

## **Sunday, September 21, 2025—Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

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### **Introduction**

As we are invited today to consider what it means to be managers (rather than owners) of all that we have, it is crucial to recognize that we are bought with a price. “Christ Jesus, himself human, . . . gave himself a ransom for all.” Apart from the generosity of God we have nothing—we are nothing. By God’s gracious favor we have everything we need.

### **Prayer of the Day**

God among us, we gather in the name of your Son to learn love for one another. Keep our feet from evil paths. Turn our minds to your wisdom and our hearts to the grace revealed in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

### **First Reading: Jeremiah 8:18—9:1**

<sup>18</sup> My joy is gone, grief is upon me,  
my heart is sick.

<sup>19</sup> Hark, the cry of my poor people  
from far and wide in the land:

“Is the LORD not in Zion?  
Is her King not in her?”

(“Why have they provoked me to anger with their images,  
with their foreign idols?”)

<sup>20</sup> “The harvest is past, the summer is ended,  
and we are not saved.”

<sup>21</sup> For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt,  
I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me.

<sup>22</sup> Is there no balm in Gilead?  
Is there no physician there?

Why then has the health of my poor people  
not been restored?

<sup>9:1</sup> O that my head were a spring of water,  
and my eyes a fountain of tears,  
so that I might weep day and night  
for the slain of my poor people!

## **Psalm 79:1-9**

<sup>1</sup> O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have profaned your holy temple; they have made Jerusalem a heap of rubble.

<sup>2</sup> **They have given the bodies of your servants as food for the birds of the air, and the flesh of your faithful ones to the beasts of the field.**

<sup>3</sup> They have shed their blood like water on every side of Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them.

<sup>4</sup> **We have become a reproach to our neighbors, an object of scorn and derision to those around us.**

<sup>5</sup> How long will you be angry, O LORD?  
Will your fury blaze like fire forever?

<sup>6</sup> **Pour out your wrath upon the nations who have not known you and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon your name.**

<sup>7</sup> For they have devoured Jacob  
and made his dwelling a ruin.

<sup>8</sup> **Remember not our past sins; let your compassion be swift to meet us; for we have been brought very low.**

<sup>9</sup> Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of your name;  
deliver us and forgive us our sins, for your name's sake.

## **Second Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-7**

<sup>1</sup> First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. <sup>3</sup> This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup> For there is one God;

there is also one mediator between God and humankind,  
Christ Jesus, himself human,

<sup>6</sup> who gave himself a ransom for all  
—this was attested at the right time.<sup>7</sup> For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

## **Gospel: Luke 16:1-13**

<sup>1</sup> Then 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. <sup>2</sup> So 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.' <sup>3</sup> Then 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. <sup>4</sup> I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people

may welcome me into their homes.’ <sup>5</sup> So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ <sup>6</sup> He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ <sup>7</sup> Then 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.’ <sup>8</sup> And 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. <sup>9</sup> And 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.

<sup>10</sup> “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. <sup>11</sup> If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? <sup>12</sup> And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? <sup>13</sup> No 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.”

Prayers and introductions from  
SundaysAndSeasons.com

## Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God, we come to you in prayer for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

O God, teach your church to act in solidarity with the poor, frustrating the efforts of those who trample on the needy and practicing justice in our own life and community. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Almighty Creator, we pray for an end to the misuse of the earth and its resources, that all people may benefit from your abundant gifts and that our stewardship of creation would be marked by justice and sustainability. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Holy One, embolden elected leaders to pursue policies of economic justice for the benefit of all, especially those who are most vulnerable and marginalized. Persuade them by your example of generosity and compassion. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Compassionate God, we pray for all facing illness, those near death, or those grieving the loss of loved ones. May they find comfort and strength in your love. Prepare us to surround them with your healing care. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

God of love, motivate our congregation to enact economic justice through tangible action, prioritizing the needs of our community and sharing resources generously through our outreach and justice ministries. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Gracious God, we give thanks for the saints (*especially Matthew and all*) who now join the heavenly chorus in praising your name. Lift us up from the dust of grief and remind us of your promise of new life. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

We entrust these prayers to you, O God, in the name of Jesus Christ, our redeemer and friend.

**Amen.**

## Reflection

### Love or Money?

A rich landowner tells his unsatisfactory manager he's going to fire him. We don't know how long the employee had to clear his desk, but apparently it was long enough to win friends and influence the people who had accounts with his boss. The manager called them in and reduced their debt. When the boss heard about it, for some reason he didn't call his lawyer but sat back and laughed in admiration.

How could Jesus tell a story where the main character is a crook? Why did the boss commend the bad manager? What is Jesus trying to tell us? This parable can be difficult for us to interpret. One possibility: Dr. Audrey West, in the 2004 Lutheran Woman Today Bible study, described a parable as a story about something ordinary, with a surprise or twist that leads us to experience reality in a new way, so that it may even transform our daily living. The surprise in this parable is not the manager's self-serving behavior, as we've seen for ourselves in some corporate accounting scandals in the news. The surprise is the boss showing mercy.

Does this boss remind you of someone? Maybe the landowner in another parable who pays a full day's wage to farm workers who spent barely one hour in the vineyard? The father running out to welcome a shamed and destitute, long-lost son? Or someone who's been in the news lately? Is there any way that he reminds you of God?

In God's economy, people matter more than profits. The prophet (first reading), the psalmist, and Jesus, telling the parable, agree on this. The epistle writer adds a prayer for "a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity" for everyone, boss and beggar alike.



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