

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

September 21, 2025



## HONEST

*the rewards we seek and the company we keep*

by Drew Downs

This week, Jesus tells a parable about honesty and integrity that can mix people up. We might think Jesus is endorsing cheating and cutting our way to success. He isn't. Just as he healed a person some prominent Pharisees were ignoring, Jesus is speaking directly to them and highlighting their misplaced priorities.

The challenge for many of us today is that the rewards we claim to want — from joy

and familial comfort to eternal life in heaven because we have been a good person — are almost entirely built on being honest, decent people in the here and now. And also, the here and now brings out the worst in us. Often downright encouraging dishonesty and a lack of integrity.

If we really want to be people of faith with true integrity, it is incumbent on us to be better company for one another.

# ORDINARY TIME

2025

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### Reunion

It is wonderful to be back, to be welcomed and supported by such a loving and generous community! After three months of Sabbatical, it is a time of joy and grace to prepare for reunion, to be among friends again.

The experience is also quite overwhelming. As I walked toward the sacristy on Sunday morning, I found the enthusiasm and gratitude energizing – and kind of disorienting. Not in a bad way, though! Because I wanted to give each person the welcome they were giving me. But there are so many more of you than there are of me! Those numbers add up quickly.

I made a brief reference in the homily to that experience of returning to the building in 2021 after our common time away from it for the first part of the pandemic. And for me, that is how it felt. To be back again after a long time away. And yet the people kept gathering! The church was still the church. Life kept happening here. And I am genuinely grateful that it did!

I'm excited to hear the stories of what the summer of renewal was like here. To hear all the highs and lows and excitements and hopes that came from a blessed time of special gathering and celebration. Please make time to share with me your new pursuits, discoveries, dreams and anticipations that came from the last few months of creating and sharing. Because I want to hear all about it.

With love,  
Drew+

# ORDINARY TIME

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Proper 20C*

September 21, 2025

### **Collect**

Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

Luke 16:1-13

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 accounting 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.

# ORDINARY TIME

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"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."

## Reflection

Sometimes Jesus tells a parable that hits strange because it doesn't sound like him. It sounds like Jesus wants us to cheat people to get along? Or to ensure we have a backup plan? But then says we cannot serve God and wealth? What is he really saying.

Remember that chapter 15 (which we read from last week) involves the tax collectors and sinners leaning in to hear what Jesus had to say while the pharisees and scribes grumbled. Well, the lost parables were for the former and this is for the latter. Jesus is putting up a mirror to the super-religious and saying "You are cheating your neighbors to curry favor with empire — which gains power by cheating. And you are rewarded by cheaters (who hate you, by the way) for cheating your neighbors. But those neighbors? They will be rewarded by God.

What might be easy to gloss over is the idea of wealth and survival, working and gaining, as some kind of personal endeavor. That, after all, is what the dishonest manager is thinking. *I am in trouble. I have to get out of this.* So he hatches a scheme to save himself. Except he isn't. At no point is he alone. He is trying to game the system that holds him and all of his neighbors. And he is doing it with the full understanding that he is trying to curry favor with good people so he can be among them. Jesus makes it clear that the Kin-dom is based on the company we keep; not by favors curried by backroom deals, but by being honest and decent with one another.

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