

It's very hard to sit easy with money, meaning it's very hard whether poor or rich not to allow money to be the deciding factor in how one wants to live or rather, what it is one wants to live for. For the poor obviously money can dominate one's thinking because one hasn't got enough and needs more just to survive from day to day. For the rich the danger becomes that one's meaning and status revolve around how much one has, and the more the better. I paint with a broad brush but, whether poor or rich, money can become 'a tainted thing' – an obsession by which we measure our true value. The poor rightly need more and the rich rightly need less, if only so that the poor may have their due – the share of the natural wealth which is everyone's due, and we could then go on to Catholic Social Teaching as a guide to money well spent and to Pope Francis's acute awareness that our present economy, our present way of managing out household goods, that is the thinking of the neo-liberal West, is an economy that kills – not so far different then from the economy that Amos attacks in our first reading, where the rich grow richer always, and, inevitably perhaps, at the expense of the poor – when even the gleanings, the left-over grain from the harvest is denied to the poor. But there may be something even more fundamental going on here which needs to be addressed first, or as well, before we get lost in the maze of how best to use money for good or ill, symbolised perhaps by the puzzlement of the various commentators on this gospel passage about just what it is that the steward is being praised for – whether it be duping his creditors or his master or both – for surely we are not being asked to dupe either, and especially God who surely cannot be duped by anyone or bought off in any way by our good actions however cunning they might be. And there is a clue to this more fundamental stance in the final stanza of the gospel passage given today ' *You cannot be slave both of God and of money*' and perhaps also in Paul's letter to Timothy which appropriately asks us to pray '*especially for kings and others in authority so that we may be able to live religious and reverent lives in peace and quiet*'. Now the peace and quiet may be that of living as good citizens within the 'Pax Romana', as one commentator suggests, but it may also be pointing towards that more fundamental peace we are all to have as Christians secure in the knowledge that Christ has won for us our redemption and that we are now indeed no longer slaves of money, or of anyone or anything else except God, and that it is this peace that will win for us the acclaim of others in God's pursuit of the salvation of all – more clearly stated here in this letter than anywhere else in the New Testament, the God *who desires all people to be saved*... And, to radicalise this even more in the words of Meister Eckhart, this more fundamental peace comes not when we seek this or that whether it be money or anything or anyone else including God, in the sense of trying to please God by our good actions, but being content with God's will alone

'if a person seeks God's will alone, whatever flows from that or is revealed by that [they] may take as a gift from God without ever looking or considering whether it is by nature or by grace or whence it comes or in what ways: [they] need not care about that. It is well with [them] and [they] need only lead an ordinary Christian life without considering doing anything special.'

Or more simply put

'The person who can be trusted in little things can be trusted in great.'

I wonder if this isn't a fitting epitaph for our late queen, and our hope for our present king. This is something at least to pray for.

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