



St Marylebone  
Parish Church

## **Trinity 9 2018 St Marylebone 8.30 am**

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

The parable which we have just heard has been called the ‘hardest’ of all the parables of Jesus. Scholars even debate what the story is really all about.

It unfolds in four ‘scenes’:

In scene one, we have a very wealthy man and a manager who is very wealthy too, because he has free reign over all of his master’s possessions and wealth.

In scene two, the rich man hears that the manager is squandering his wealth and straightaway fires him. No recourse to an employment tribunal, nor even a bit a counselling provided by the HR department, he is summarily sacked.

But before he clears out his office, the distinctly dodgy manager gets the chance to visit all the rich man’s clients to settle up their accounts.

In scene three, the manager has a bright idea. Rather than feeling sorry for himself or calling in his union rep, he sets about writing off the debts of the rich man's major creditors.

It might be too late to make money, but it's not too late to build, what these days is called, 'social capital'; so he starts making friends, people who will be pleased to see him even when he's out of a job.

In scene four, the rich man comes face to face with the manager and, most surprisingly, the rich man says, *'Good for you, you were in a really big hole and you got out of it simply by being generous. You realized that generosity is the best investment. You're rather better at this than I am.'*

It's a pretty shocking and unexpected ending, and what Jesus *appears* to be saying is, that 'living a life based on generosity and the building of good relationships is better than a life spent exacting debt' or, as Sam Wells, the Vicar of St Martins' in the Fields very helpfully once put it, *'it is better to live the life of Manna rather than the life of Mammon'*.

The 'economy of Mammon', Wells defines, as 'the life of sharp business practice: the economy of scarcity and perpetual anxiety'.

The 'economy of Manna', on the other hand, he writes is 'the life of generosity and relationship; the economy of abundance and limitless grace'.

So in the parable we see the manager leaving behind the rich man's 'Mammon economy' and moving into the gracious 'Manna economy' of God.

The choice God sets before us all, is this: in which 'economy' are you going to live?

Are we going to live the 'economy of Mammon', the 'small' economy that includes only certain people, which buys only certain things, which lasts only a lifetime – the economy of anxiety and scarcity?

Or, are we going to live the 'economy of Manna', the great economy of God where the only use of wealth is to build, establish and sustain good relationship and set people free; an economy in which we can never be homeless and where we can never be destitute because we have spent our time and money in the service of community, living the economy of God's abundant grace and love and life, the economy of the Kingdom?

For far too long, the world has chosen to live the 'economy of Mammon', may we, at least, have the grace to try to live the 'economy of God's abundant Manna', in which the hungry are fed, the thirsty are given clean water to drink, the broken are mended and God's Kingdom of welcome and grace is lived and proclaimed in such a way that all hear the invitation to lives by God's abundant and overflowing grace.

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> A Sermon preached in Duke University Chapel for Bacculaureate 2006 by the  
Revd Canon Dr Sam Wells