

PARISHES OF  
**ST PIUS X, ALDERLEY EDGE, ST BENEDICT'S, HANDFORTH**  
**AND**  
**SACRED HEART & ST TERESA'S WILMSLOW**  
**WEEKLY REFLECTION**

**Sunday 1st February 2026 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Err.... How can Jesus have said that? (2)**

In Luke 16:1-9, Jesus recounts the parable of the dishonest steward. The master discovers that the steward has been wasting the master's goods and dismisses him. The steward decides to make friends with the master's debtors by cancelling a large percentage of their debts to the master. This is so he will have people to help him out when he loses his job. Then comes this difficult passage: *"The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness. For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light."*

What is the message here? The dishonest steward seems to be commended by his master and possibly to be suggested by Jesus as a template of behaviour for His disciples.

There has been much academic debate on this passage. Some have suggested that the text may have been erroneously modified in transmission.

Another suggestion, which has substantial support, is that at that time stewards would take a commission on the recovery of their master's debts, and that what the steward in fact did was waive his own commission. Alternatively, the steward was releasing the debtors from paying interest – the charging of interest being contrary to Jewish law. He was losing his stewardship for not properly looking after his master's property, but he was not being dishonest by reducing part of the debts owed to his master. This explains why the master praised the steward. He was shrewd enough either (a) to sacrifice his commission knowing that he needed friends more than money, or (b) to win friends and put his Master in a good light by cancelling the illegal interest.

Jesus comments, understandably, that worldly people are better at dealing with the world than are the 'children of light'. However, He then continues: *"So I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it fails, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings."* What are we to make of this?

Let us take it in two stages. First, using (tainted) money to win friends should be seen in the light of the subsequent verses (Luke 16:10-14) where Jesus says you cannot serve God and money. So we make friends on earth by using our worldly goods for the benefit of others.

Using our worldly goods altruistically fits in with many other themes in the Gospels. We may note also the certainty expressed about money (v 9) : “...when it fails ....”

More difficult is stage 2. How do these friends welcome us into ‘eternal dwellings’ (heaven)? Salvation comes through grace from God alone. Nevertheless, we need to have faith and do good works. Jesus says (Luke 16:11): “*If then you are not trustworthy with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches?*” If we are good and faithful stewards of our worldly assets, using them for the benefit of others, by His grace our friends in Heaven will welcome us in.

Stephen S.