

About Debts and Debtors

By Rev. Sheryl Stewart

Amos 6:1(a), 4-7 Acts 3:1-10 Luke 16: 1-13

The first time I read Jesus' parable about the shrewd and dishonest manager, it offended me. That manager helped himself to good will by helping other cheats reduce their bad debts. This sounds like Jesus is saying we ought to be better cheaters than the wicked folk. That couldn't be right.

The incident with Paul and that lame beggar gave me a new slant on debts. Paul says, "Silver and gold have I none, but what I do have, I give you." Then, he heals the beggar in the name of Christ. When questioned, Paul said this man's faith opened a door for Christ's authority to heal his body and soul.

"Your faith has made you whole," was something Jesus often said and, more than once, sins were forgiven before physical healing. Jesus went beyond what the dishonest manager did, Using His authority, Jesus

does not just reduce the debts we owe to God; He completely eliminates them!

The sly manager acted selfishly, making sure he'd be welcome in the homes of his employer's clients. In contrast, Jesus acts for our benefit, making sure we will be welcome with Him in heaven. He is so much my friend that I want Him in my house, my life, my heart even before I get to Heaven.

Now, what of the application of forgiven debt? First, as I step away from my sin, I step toward the God whose gifts I have previously exploited. My changed relationship with God changes everything in my life

Instead of exploiting the world's resources and creating more mounting debts, Jesus' disciples become stewards, showing God's dominion by giving instead of selfishly using things and other people. In respect to Creation, we are called to be "green."

Instead of fearing and distrusting other people, who incur debts against us, we are called to forgive as we are forgiven. This is a call to

be a people of peace, without walls. This cannot be done without fear, but-- as peacemakers, -- we can't let our fears place us in debt again. We must try to trust each other like we are trusted by God.

You and anyone trusting in Jesus are debt free and must turn from making new debts to be a people who show God's will to everyone and everything. This may be why, after He prayed, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," that Jesus continued with "Lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Go forth, then, not into evil: but toward God, living abundantly and forever! Amen.