

# A Puzzling Parable

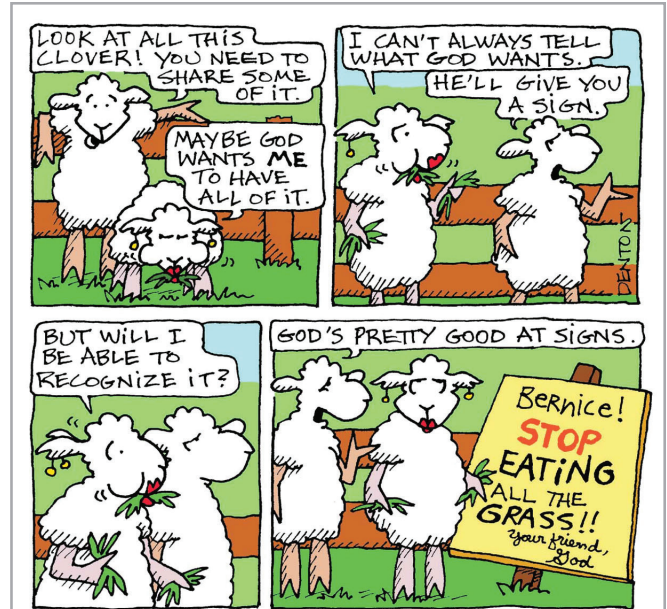
*This Week's Readings at Mass*

- ▶ Amos 8:4-7 - Against greed
- ▶ 1 Timothy 2:1-8 - Conduct of men and women
- ▶ Luke 16:1-13 or 16:10-13 - The dishonest steward

The first reading from the prophet Amos sounds a clear conviction against those who purposefully cheat, extort, and take advantage of the poor, seemingly without remorse. Sadly, that kind of injustice was common back then, as it still is today. Old Testament prophets like Amos regularly named economic injustice when they saw it. In the Gospel reading today, Jesus picks up on the prophetic tradition, preaching about appropriate and inappropriate uses of money. In Luke, more than any other Gospel, Jesus continually hammers home warnings about the seductive power of money.

The first section of today's Gospel, the parable about the dishonest steward, is a hard one to swallow if taken at face value. Biblical scholars still debate Jesus' meaning since it seems unlikely he would have commended the unsavory behavior of the steward who so blatantly cheats his master. (Although it is quite possible the master was extorting his debtors in the first place by charging extremely high interest rates—a common practice even though Jewish law forbid charging interest.) The most common interpretation is that Jesus is calling for his followers to act as *decisively* as the steward did in a time of crisis, not calling them to dishonesty. His call for prudence points out that disciples need to stretch themselves by showing greater dedication and commitment to the life of discipleship than the "children of this world" who invest themselves in making money and pursuing security in any manner possible.

If we let go of puzzling over this strange parable that seems so contradictory to Jesus'



© Jean Denton flock.pastoralcenter.com

“Who will trust you with true wealth?”

### Sheepish Question:

When—and why—have I thought it was okay to have more than my share?

other parables and step back to look at the overall content of Jesus' message about wealth, we can summarize it with the last line. “You cannot serve both God and mammon.” Time after time, Jesus, like the prophets before him, shows how money can too easily get in the way of people doing God's work

## Questions of the Week

- 1 Share an example of someone proving him/herself trustworthy in small matters and graduating to being trustworthy in greater ones.
- 2 How have you seen money/wealth corrupt someone who originally had good intentions? Please share an example.

*Word of the Week • Copyright © 2019 Ann Naffziger. Published by the Pastoral Center / PastoralCenter.com. All rights reserved.*

