The Shrewd Manager 2025*
Luke 16:1-17
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I propose to show that Jesus challenges us to move beyond naiveté and placid acceptance of our world and situation and to instead understand everything is in transition and we need to use all of our wits to prepare for what is coming.

May the God who creates us, redeems us, and sustains us, be with us this day, and remain with us always.

Please be seated.

Good Morning!

"And his master commended the dishonest manager, [the same master who fired the manager for mismanaging his accounts, now commends the manager for acting shrewdly: [saying] for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of the light…"

That is confusing. It makes me want to ask:

" Jesus, is this really what you meant to say?"
Let's clarify, for those of us who may not have been listening, completely attentively as the Gospel passage was read.
Did you actually mean to commend the DIS-honest manager and exhortus to,
"make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth"…?

It must be, that we missed earlier on in the reading the part that offered a reasonable context for that later confusing section. ……

Right?

Alas, no. We can read this passage over and over again, and each time we will be stuck with Jesus commending the guy who is slimy and smooth, not upright and true. So…Jesus and the author of the Gospel of Luke, might we offer you an editorial suggestion or two? Perhaps go back to being earnest so we may continue to limit your words to pious, predictable, fortune cookie sayings that stay with us only until we pay the bill and then leave them behind on the table when we exit the restaurant and return to our normal lives.

As you might imagine there are any number of thoughts on this passage in the world of biblical scholarship. Much of it consists of author's attempting to turn themselves inside out—to explain away Jesus' unapologetic admiration for the shrewd guy who is figuring out ways to survive in a world that is seemingly collapsing all around him. The dishonest

manager had a great gig managing the rich man's money, but someone reported him and his boss is soon going to fire the manager so he is doing his best to make some friends to help him when the world as he knows it, turns one more time and tosses him off to the side.

Rather than trying to explain this parable away, or preach on another easier text, I'm going to go with the notion that Justo Gonzalez presents in the *Belief Theological Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (pp 191-193). Gonzalez says, that Jesus is pointing out that everything in our world is changing. Nothing and no one in our lives are permanent. And we who are faithful must WAKE UP and use every gift, every talent, every person in our lives to manage the massive transitions that are about to unfold. All that we have is transitory. The manager's position as chief steward for the rich dude is about to go out the window, on a personal note: our kids are growing up and making their own decisions, the jobs we planned for are changing in ways we never envisioned, our Cathedral is about to call a new dean; on a national level: free speech is under assault by our government, Americans seem to have a tacit acceptance of gratuitous gun violence, as if there is nothing we can do to alter access to guns in our country, our standing in the world as an ally of democracy and defender against tyranny is eroding at every turn. It appears to be the end of the world as we know it. And we must be ever ready, always preparing for these tectonic shifts.

Jesus says, it's not just our call placidly to accept these swirling shifts and changes standing flat-footed as they arrive, then being knocked all around with no sense of agency or power. But rather Jesus says to us, as the shrewd manager did to anticipate and prepare and plan. These are not waves by which we need to be shaken and thrashed, but rather fierce currents and tides that we need to steer, navigate and ferry across.
And each stroke of agency and planned angle of preparation will give us the needed momentum and position to survive and thrive in the world that is about to come.

"Whoever is faithful in a little, is faithful in much." Small steps to prepare for our changing world will lead to larger ones. Shrewd anticipation will power us forward, enabling us to be more at home in this new world, than we ever could have imagined. For Jesus is calling us to be shrewd in this generation so that we might thrive in the world to come.

Amen.

"It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine." REM Maybe….