

In today's gospel, Jesus tells his disciples a parable about a rich man who calls his manager and says, "Give me an accounting of your management! You cannot work for me anymore!" Does this gospel give you trouble, it gives me trouble, ever since I was a kid. There just doesn't seem to be enough information.

In the parable itself, it's hard to understand why the rich man who has already caught his manager cheating, would congratulate the manager for ripping him off again. After all, the manager reduced the debt to his master just to gain friends. So, I went to several biblical sources that know a lot more than me for some background and I found an explanation that helped me put this story into focus a little better.

The sources explained that the manager was caught cheating and needed to think fast to save his livelihood. You see, the manager's real source of income in those days was the commission he made on transactions for his master.

So, in order to have a friend or two after he got fired he called in the debtors and reduced the price of their debt by the amount of his large commission so that although he wouldn't make any money on those debts, but he would at least have bought a friend - and the rich man would still get what's coming to him.

He could have kept the money from these last sales that he was in charge of, but then it might have been the last money he ever got. So his quick thinking and sacrifice of immediate gain against winning a secure future was praised by the rich man.

This parable shows someone who realizes that he has been behaving sinfully and realizes he must change his ways and start over. He learns that sacrificing oneself for a greater good is the true way to security in this world, just as conversion, repentance and self-sacrifice are the way to eternal salvation in the next world.

So we learn that managing things isn't just about getting the most for ourselves, or else we will be dismissed. It's about taking responsibility and caring about things that don't belong to us as if they were our own.

I can't tell you how much I fear that voice coming to me saying: "Draw up an account of your management! Show me what you have done with the fantastic gifts I have entrusted you with!"

It scares me silly that I won't have the time to change before I get "fired!"

We are managing God's world for him and he trusts us with it. But if we can't take care of it, and take care of each other for just a while as God asks, why should we be given even more precious gifts of our own to keep, like faith and grace and love and eternal life?

Those of us who are parents, God gave us children. We don't own them, they belong to God but we are asked to watch over them and teach them and steward them for God.

Have we loved them, given them spiritual guidance and example, taught them love, selflessness, virtue or have we squandered our chance and showed them only materialism, selfishness, hopelessness.

Have those of us in charge created a self-centred society where we build self-esteem by getting more stuff, no matter the cost to the environment and the poor at home and abroad. Have we buried the idea of sacrifice for others under a philosophy of "Me first!"

It's never too late to be an example for our children, even after they've left home, on how to love others by sacrificing our own needs for those who need help.

What about our young people here, are you looking at the fantastic gifts you've been given to manage? One of them, whether you know it or not, is the church.

God has seen to it that his word has been preserved and passed on for two thousand years so that it is available to you. You might think that the adults in charge may have taught you to look out only for yourselves, and so we can't really object if you don't like the church we're trying to give you.

But can you overcome that? Are you just complaining that it doesn't suit you because you don't like the music, or the preachers aren't connecting, or are you ready to get involved and be part of the changes the church needs to stay alive. Are you going to abandon her without a fight the first time someone says "No" to an idea for change, or will you keep trying.

God made the young rebellious and radical because he knows we need it to change, just like the dishonest manager did, but we have to have the guts to do something with that rebelliousness besides complain about things.

The young have courage, and you can have that courage built up even more by coming here and partaking in the Eucharist, receiving Christ's body in Holy Communion, where God will give you the strength you need to answer his call - to take the gift of his church and keep it really alive.

What about women today, especially young women, look at young women like Greta Thunberg and Malala Yousafzai. The women of North America are blessed in a way and given more opportunity than any time in history and I think you're finally beginning to have an impact on male thinking ... but I know there's a long way to go. Please don't abandon God's church just because it's not changing right this second.

Women in the west may be leading the world but don't forget there are a billions of women out there in the third world, more than ten times the number that live in Western Society, who are living the same lives that women lived two thousand years ago, so change may take some time.

Are you going to rise to your opportunities to manage God's gifts and carry on the road to change, knowing it will be hard to change that much inertia overnight?

The world and the church needs the courage of women to make the changes we need for true equality, as God is calling us to. Bolster your strength with the bread of life and use your gifts.

So this gospel isn't just for the few of us here who've been privileged to be made managers or leaders, all of us are managing God's resources. God will say to all of us, "Give me an

accounting of your management!”

So we can take some time, think about it, and if this gospel troubles us, maybe it should. Take stock, what can we do to change, to sacrifice to make things better.

The dishonest manager was congratulated for being shrewd. It's not too late to hear the congratulations of our master before we get “fired” and make a commitment to change and to look for our chance to manage God’s gifts and sacrifice our own wants and needs to serve others and so we will gain a welcome into our eternal home.

- Deacon Steve