

Interactive lesson



carving pumpkin picture cropped from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-in-gray-sweater-carving-orange-pumpkin-5634769/>; candy picture from MMMS collection

Have you ever carved a pumpkin in preparation for Halloween? <Let them respond>

Was it fun? <Let them respond>

What mattered most to you when carving it?

<Let them respond>

What did you get out of it? <Let them respond>

On Halloween, have you ever gone trick-or-treating?

<Let them respond>

What mattered most to you when trick-or-treating?

<Let them respond>

When you saw the goodies you collected, did you think about the pumpkin you had carved? <Let them respond>

In life, we may be working on things we think really important at the time, and then something else comes up that makes what we were doing before seem to not matter anymore. Can you think of any examples of that in your life? <Let them respond>

People live every day trying to be good members of society, and it is good for them to want to be that. But Jesus teaches us so much better for how to live in and shape society, that what we thought important before often fades into the background.

Did you ever forgo trick-or-treating in order to carve a pumpkin? <Let them respond>

Just as we stop doing one thing to do what is better, Jesus calls us to stop putting love of material things ahead of loving God and loving one another.

While we do recall what has gone before, let us let go of bygone concerns and focus today – and moving forward – on what God would have us work toward.

Gospel lesson

Listen now to this parable Jesus told during His countryside ministry:



*picture screencaptured from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KODw_5Em1NQ (LUMO)*

Luke 16:1-13

(NRSV)

¹ Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property.

² So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.'

³ Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg.'

⁴ I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.'

⁵ So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

⁶ He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.'

⁷ Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.'

⁸ And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.

⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

¹⁰ "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.

¹¹ If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

¹² And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your

own?

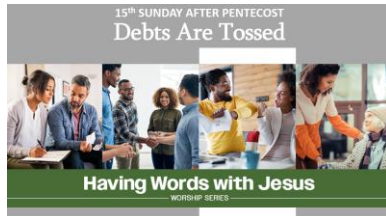
¹³No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Jesus Calls Us"

UMH #398 vv.1,3,5>

Message: Debts Are Tossed



Foreground picture from

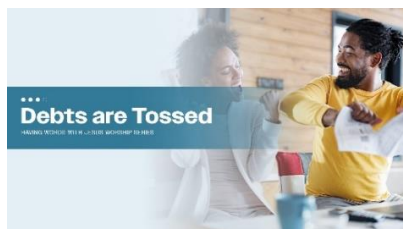
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/having-words-with-jesus/fourteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/fourteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Amazing Redeemer who refocuses us on good,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may keep our focus on bringing Your grace to
the world. Amen.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/having-words-with-jesus/fifteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/fifteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Our sermon theme today in “Having Words with Jesus” is “Debts Are Tossed”:

“Worship needs a vision that looks first to God and then to community within and then to the world beyond the walls. We are driven by the question, “How do we share this gift of faith?”

We are constantly seeking ways to be a witness to the treasure we have found, to the joy we live.”



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-holding-white-roses-bouquet-5894037/>

Back in the early years of their marriage, my brother-in-law and his wife owned a flower shop in Oneida. It was a lovely shop, but then another floral shop opened nearby. With the direct competition, they began to have difficulty making ends meet; eventually they had to declare bankruptcy and lost the shop.

Coming out of it, my brother-in-law began his own construction business and his wife began working for large grocery stores, managing the floral sections. They had family health insurance and a steadier income. In recent years, my brother-in-law took a job as maintenance manager for a large apartment complex, a financially better arrangement with shorter hours than he put into his own business, and his wife got a better position as an interior designer.

Did they want to lose their shop? No way! It was a devastating time for them. They were up to their eyeballs in debt, unable to see how to move forward. Declaring bankruptcy was a reset. It cleared their debt and gave them a fresh start for a good life.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/solomon-temple/>

In the Old Testament lesson, we hear how the people of Israel had thought to be God's people, but when they turned away from the Lord, they suffered from pain inflicted as a result of their own actions. From the Babylonian exile, the psalmist cries out to God, asking that their ancestors' guilt not be held against them, seeming to miss that his current generation was just as guilty of forgetting God.

The people accrued a debt of sin before the Lord. Jeremiah wept that medical balms could not cure their sin-induced ailments. This continued through the centuries: Paul wrote to Timothy explaining that in his day, people need to be saved from their sin.

We see this even in our day with sin and greed rampant in society, devastating people and the world. Jesus recognized this during His ministry, as well as people's hesitance to change from what they know.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-jesus-matthew/>

In the story Jesus tells, the manager is deceitful, looking for his own material gains at the expense of others and dishonor to his master. When he did his shrewd dealings, the master commended him not for playing fast and loose with the master's accounts, but for finally realizing that relationships with others matter more than financial gain for oneself.

Then Jesus tells the people the equivalent of: at least "be kind," so that even if you are not connected in faith to the source of all life, you have a love connection to our life-giving God through those who are faithful. Value relationships above possessions. Value God above all.

I know a person who, when young and entering the workforce, got a job at a dollar store. After his first week, the owner asked him to tally up receipts at the end of the day so the owner could see how he did it. When the young man totaled everything, it came up \$20 short. The owner immediately questioned him about where it went; after rechecking the count twice, he said he didn't know, he had not taken it.

The guy figured he had done the job he was paid to

do. He had tended the register conscientiously throughout the day, just like he had all week. He had no idea what he was supposed to do about the short account; he did not think it was his fault. The owner saw it differently. Did he care about the business, or just doing his own tasks adequately?

I know the guy was honest. I think the owner had taken the \$20 out of the till when the guy was not looking, as a test to see how careful the guy was with the owner's livelihood. When the guy did not go through extreme measures to find the missing money, the owner did not have trust that the guy would take care of the rest of the owner's livelihood carefully enough, and the young man was let go.

If we are going to serve God, to claim to be Christians, it is not enough to just "be kind." From creation, we were given dominion over the earth; are we showing enough care in what we do, or are we dismissive of most other's issues as not our doing? Do we care about God's creation, or just doing our own tasks adequately?



wallet picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/crop-man-getting-dollars-from-wallet-4386433/>; Bible picture from MMMS collection

We need to love Jesus and seek to show the Lord's love in every aspect of our lives, not just at random moments or to the point we think is "good enough." We

have all sinned, running up a debt before God from which we cannot recover or move forward by ourselves.

The good news, as Paul wrote to Timothy, is that Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all, as a mediator between God and humankind. We have the opportunity to declare our spiritual bankruptcy and move forward in the grace of God, to live better.

Jesus calls us to set aside love of material things, to love God and one another instead. Through this, we restore individuals, societies, and the world.

My homework for you this week is to look at our conveniences. How does what we do, or the things we get, affect others? What have we forgotten to consider? Can we – can you do better in sharing God's grace with the world? What will you do with the new start Jesus gave you?

Pray for guidance, then do better as the loving, Holy Spirit drives you. Help others to know the joy and freedom of redemption from sin through Jesus.

Now let us respond with

Affirmation from I Timothy 2:5-6; 1:15; 3:16 UMH #889

Leader:

There is one God

and there is one mediator, Christ Jesus,
who came as a ransom for all, to whom we testify.

People:

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance:
That Jesus Christ came into the world to save
sinners, and was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations, believed in
throughout the world, taken up in glory.
Great indeed is the mystery of the gospel. Amen.

*<Doxology>**<Offertory / Pastoral Prayer>*

Let us pray:

Holy giver of all good blessings, we find ourselves
under a debt we can never overcome.

Every blessing we have received or hope to receive
comes from your generosity.

The gifts we bring to you this morning pale in
comparison to the bottom line of our ledger.

Yet you manage your kingdom on a different economic
model - one where the equity is grace, forgiveness,
compassion, mercy, and justice.

You encourage us to be shrewd in the world's money,
knowing it is not the currency that matters in the
end.

And so, we pray in the name of Jesus, whose life and
death paid our debt.

(above prayer from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org>)

- Lord, please help {these members of the body of

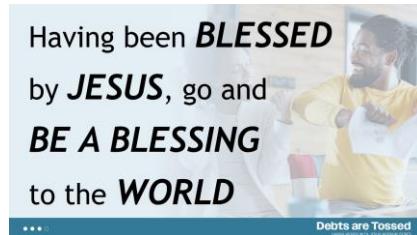
Christ whom we lift up} with Your healing touch and comfort:

- **Melody Smith** - swollen face to ER
- **Marilyn Simmons** - recovering from infection & stroke
- **Pastor Palmer (Butch) Neumeister** - fall/head injury
- **Gloria Dubois** - recovery after covid
- -
- -
- -
- -
- -
- -
- Thanks for
 - -
 - -
 - -
- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
 - Family far off
 - Travelers
- Send Your Spirit to address world/social problems
 - end bigotry, dismantle racism, reform systems persist
 - bring world peace
- Guide our Leaders - local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.
- Lord, please help people who yet struggle with war in their homeland.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,
<Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "Forth in Thy Name, O Lord" UMH #438>

<Benediction>



background picture from
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/having-words-with-jesus/fifteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/fifteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Go forth in God's name,
Having been blessed by Jesus;
Go focus delightedly on the work of the Holy Spirit
and be a blessing to the World.
Amen.