

FUELLING THE FIRE

I know from my own experience as an administrator and principal, that time is precious. Despite our best intentions, setting aside time for our own spiritual nurture can easily fall down the list of priorities amidst the day-to-day pressures and curve balls of leading a school or early childhood community. Yet this is something that we must not allow to be permanently consigned to the too hard basket. We must keep chipping away at it. A theological reality is that we cannot grow in our relationship with God aside from the Spirit being at work in us. It is logical that we use The Word to fuel our spiritual fire. As soon as we open up the Word and reflect on it, we can be assured that the Spirit is at work in us, furiously growing our relationship with Him.

It is our plan to circulate a weekly edition of Gospel Reflections. The Reflections will be on the assigned Lectionary Gospel reading for the following Sunday. We encourage you to commit to setting aside a few minutes each week to let the Spirit loose as you engage with the Reflections. We will aim to have the weekly edition to your email inbox by midday every Tuesday.

In putting together these Reflections, I will not be seeking to articulate a full theological treatise of the passage (far from it in fact), but rather choose just one thread of thinking in response to the question: *“What does this mean for us in Lutheran schools and Early Childhood Centres in the 21st century?”*

Cheers and blessings,

Neville Grieger

(See next page for the first edition of Gospel reflections)

Gospel reading for Sunday 22nd Sept 2019

[Luke 16:1-13](#)

(You are encouraged to click on the Bible Gateway link to view the reading)

This parable has been tagged with at least two different titles: The ***Parable of the shrewd manager*** and the ***Parable of the unjust steward***. Either way, on the surface, the parable seems to make no sense at all. In short, a crook is commended by his master for fraudulently rigging the books (v8), with an underlying motive that is driven only by the need to look after himself!

One can be forgiven for thinking ... where is the Gospel in this story? If we get stuck on the illogical nature of the master commending the dishonest steward, we probably have missed the fundamental point of the parable. Let's dig a little deeper, keeping in mind, this is Jesus painting yet another canvas of how our God operates rather than the parable being about us!

The steward forgives debts. Even though he does so as a person with an image lacking respectability and credibility, note that ...

- **He forgives things that he does not need to forgive and would appear to have no right to forgive.**
- **He forgives his debtors for no reason at all.**
- **He forgives not because the forgiveness is warranted, he simply forgives.**

Sound like a description of someone we know?

That's our God. The God who has forgiven us (past tense) for no reason at all! Fortunately for us, we are not dealing with a just steward!

Yes indeed, the parables are full of twists and surprises and this one is certainly no exception. The danger always lies with taking too much of a literal or real-life view of the story. The Parable is certainly not a call for Business Managers in our schools to cancel debts of people for no reason at all! (But hang on ... maybe there are times in Lutheran schools when we do need to cancel debts of a family?)

We do often make the mistake of interpreting the parables as instructions to us about how we should conduct our lives. In this case, it is yet another vivid illustration of how our God thinks and acts in our world. It is this image of a loving, gracious God that we need to make sure underpins our leadership and our thinking as we strive to connect young people and families to Jesus in our school communities.

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