

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 18th, 2022



"Jesus' Story of the Shrewd Manager"

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1
Church: 905-685-8294
www.christlutheransc.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon
Bulletin Announcements: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

Pastor: Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com
Parish Assistant: Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca
Business Manager: Karen McCumber business.manager@christlutheransc.ca
Secretary: Pat Kimpel secretary@christlutheransc.ca
Facebook: Lisa Gall www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC
Bulletin by email: Judy Mason chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca

A recording of Sunday's service will be uploaded to YouTube at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING_TKTi9c_OIBbMqGwLw

Prayer: Lord of all power and might, Author and Giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of Your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: Jas. 1: 1-13 Wednesday: Zech. 7: 8-14 Friday: Heb. 2: 11-18
Tuesday: Matt. 10: 40-42 Thursday: Exod. 22: 20-26 Saturday: Jer. 2: 13-19

Musician: 10 a.m. – Louise Gondosch
Reader: 10 a.m. – Don Fretz

SUNDAY SCHOOL is held at 9 a.m. before service. Our focus this year is on “*God’s Good Rules, His 10 Commandments*”. Parents are welcome to stay for a coffee and time to read their own devotions or join in Christian conversation.

YOUTH CATECHISM CLASS 2022—Christ Lutheran Church – Rev. Todd Hoeffs

Youth Catechism Class with Pastor Todd is a time for young people to see their own unique place in God’s Story of love, acceptance, and new life in Jesus Christ. Scripture-rich lessons focus on our identity as Jesus’ brothers and sisters through our Baptismal faith. Preparation for receiving Jesus’ Body and Blood in the Bread and Wine for Holy Communion makes for a meaningful life-long faith journey.

Part of Catechism class is learning how to participate in Sunday worship and undertake opportunities to serve and “live their faith” in small local outreach projects. Altar candle lighting, ushering and training for assistance in Sunday services will be an integral part of class. Because of this, regular attendance during our Sunday worship is a requirement of all students.

Young people who are beginning grade 5 through grade 9 are welcome to join the Catechism Class. The start date and time will be set in the near future.

Please email PastorToddHoeffs@gmail.com to let him know your intention for class. Feel free to ask any and all questions you may have about this. *Your servant in Christ, Pastor Todd*

SOUL MINISTRIES in person will resume again. Pastor Todd and a number of parish volunteers are assisting to ensure the worship, music, food, fellowship, arts/crafts & Bible Bingo continues for this very neglected segment of our society. Between 15 and 20 people who have been the most isolated through COVID are the priority for this outreach. START UP DATE TBD very soon! We thank you for your patience.

Last Sunday Attendance: September 11th, 2022 Attn: 10 a.m. – 83

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or – (--)</u>
Current:	283,291.00	5,554.73	3,137.00	144,305.84	(51,818.70)
LCC Missions	20,000.00	392.16	365.00	10,676.50	(3,170.15)
Property Improvement:			69.00	4,363.00	

INSTALLATION TODAY OF Church Council Members 2022—2023: These are members of Christ Lutheran who are serving the spiritual and property needs of the church both in faith life and in building structure:

Executive:

Chairman:	Don Fretz
Vice Chairman:	Tom Kuhl
Secretary:	Christopher Mason
Treasurer :	Gloria Meyer

Committee Chairs:

Administration:	Theresa Mason
Elders:	Glenn Pink
Fellowship:	Tim Reck
Parish Education & Youth & Young Adults:	Brandon Kemp
Property:	Garth Goodburn
Social/Health Ministry & Worship:	Judy Slingerland
Outreach:	vacant

ORDINATION & INSTALLATION at Grace Lutheran Church, 213 Linwell Road, St. Catharines. Captain Chad Miller of the Canadian Armed Forces will be ordained and installed on Sunday, September 25th at 4 p.m. in a church service. Guest preacher is Rev. Dr. Thomas Korcok. For those desiring to attend the supper reception that follows the service, please let them know that you are coming by Monday, September 19, 2022, so that they have sufficient food. You can email Grace at office@gracelutheranstcath.com and/or call at (905) 646-0113 and leave a message. Please include your name and the number of people attending with you. Pastors of LCC and LCMS and our sister synods are welcome to take part and are asked to vest in robe and red stoles.

Notice to Church Extension Fund Depositors: The Church Extension Fund (CEF) is winding down its operations and as of now all depositors with current addresses have received their deposited funds plus the interest owing. However, we have a number of unclaimed savings accounts and savings certificates as we do not have current contact information for these. If you or someone you know thinks they may have a CEF account which has not been redeemed, please contact Darryll Holland at: 800-465-8179 ext4 or dholland@lcceast.ca. Also if you are in possession of God Bank Savings Stamps or Tracky Stamps, these too can be redeemed by returning the books or stamps to: Lutheran East District, 275 Lawrence Ave., Kitchener, ON N2M 1Y3.

NOTE: RE: YARD SALE ON SAT. SEPT. 17:

A huge “**Thank You**” to all who helped in any way. We greatly appreciate your support. We will let you know the amount we made after totals are tallied.

LMWL-C/MARY MARTHA:

This is such an exciting time to welcome back and extend an invitation to everyone for our new Fall/Winter program. Please mark your calendars so that you may be able to join us:

BAZAAR NOTES: We are hoping to have a **regular Bazaar again Saturday, November 26th.**

*(One extra note***In this ever changing COVID climate that we've been in these last few years., if by any chance in November it is decided in conjunction with Pastor, Judy and council, that for health and safety reasons it is unwise to go back to the indoor portion of our Christmas Bazaar again as we are hoping to, we would make adjustments as necessary and continue with that in a similar manner to what we have done the last 2 years.)*

Tuesday, September 20th – 7 p.m.: Pastor John will share a short Bible Study and talk about his trip to Greece to visit our family. Carole will give a short presentation on the Ontario District LWML-C Convention held at Grace Lutheran Church in June

Sunday, October 2: LWML-C Sunday

Tuesday, October 18, 7 p.m.: Speaker from Salem Chapel - Rochelle Bush (*underground railroad*)

Tuesday, November 15, 7 p.m. Assembly of **Warm Feet for the Streets** sock blessings.

Saturday, November 26: BAZAAR

Tuesday, December 20, 5:30 p.m.: Advent/Christmas Dinner

We look forward to seeing familiar faces at our meetings and welcoming new faces! If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to call Lorraine at 905 964 5837!

We look forward to seeing familiar faces at our meetings and welcoming new faces! If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to call Lorraine at 905 964 5837!

¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3: 14-16



Niagara Zone

Fall Rally

THEME:

THE
POWER OF
THE
GOSPEL

For I am not ashamed of the good news. It is God's power to save everyone who believes it, the Jew first and also the Greek. It reveals God's righteousness as being by faith and for faith, as the Bible says: By faith you are righteous and you shall live. (Romans 1:16)

October 2, 2022 at 1pm
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
1299 Brant Street, Burlington, Ontario

SPEAKER: POYA ZAMANI. His journey to the Seminary in St Catharines, began in Afghanistan.

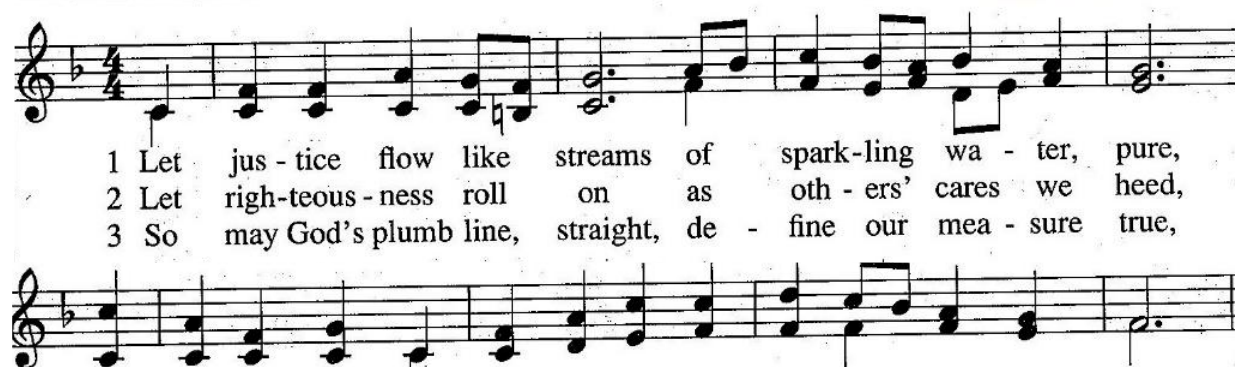
INGATHERING: Halton Women's Centre accepts Presto or grocery gift cards, new women's and children's clothing, and hygiene products as well as monetary donations.

MORNING PRAYER

Lutheran Church of Australia Hymn version of Matins
September 18, 2022 + 10 AM Worship

FIRST SONG: *"Let Justice Flow Like Streams"* www.pennwest.org/2019EveningPrayers

Iane Parker Huber, 1984



1 Let jus - tice flow like streams of spark - ling wa - ter, pure,
2 Let righ - teous - ness roll on as oth - ers' cares we heed,
3 So may God's plumb line, straight, de - fine our mea - sure true,
En - a - bling growth, re - fresh - ing life, a - bun - dant, cleans - ing, sure.
An ev - er - flow - ing stream of faith trans - lat - ed in - to deed.
And jus - tice, right, and peace per - vade this world our whole life through.

Tune: ST. THOMAS S.M.

Aaron Williams' New Universal Psalmist, 1770

SPOKEN MORNING PRAYER SCRIPTURE RESPONSES:

O Lord, open my lips!

And my mouth will sing praises to Your Name!

Come quickly to Help me, O Lord

And be speedy to deliver me from harm.

Teach me Your Way, O Lord, that I may walk in Your truth.

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son + and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Praise to You, O Christ!

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Give glory to our God, our Light and our Life!

O Come, let us worship Him!

PSALMODY

**O come, and sing unto the Lord, come blend your voice toward Him Who saves.
with thankful hearts we enter now, to offer songs of glorious praise.**

**Our saving Lord is a great God a pow'ful King above all gods.
His steady hands embraces earth; The mountain peaks display His worth.**

**The sea and land divinely placed, our Maker, bow before His face,
His pasture nourishes all sheep, He'll shepherd, guard and safely keep.**

**All praise and glory be to You, the Father, Son and Spirit, Who,
Protects and shelters us from fear, His holy name this day revere.**

(Hymn version of Psalm 96; Tune: "All Praise To Thee!" LSB # 883)

Give glory to our God, our Light and our Life!

O Come, let us worship Him!

PSALM 113:

Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD;

praise the name of the LORD.

Blessed be the name of the LORD

from this time on and forevermore.

From the rising of the sun to its setting

the name of the LORD is to be praised.

The LORD is high above all nations,

and his glory above the heavens.

Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high,

who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?

He raises the poor from the dust,

and lifts the needy from the ash heap,

to make them sit with princes,

with the princes of his people.

He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children.

Praise the LORD!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord, hear my prayer,

And let my cry come before You.

O God our Father, since without You we are not able to please You: Mercifully help us so that Your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts. We ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE SCRIPTURES

The Old Testament: *Amos 8: 4-7*

Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying, 'When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.' The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

The Epistle: *1 Timothy 2: 1-7*

[St. Paul writes:] First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time. For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SUNG GOSPEL VERSE.

"This is My Commandment"

www.hymnary.org



1.
This is my com-mand-ment, that you love one an-oth-er that your
2.
joy may be full. This is my com-mand-ment, that you
love one an-oth-er that your joy may be full, that your
joy may be full, that your joy may be full. This is my com-
mand-ment, that you love one an-oth-er that your joy may be full.

Text: John 15:11-12
Tune: Traditional

The Holy Gospel: *St. Luke 16: 1-13*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Luke, the 16th chapter: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

Then Jesus said to the disciples, 'There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, "What is this that I hear about you? Give me an account of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer." Then the manager said to himself, "What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes." So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, "How much do you owe my master?" He answered, "A hundred jugs of olive oil." He said to him, "Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty." Then he asked another, "And how much do you owe?" He replied, "A hundred containers of wheat." He said to him, "Take your bill and make it eighty." And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. 'Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON HYMN: *"Praise With Joy"*

© John Bell 1987 www.hymnary.org/



1 Praise with joy the world's cre - at - or, God of just - ice,



love and peace, source and end of hu - man know - ledge,



Force of good - ness with - out cease. Cel - e - brate the



Mak - er's glo - ry, pow'r to res - cue and re - lease.

Praise the Son who feeds the hungry,
Frees the captive, finds the lost,
Heals the sick, upsets religion,
Fearless both of fate and cost.
Celebrate Christ's constant presence -
Friend and Stranger, Guest and Host.

Praise the Spirit sent among us
Liberating truth from pride,
Forging bonds where race or gender,
Age or nation dare divide.
Celebrate the Spirit's treasure -
Foolishness none dare deride.

Praise the Maker, Son and Spirit,
One God in Community,
Calling us to leave behind us
fear and rank obscurity.
Thus the world shall yet believe
When shown Christ's vibrant unity.

*(Words: John Bell © 1987; alt © 2020 Tune: Praise my soul the king of heaven. J Goss c. 1986 Wild Goose Publications)
© 1987 WGRG / Iona Community / G. I. A. Publications, Inc.*

MESSAGE



1 We praise You, O God, our Re - deem - er, Cre - a - tor;
 2 We wor - ship You, God of our fa - thers, we bless You;
 3 With voic - es u - nit - ed our prais - es we of - fer



In grate - ful de - vo - tion our trib - ute we bring.
 Through tri - al and tem - pest our guide You have been.
 And glad - ly our songs of thanks - giv - ing we raise.



We lay it be - fore You, we kneel and a - dore You;
 When per - ils o'er - take us, You will not for - sake us,
 With You, Lord, be - side us, Your strong arm will guide us.



We bless Your ho - ly name, glad prais - es we sing.
 And with Your help, O Lord, our strug - gles we win.
 To You, our great Re - deem - er, for - ev - er be praise!

Text: Julia B. Cory, 1882–1963, alt.

Tune: *Nederlandsch Gedenckclanck, Haarlem, 1626*; setting: *Service Book and Hymnal, 1958*

KREMSEK
 12 11 12 11

THE OFFERING *is received.*

THE PRAYERS

Let us pray to the Lord on behalf of His Church, the nation, the world and all people according to their needs. For the joyful proclamation of the Gospel here and throughout the world, that those who hear may be brought to faith, strengthened in faith and equipped to live out faithfully their baptismal calling; Be pleased to hear us, O God: **Accept our prayers.**

For this congregation and for the work of the Lord given to us to do in this place, for our unity of faith and life in Christ, and for our faithful financial and prayerful support of all that God has given us to do; Be pleased to hear us, O God: **Accept our prayers.**

For our nation's leaders, HGM King Charles, Prime Minister, Premier, MLAs, for judges, police and for all entrusted with authority and given positions of leadership, that they may serve well, act with integrity and heed the voice of God's Word in caring for all peoples' needs; Be pleased to hear us, O God: **Accept our prayers.**

For the poor and homeless, for the hungry and unemployed, and for victims of violence and prejudice, that the Lord would preserve them and grant them aid and relief from all adversity and trouble; Be pleased to hear us, O God:

Accept our prayers.

For the sick and those who suffer, for those troubled in mind, for the grieving in their sorrows, and for the dying in their last hours [*especially _____*], that the Lord would grant them the comfort of His presence, relief according to His will and peace in their hearts; Be pleased to hear us, O God:

Accept our prayers.

O Lord, our God, whose mercies are new every morning, we give You thanks and praise for all Your kindness toward us, and we pray You to grant us the will and desire to worship You joyfully, to serve You faithfully and to proclaim boldly Your mighty acts of deliverance through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom we offer to You these prayers, and in whom we trust for all things; to You alone be glory, honor, worship and praise, O Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER:

I thank You, Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger. And I pray that You would keep me this day, also, from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe have no power over me. Amen.

BLESSING & BENEDICTION:

Let us praise the Lord:

Thanks be to God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, + be with you all.

Amen.



1. Who am I ___ that the high - est King would wel - come me.
 2. Free at last, _ He has ran - somed me, His grace runs deep.



I was lost _ but He brought me in. Oh, His love for me. Oh, His love for
 While I was a slave to sin, Je - sus died for me. Yes, He died for

CHORUS 1 & 2



me. Who the Son sets free, oh is free in - deed. I'm a child of
 me.



God, yes I ___ am. ___ In my Fa - ther's



house there's a place for me. I'm a child of God, yes I ___

am. I am cho - sen, not for - sak - en. I

30 A D F#m E/G#

am who You say I am. You are for me, not a - gainst me. I

34 A D (1, 3, 4.) D (2, 5.) F#m E/G# Last time to Coda ⊕

am who You say I am. I am (Oh) I am who You say I am.

CHORUS 2

38 D A E

Who the Son sets free, oh is free in - deed. I'm a

Fa - ther's house there's a place for me. I'm a

child of God, yes I am. In my am.

child of God, yes I am.

I am

I am

Yes, I am who You say I am. Who the Son sets

Fa - ther's

free, oh is free in - deed. I'm a child of
 house there's a place for me. I'm a child of

God, yes I _____ am. _____ In my _____ am. _____
 God, yes I

CCLI Song # 7102401
 © 2017 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia
 For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
 CCLI License # 775293

Rev. Todd Hoeffs
PENTECOST 15 (series C)
Scripture: St. Luke 16:1-12
Title: "Can't Buy Me Love"
September 18, 2022

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A comedian once said -- MONEY CAN'T BUY YOU HAPPINESS – was spoken by someone who didn't have any! The Beatles sang "Can't Buy Me Love" As love isn't supposed to have a monetary value. Certainly within our world money makes things move. It's a means to an end, a way to receive the things we need for daily living.

Even getting the things we don't need...There's a great scene about money in the Disney movie Mary Poppins. Mr. Banks, who works at a bank in London, takes his children with him to work. He wants his children to invest their two coins (tuppence) in the bank; but his son Michael wants to give his money to the woman who feeds the birds on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral. This nearly sets off a near screaming match at the bank as a result.

Putting the money in the bank is seen as the wiser choice.

Giving it to the poor woman who needs it, not so wise. And yet Michael sees the world with different eyes. Jesus is encouraging us to consider wasteful, dishonest financial practices to benefit the God's Kingdom in the Gospel today! Make friends for yourselves by dishonest wealth" "If you have not been faithful in dishonest wealth, who will entrust you with true riches?!" Interesting. Sounds a lot like scammers becoming heroes.

We live now in a time of rising interest rates, inflation, and food shortages. Hanging onto money might seem wiser but spending continues at rapid rates. In Lutheran districts out in Western Canada, the 1960's afforded people Opportunity to build churches with money loaned from a Lutheran Church Extension Fund.

Sadly, it was believed then that NO ONE DARE CHARGE ANY INTEREST

(until the 1980's) because many felt churches and Christians shouldn't make a profit.

Might seem pious, but not great business sense. Not so shrewd with earthly goods!

Jesus encourages us to use earthly wealth wisely to win over those who can help you now (for the sake of the Gospel message) and later on OUR LORD will remember

and welcome you into paradise. That's really the point here. If we understand the parable's social setting, we'll see that the manager's actions aren't dishonest, but shrewd.

By shrewd, I mean calculated to insure one's own self-interest.

Shrewd in the Jewish understanding here really means wise. Calculated.

Smart savvy business sense. Luke's Gospel records Jesus' detailed explanations about money and power more than any other Gospel writer. Today Jesus uses the image of a rich man and his manager. The manager has access to his master's wealth, and takes care of the owner's various properties. [perhaps like a personal accountant today.

In Biblical days, a very complex social, economic relationship existed among landowners, managers, peasants, and merchants. The wealthy landowners got as much profit as possible from their tenants. The manager is a middleman between the landholder and his clients in the exchange of goods and services such as buying and selling grain, oil, and crops and collecting rents. If the manager can skim some money off the top for himself in these transactions, the master didn't mind; in fact he expects it.

As long as the master's profits kept rolling in and the manager didn't get too outrageous in his consumption, the master had no problem with shrewd skimming.

As for the merchants and tenants, they had no access to the rich masters.

They had to pay. The manager is both privileged and vulnerable. He had a relatively high standard of living, a benefit of his being able to read and write and his training by the master, but he was completely dependent on the master's goodwill.

The debt burden of the poor is a major social problem in the 1st century world. If you couldn't pay your debts, so much the better. They'd just take your land.

If you didn't have any land left, they might take your daughter. What passed for normal business then would be pirating today. The rich master hears that this manager is "squandering" his money. The master demands an accounting before looking at his record books--What can this manager do now? He's caught. He can't expect to keep the job. He lacks strength for physical labour, and is "ashamed" to beg.

Which would be quite a step-down. He's had an easy job so hard labour would kill him.

Begging is beneath him so he'd go hungry. Rather than despair, the manager reduces the debts of the tenants. The riskier the commodity, the higher the interest.

The interest on oil was 50 percent because it could easily be spilled or spoil. The interest on wheat was 20 percent because it was a more stable commodity. So he's wisely cutting them down in price, making it almost believable and "honest" to the landowner due to rot and waste. It's shrewd & smart and believable.

This reduction of the debts never guarantees permanent love and hospitality.

But it's a win of sorts for him. The rich master cannot blame him for not taking lots of interest, since to do so would be an admission that his manager, with his blessing, had been condoning charging interest, in violation of the Torah. His best bet would be to try and get another position for another member of the landowning elite, thereby saving him from a life of hard labor. Turns out, it's a win for everyone!

The manager's action pleases the debtors who now owe the master less.

His actions please the master who takes pride in the shrewdness of his underling and who, besides, is now on the receiving end of goodwill from the debtors.

All's well that ends well! Now, why aren't Christians, children of the light, just as shrewd with their participation in God's Kingdom? This means we can go about cancelling the debts of others to get in good with them and win them over to the Father in Heaven.

For the Gospel is a free and generous message so we need not pinch pennies when it comes to Jesus. The manager models behaviour Jesus' own disciples should emulate. Instead of simply being a victim of circumstance, he transforms a bad situation into one that benefits him and others. He's created a new set of relationships. By using money wisely he's made a lasting impression for future need. This is how the Kingdom of God breaks into the world in the radical free grace and shrewdness of Jesus Christ.

Old ways are overturned and new friendships are established! Jesus Himself is perfectly shrewd in coming down to earth as one of us and living our life in ways we could never have. He shrewdly threw off the religious establishment

by tearing down their idols of money, power and control and set up in their place HIS CROSS that all Who believe on Him have eternal life.

What looks like He threw His life away by dying for those who received Him not,

it was the shrewdest of plans because in one death all people from every generation are forgiven and all sin debts are paid in full –not canceled, but washed away forever in BLOOD. Blood which still wipes every debt clean in Baptism With a faith life and the Spirit's presence To forgive us as we forgive others. That is God's economy. Nothing more shrewd than the Gospel to get us all off the hook because of Jesus. Think of the Master as God and the manager as the Church. We'd be so applauded for shrewdness in securing friends with dishonest wealth. Now, that doesn't mean we should look into money laundering or fraud. But whatever wealth we have, be it property, cash, talent, intellect and ability, use it wisely, even in a worldly, secular way, for the benefit of God's Kingdom here where we live. So long we understand the balance of serving God and not the wealth (or earthly goods). To serve one Master, to carry Jesus' cross, means to put down the iPad, the phone, the five-iron, the steering wheel, the charge card, the TV remote or that food we don't need to eat or any thing that gets in our way, even our own selves. We need not throw them away. But we must understand that all the things the world values are potential distractions. And we must treat them accordingly. While we as Jesus' Body on earth take seriously what we have and receive, the Gospel isn't about the bottom budget line. God could bless us with far more or far less than we could fathom. So let us cut the debts in half. Let's free others from huge bills of sin and shame and guilt and watch them welcome you into their homes and together you're all welcomed into God's home in Heaven.

The church's business is reconciliation and relationships with Christ and all people you encounter. It is about forgiving our debts, as we forgive our debtors. It doesn't make good economic sense. Jesus has a funny economic way of not making sense.

It doesn't make sense that He invites anyone who believes in Him and desires Him and wants forgiveness to come to Him to dine on His Flesh and Blood. It doesn't make sense to turn your other cheek, throw a party for people that can't invite you to theirs, leave behind a flock because one sheep strayed, or throw a party for your good-for-nothing son who finally came back home with his tail between his legs.

It doesn't make sense that God is born as one of us.

It doesn't make sense that God claims you as his own, or insists you be wise in winning over all people to His Kingdom, even in a worldly way. It doesn't make sense that Jesus would do all he could for a people that responded by nailing him to a cross.

It doesn't make sense that His tomb was empty, or that his disciples experienced Him in the breaking of bread.

And yet He tells us to use everything at our disposal for His Kingdom, ensuring the Gospel message is spread and relationships are made.

Wise with wealth, faithful in furthering God's Kingdom in Jesus, the shrewd Saviour!

Amen.