

## Proper 20, Year C

- Spent yesterday the way a great many of you probably did – watching college football
- It’s interesting to think about how much liturgy there is around college football, how many different aspects there are to it
- One of the most fun, of course, being the tradition of College Gameday – a countdown-type show on ESPN offering previews of the matchups for the day
- Even if you don’t watch college football, you may have heard of College Gameday, at least for the tradition of clever signs that fans make to insult the fans or coach of the team they’re going to play that day
- One of my favorite examples of all time came yesterday from a Georgia fan
- Georgia was of course playing Notre Dame last night
- And some clever Georgia fan had shown up to College Gameday with a sign designed to strike fear into the hearts of the Notre Dame faithful: a blown up picture of Martin Luther, father of the Protestant Reformation
- But there was another sign, one from a week ago, that was clever enough to lead to some headlines
- This one came from an Iowa State Cyclones fan who made the type of sign that college kids everywhere probably wish they’d thought of
- His name is Carson King, and his sign said simply, “Busch Light supply needs replenished” and had the information for his Venmo, an online program designed to easily send money to people
- Carson managed to find a spot on College Gameday that was prominent enough for his sign to be seen by quite a few people
- So many, in fact, that the response was a lot more than what he’d expected
- Within 30 minutes, he’d been sent around \$400, likely from people who thought his sign witty enough that they were willing to pay him for the amusement it’d brought, and at that point he bought a case of beer, and was dreaming about the kind of night out on the town he could have with the rest of the money
- But the money kept coming, and it wasn’t long before he started to feel a little guilty, maybe – like maybe he ought to do something else, something a little less self-serving, with that money
- He had that thought when the total hit about \$600
- So he talked to his family and said he thought maybe instead of enjoying all the money

himself, he should give the money donated to the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital

- By the time he announced that this was his plan, he'd received \$1,600
- And once he announced it, both Venmo and Anheuser Busch managed to hear about the plan he had for the money that had been donated, originally to replenish his Busch Light supply
- And they vowed to match whatever amount he donated to the hospital
- So of course the tweet went viral, and more and more people took note, and as of late last night the total amount that was going to be donated had reached \$950,000 – and counting, since Carson promised to donate everything he received through the end of the month
- \$950,000 and counting – all starting with a sign asking for beer money
- And I have to say, thinking about it – the most amazing part of the whole story is not that this young man will likely have raised well clear of a million dollars once all is said and done – it isn't even that people were so generous because of a clever sign and then because of the chance to help out a children's hospital
- The most incredible part of it all, to me, is that a college kid decided to do all this when he felt a little bit guilty about how much beer he could buy with \$600
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- That's an attitude I'd love to have, honestly
- One that I think Jesus would be proud of, if our parable today is any indication
- This parable of the unjust steward or the dishonest manager
- Where the manager for a rich man makes friends for himself, we're told, by means of dishonest wealth
- He cuts the bills of people who owe his master significantly, knowing that he will soon be out of a job, knowing that the money isn't really his to decide what to do with
- But he cuts their bill to make friends for himself – to have people who will remember him once he's out of a job, who may be willing to help look out for him
- The one where we're told, "You cannot serve God and wealth"
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- This is one of the passages that gives us trouble in Scripture, one of the stories Jesus tells that we aren't really comfortable with
- Because Jesus seems to be encouraging us to be dishonest, at least in some way?

- But I think the story he's telling is like the story of Carson King – would we be as willing as he was to so readily say, “we need to be doing something a little more responsible, a bit less selfish, with this \$1600 that people have decided to give us?”
- We're all like Carson King – we're all the dishonest steward in this story
- We've all been given more than we can imagine – more than we deserve
- Every morning we wake up to another day on this earth that we haven't earned
- Every day we're shown the grace of God in the creation surrounding us and the love that God has for us in everyone who cares for us
- Every day, we're lavished with dishonest wealth – every day our account has a balance we didn't earn – every day we wake up and see that there's more in our Venmo than we put in, maybe more than we ought to be entirely comfortable with keeping all to ourselves
- And every day, like Carson King, we have an opportunity to think: is all this really just for us? Is there something better we ought to be doing with all this lavish grace, all this unbounded love that God showers upon us every day, that has just landed in our laps?
- The abundance of God is our dishonest wealth – it's unearned, not ours by right – it belongs to our master
- To serve wealth would mean deciding that the wealth is something we have to gather up for ourselves because we won't ever have enough – would mean making sure we get what's ours, what we have coming to us – would mean being anxious about earthly things
- But we have instead been shown an alternate accounting system – that of the unearned, unmerited grace and love of God – a love of things heavenly
- And the thing about that system is that it's all-encompassing – accepting God's grace means having to change our math
- Means recognizing what we owe, and how little others owe us, when all is said and done
- We can't serve God and wealth so we pray “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”
- That is our dishonest wealth – the wealth of debts erased, of sins and wrongs forgiven, the wealth of grace, that God gives so freely that we can't possibly hoard it for ourselves – but can only hold onto long enough to share it with the world