

Jesus seemed to praise a steward (a manager entrusted with his master's goods) who misused his wealthy employer's money. When the landowner discovered the steward's dishonest practice he immediately removed him from his job, leaving him penniless and ashamed to beg or do manual work. Before news of his dismissal became public knowledge, the shrewd steward struck a deal with his master's debtors. Such a deal won him great favour with the debtors. Since the steward acted as the landowner's agent, such a deal made his master look very generous and forgiving towards those who owed him money. Surely everyone would praise such a generous landowner as the town hero! Since the master could not undo the steward's cancellation of the debts without losing face and making his debtors resent him, he praised the steward for outwitting him and making him appear as a generous and merciful landowner.

What's the point of Jesus' parable? Jesus did not praise the steward for his dishonest behaviour but for his shrewd foresight in relieving the debts of others who he believed would, in turn, treat him as a friend and show him mercy, kindness, and generosity in his time of need and great want. We are **supposed** to be **creative** and **ingenious** in life. But he **reprimands** his followers for not applying that same astuteness to the more important project of preparing for **eternity**. We are **all** like that steward. We know that our **lives will come to an end**, sooner or later. We know it for a **fact**. And yet, are we **effectively utilizing** our resources and opportunities to

prepare for what will come next? This is the question he wants us to ask ourselves. Are we **energetically** building Christ's Kingdom **now**, so as to be able to **enjoy it** forever **later**? Many of the great men and women of the world, the athletes, the movie stars, the political leaders - are **exemplary** in their tenacity, their determination, and their astuteness. They set a goal and let **nothing** stop them from achieving it. They turn **everything** into an opportunity to advance their cause. **No** sacrifice is too great.

Imagine how **different** the Church (and the world) would be if **every Catholic** pursued holiness **that** energetically. But Jesus immediately followed this parable with an exhortation to his followers to make use of the world's material goods, including "tainted money" to relieve those who are indebted to us for the material and physical help we give them in their time of need and want. In the Scriptures *generous giving* is connected with *alms giving* – the sharing of our financial and material resources with those in need (*Luke 12:33*). Those who receive alms become your friends because you are merciful to them in their time of need. And God, who sees all, rewards those who are generous in helping others.

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