

Pastor Roy's sermon from September 18, 2016

Nobody really knows the meaning of today's parable. So if you didn't "get it," while I read it, you have plenty of company. We know the manager was wasting the owner's resources. We know he loses his job. We know he becomes desperate, is afraid, and pretty sure he cannot make it on his own. He is going to need friends, and he does what he has to do to turn acquaintances into friends.

Especially with his comment, "For the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light," I believe he is questioning our over-concern with providing for our physical needs over our spiritual needs. The physical is a driving force. The spiritual, well, isn't that just automatic? But we are easily distracted by many things from our spiritual wellbeing.

What are the things of the Spirit? Is it not relationships? Relationships with God, God's creation, family, friends, neighbor, even enemies? We exist in relation to everyone and everything around us. We do well if we tend those relationships as much as we are concerned about our own wellbeing.

And tending is not just making sure we get what we want and need from those relationships, tending is when we give what we need to give for those relationships to thrive—for the other to thrive.

Martin Luther said, "Many a person thinks he has God and everything he needs when he has money and property, in them he trusts and of them he boasts so stubbornly and securely that he cares for no one."

Unlike in Martin Luther's day, pretty much all of us have what we need to survive, with some extra thrown in. And unlike the man in the parable we only know limited desperation.

We are distracted by the material things which surround us. Food, home, car, energy, entertainment, retirement. And it's a low grade, ever-present distraction, a stress—better work on this, better shore up that—and the relationships which surround us languish if we do not tend them.

And Jesus lobs this parable at us. He asks, "Anyone out there desperate?" Anyone desperate to tend the relationships which form our spirits? Anyone out there willing to trust someone and all besides themselves?

Is Jesus calling us to seriously question our assumptions? To consider the balance of our lives? Is Jesus suggesting that maybe we really should be desperate. That we powerless to change our place in the universe—our many relationships in the web of creation—and that is a good thing? That all the energy we put into controlling everything around us is wasted energy. We squander mental and physical resources which could be shared for the benefit of humanity and the rest of creation. Billions of dollars on powerful weapon systems, millions of dollars controlling political systems, and, personally, a lifetime of concern and energy for a result which we are powerless to determine.

Is Jesus sowing seeds that will grow into the realization that the only thing that matters is that we are all children of God and God will never forsake anyone or anything in any way that is part of beloved creation.

The parable invites us to prayer—which is relationship to God. Meditation—which is relationship to ourselves. Study—which is relationship to our surroundings. Patience. Communion with Christ. Communion with our sisters and brothers in faith. Communion with those who are very different from us, in race, in faith, in culture.

Let us not hold back. We are much, much more desperate than we realize. We really are desperate for true, meaningful, relationships. For grace. For love. For sanity and peace. And the joy is that we have these already because we are children of God. Regardless. If we are mindful of this grace in which we stand. Let us take up this holy desperation. Amen.