

**25th Sun of Ord (Amos 8:4-7, Lk 16:1-13)
2022**

18 Sept

Forgetfulness I have a certain routine that I like to use when constructing a homily. Typically, I spend time on Tuesday reading and reflecting on the upcoming week's readings. Then on Wednesday, I review commentaries and look for connections to the things that stood out to me the day before. Thursday is a day to lay down an outline and start writing and hopefully I have a full text on Friday that can be tweaked on Saturday. I started this week off as usual but when I sat down to work on Thursday, I honestly couldn't remember what I had read on Tuesday or Wednesday. Pitiful, I know. But, before we get to the memory jokes, I wonder how many of us can recall the readings and/or homily from last weekend? I confess that I had to look them up - and I heard each of them on Saturday and Sunday. Let's face it, for some of us, if our memories were any worse we could plan our own surprise parties.

Regardless of the condition of our memory, sometimes we all need reminders, and that is the intent of the prophet Amos in our first reading and Jesus in our Gospel. Amos lived around 750 years before Jesus. During his adulthood, the nation of Israel was thriving, especially financially. However, much of that prosperity apparently came at the expense of the less fortunate and the poor. Amos speaks of unethical wealth being gained through the use of dishonest scales, the human trafficking of slaves and through forbidden business transactions taking place on the Sabbath in violation of Jewish law. Amos warns his audience that they have lost their focus, forgotten if you will, that God demands that they care for the less fortunate and observe the Sabbath. Forgotten that personal profit should not be prioritized over the common good.

Similarly, in our Gospel passage, Jesus tells us about a dishonest steward. In the parable that Jesus shares, we encounter a steward who is ultimately motivated and concerned first and foremost with his own well-being. So concerned with his own welfare that he stoops to dishonest actions. Jesus concludes his story with the reminder that we cannot serve two masters, both God and mammon. In this case, mammon represents the false god of personal wealth. The accumulation of wealth is not inherently wrong. It only becomes problematic when our spiritual growth and the needs of our neighbors suffer as a result of our pursuit of personal gain.

Now before you start worrying that I'm going to give a lecture, I want to assure you that I have very little concern over the priorities of this parish congregation. In fact, I want to thank you. I'd like to sincerely recognize and thank you for your generosity within our community. Whether it be our Capital Campaign, a visiting missionary, the weekly collection or any appeal for that matter, collectively you continue to amaze us with your financial support. This is particularly true with regard to your support for our St. Vincent de Paul group.

Here at Lourdes, using the monthly envelopes, you have stepped up beyond expectations. Every month, our parish Vincentians respond to local requests for help from 10-20 households, sometimes more. After visiting with those families and evaluating their needs, over the past 12 months, our SVDP conference has been able to help 404 different adults and 363 children who currently live within the Our Lady of Lourdes or St. Bernadette parish boundaries. That assistance runs the gamut from utility and rent assistance, to peanut butter and food staples, furniture & appliances, clothing & kitchen utensils and even beds. In just the past twelve months, your generosity has enabled our parish Vincentians to share over \$31,000 worth financial and material assistance to our neighbors. Simply amazing! I thank you and offer a special thanks to our parish Vincentians who have generously given of their time to physically share these resources with those in need. Unfortunately, the demand for assistance is unlikely to end, or even diminish any time soon. So thank you in advance for your continued support - and if any of you would like to join in our SVDP's efforts, let me know and I'll get you connected.

The prophet Amos' community neglected and took advantage of the poor within their ranks, forgetting their obligation to the less fortunate. During his ministry, Jesus' disciples had forgotten and needed to be reminded that no servant can serve two masters. And in preparing for today, I couldn't recall one of Jesus' most iconic quotes: "No one can serve both God and mammon." We are all prone to forget. But our God is not. Our God is aware of our every action, good or bad, and while he does forgive, he also never forgets. So, let us honor our Lord by never forgetting to care for the less fortunate, and let's remember to keep God's will foremost in our hearts and in our actions.