to lean, as His chosen child – in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!**