

If I were to ask you to remember all of the things you did in the last 24 hours could you do it? I have no doubt that there are some here who could do it, but I am not one of them. But I bet you could name at least the top three. Those three things that occupied the bulk of your time, or energies. These are the things that invigorated you, broke your back, strained your brain, nourished your soul or left a dent in your bank account. You recall them because they left an impression - good or bad, on your memory. Now, if I ask what it was that motivated you to do those three things, you could also probably figure it out, but it might require some thought. But... if I were to ask what motivated your motivation... that would be a tougher question to answer. But if you could answer it, then I might ask what motivated your motivation to be motivated?

This self-reflection is a critical element in understanding who we are and why we act the way we act. Some might connect this line of reason to be psychological in nature and they would be partially right, but it has a Spiritual element as well for we will eventually learn who or what we serve. Who or what holds the greatest influence in our lives?

And, once known, we cannot ignore the answer because it logically places us under judgement from God and ourselves. And what we do about our judgement is an eternal matter. If our root motivations are wholesome and holy and based in a love for God and others, then we ourselves are not far from the Kingdom of God. If they are not, if they are based on pride, or lust or avarice we have the opportunity to change.

The steward in today's Gospel confronts the reality that he can't go on living the way he has been. He is under judgment, and must give account for what he has done. He has misused his master's resources, and he has misused the power that he received from his Master. And so both will be taken away.

He is about to be fired and he makes an honest assessment of who and what he is - too lazy to dig and too proud to beg.

I would venture to say that most of us, when it comes to the spiritual, sometimes we can all be too lazy to dig. We stay at the surface of our faith, knowing the rules, keeping the Sabbath, but allowing only a fraction of faith to guide our actions. We might give alms because we are impelled to do so by the tenants of our faith, which does do material good . . . But imagine what the world would be like if we are impelled by our love and respect for the poor rather than a duty, no matter how noble that duty is.

In the same way, we can be too proud to beg, to pray, to ask God's help in the everyday things. Our pride has us going it alone, relying on our own intelligence or resources. Many of us, including myself, have experienced the results of such thinking and acting - and I know that sometimes it works out - but for me, most often it doesn't. This is not shocking.

The shock of the Gospel story is that Jesus holds this servant up as a good example for the Christian.

He is not a model of repentance. His actions are dishonest, he cheats, he lies, he schemes. He is a child of this world, driven by a purely selfish motive - to make friends and be welcomed into the homes of his master's debtors. But - he was not passive. Nor should we be passive Christians. We should be doers of the Word and not just hearers as St. James tells us in His epistle.

On a natural level, Christ is telling us to be active and to act prudently, but this also carries into the spiritual. Our Lord never condemns wealth or money - but warns us against choosing them or anything else, over Him. And it must be a choice of our heart, and in order to make such a choice we must actively seek to know our own hearts. Both to know them as they are and to seek to know how Jesus intends for them to be.

The Christian has the friendship of the Saints who long for them to come into their home - the home of our common master.

The Christian eventually comes to realize, as the steward does, that what we have is not honestly ours, but what in truth belongs to another, our Master, yet it is given for us to use - prudently- in this life.

The Christian eventually comes to realize that all the mammon in the world could not have paid the debt we owe our Master.

So He paid it for us, gave His life as a ransom for all, as we hear in today's Epistle.

Timothy tells us that God wants everyone to be saved, even kings and princes, even the lovers of money. But we cannot serve two Masters. By his grace, we should choose to be, as we sing in today's Psalm - "servants of the Lord."

We serve Him by using what He has entrusted to us, time, talent and treasure, to give alms and to lift the lowly from the dust and dunghills of this world as the Psalmist puts it. By this we will gain what is ours and be welcomed into eternal dwellings, the many mansions of the Father's house.