

OBJECT SUBJECT

Truth is like gold.  
Gold is still gold even when delivered with dirty hands.

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Today's parable from Luke is a bit peculiar. The featured person is of questionable character. He is not a role model, yet Jesus uses him to present a truth.

And, since we tend to venerate the person presenting wisdom or good advice, we should take note of this feature.

Normally, one doesn't digress at the very beginning, but that is what I'm doing.

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We like to put people on a pedestal who say insightful or inspiring things, but should we? And, if that person proves to be not worthy of respect, does that mean the message is also tainted?

One of my favourite university classes was on logic, where I learned many logical and illogical argument forms.

Such as: "Consider the source" is an invalid / illogical premise.

It is not valid to declare, "Well, look who said it" or "If he said it, then it must be wrong."

It's the Message that is important, and not the messenger,..... unless the messenger is Christ. All others fall short, and any pastor who says that she/he practices what he/she preaches either is preaching a diluted message or is a deceiver.

There have been many great messages delivered, yet I don't know of any of "those messengers" who is worthy of the message.

Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Bob Dylan and John Howard Yoder all had their "issues".

Granted, some "issues" were very deplorable; nevertheless, we should not make messengers into heroes.

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With that said, the Steward / the business manager in Jesus' parable was definitely not a worthy model. Yet, he was crafty and consistent.

He was an unsavory character with little moral scruples, and was only concerned for himself.

Scholars believe that this story really happened. Jesus didn't make it up; he merely used it as an example.

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Rehashing the parable:

The rich business owner was informed that his business manager was running down his business, and maybe even embezzling money.

He confronted the manager, and demanded an explanation and for him to turn over the books.

The manager bought some time because he knew he was about to be fired. He couldn't defend himself, and he needed to plan for his future. No one would ever hire him as a manager, and he wasn't fit to do physical work.

So, he decided to use more of the rich man's money to buy friends.

The manager would help those who owed the rich man, knowing that they would be so grateful that they would help him when he was unemployed.

The manager went to those who had outstanding bills to the company, and slashed the amount they owed--some as much as 50%.

And, those were huge debts / significant business deals.

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When the rich owner of the company found out about what his manager had done,.....well he was impressed by the manager's shrewdness.

His reaction may sound strange, but..... it does make sense.

The rich owner was all about making money,.... and he appreciated, even admired the way his manager used money to take care of himself. It was a professional respect, and he was likely so rich, that the loss of funds really didn't hurt him much.

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At this point, Jesus breaks into the parable with an observation, .... before he gets to his main point.

Jesus in essence said, "Look how shrewd and diligent they are; children of the light need to be more committed and creative to the object they are subject to."

The servants / the subjects to money and temporal power work hard serving their master--which is wealth and the illusion of control.

And, everyone is subject to their devotion / to what is valued.

All are slaves to something.

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In the realm of fairy tales, the manager would have confessed when confronted, and then offered to make amends,... just for the sake of doing the right thing. But, that doesn't happen.

You are what you are.

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I was trying to think of a contemporary example for this parable, as Jesus had done, when low and behold, Cameco appeared front and centre in the news.

Canada Revenue has accused Cameco of avoiding over 800 million dollars in taxes.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/ottawa-accuses-cameco-of-multi-million-dollar-tax-dodge-1.1860079>

Apparently, Cameco formed a subsidiary company in Switzerland in order to avoid paying Canadian taxes.

This makes sense: Cameco mutilates the land to get uranium that is turned into a very nasty product, is deeply entrenched with those who make terrible weapons, including depleted uranium bullets and shells, and they are deceptive about how they treat First Nations' people, too.

Plus, their public face of enabling clean energy doesn't look so pure after the disaster in Japan.

And, just like the Manager in the parable, they are using money to influence people to like them, by investing in all sorts of high profile social causes, albeit good causes.  
Expect Cameco to make even more public donations, after this negative news. They'll need to buy more friends.

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They are what they are. They are subject to the object of their obsession--which is making money.  
They are in the business to make money; that is their motivation.

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Moreover, according to Jesus, there is no middle ground.  
We are subject to the object of our affection.

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An additional example from the news this past week is yet another mass killing in the US, this time in Washington DC.  
There are so many guns, and they are too easy to get  
And in spite of shooting after shooting, no one expects the government to enact stricter gun controls.

The reason they won't is NOT because of the gun lobby.

How can US government declare, "You don't need guns. Guns will not make you safer. You don't need them to assert your will or be respected."? How can they promote that ideology?  
The US government has the most and biggest guns in the world, and they are prone to pull the trigger, too.

They can't have gun control unless the government changes. They have to be something they are not, and I don't see that happening, although I pray it will happen.

They are what they are,..... and endless murders by guns is but a consequence.

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Jesus said, You can Not serve two masters.  
Either you are for peace or you are not.  
Either your trust is in money or in God.  
Either you are for God's creation / the environment or you are not.

And on a more serious level:  
A person is either a Riders' fan or NOT.

I don't think you'll see anyone at the game today with Riders' emblem on the front of their shirt and a Lions' emblem on the back.

If you do, they are a fan of humour and not devoted to both teams.

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It is juvenile theology to believe it is possible to be a blend.

A naive teenagers desires freedom and extravagance WITH and keeping all the comforts of home.

Parents laugh at such silliness,..... yet we try to blend our cultures values with the way and teachings of Christ.

We try to be both: a subject to rules of culture and God's way, and then wonder why life is so frustrating and tormenting.

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Jeremiah grieved for his people's ignorance and for their situation--the consequences of their bad choices.

Things were not going well for them. Their wealth and greed only brought problems, including war. And, they didn't get it. They didn't understand.

They were even perplexed why it bothered God that they indulged in idols.

They didn't get it. They had juvenile theology....believing God had rules just to make life difficult for them.

Yet, the opposite is true,..... and idols are a waste of time, energy, resources.... and devotion.

God wants what's best for us,..... and idols,.....including the devotion to monetary power and influence is a waste.....and worse.

Jesus cogently said, "You cannot serve God and wealth."

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So, who/ what are we subject to?

What is it that determines our actions?

What controls our thoughts? What occupies our focus the most?

What priority does money have in church decisions?

What .....or who do we put our trust in?

What is the object of our energy, our time, our devotion and passion?

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I think, in this passage, Jesus is urging us to see more clearly / to become aware ....enlightened about who we serve and how we live.

Jesus declared that it is time to be Honest.

John Lennon once said, "Being honest may not get you a lot of friends, but it will always get you the right ones."

Today's message prompts us to be honest: honest with ourselves, honest with our choices and honest about our involvement in our culture.

This self inspection will likely cause tension because much of our culture and most every business are subjects to money and not God.

Jesus prompts us to look at ourselves and to be honest about what we are clutching in our hands.  
Is it gold or God?

It can't be both.