

Wednesday Reflection

Title: Cunning Christians

Date: September 21, 2025

ID: 25th Sunday of the Year

Scripture: Luke 16:1-13

I quote from Joel B. Green. The Gospel of Luke. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997. The abbreviation FSS is my book For Us and For Our Salvation.

Text: Commentators debate the interpretation of this parable. Where is the Lord focusing our attention: on squandering the master's property; on the gifts given to debtors; on the master's praise; on children of light; on possessions? I suggest focusing on the Lord's ministry.

In Luke, Jesus defined his ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth. He read from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). *Liberty to captives* and letting *the oppressed go free* are translations of the Greek word for *release*. The year acceptable to the Lord is a Jubilee Year (Lev. 25:8-12). During that year, slaves must be freed, debts are cancelled, and land lost must be returned to the family Moses gave it to years before (Num. 34). Scripture scholar Joel Green calls a Jubilee Year a "year of release." Let's focus on release.

Green explains the idea of deprivation in the Lord's time. He describes a "holistic approach." In the ancient world, one's status depended on "a number of elements including education, gender, family heritage, religious purity, vocation, economics, and so on." A holistic approach includes a lack of subsistence, exclusion from society, possession by the demons of anxiety and stress. Jesus's ministry brings release from the chains keeping people from their life's potential. And more: Jesus liberates the ones doing the oppressing, beating people down, holding prejudice and hatred, and so on. He calls for conversion. Think of all the deprived, and those doing the oppressing. Release is needed by them all.

This is worth our thoughts. Very little of what we normally call religion is mentioned in the Lord's summary (FSS p 8-14). There is no prayer or piety, no spirituality, not even worship. Salvation is not only for disembodied, other-worldly souls. The whole of our lives is included—body and soul, what we do with our wealth, how we navigate our social systems, how we relate to one another, especially those who differ from us (FSS p 19/20). The "children of the light" are to be participants in the Lord's ministry of bringing release to others. Any one of us can list those chained down and unable to develop their full potential. And we can name the oppressors.

Christ saves the whole of reality. We are to be cunning participants.