

09/22/13 25 C

-- It was early November, 1979. The Shah of Iran had been deposed and angry crowds were gathering outside the US Embassy in Tehran (Iran's capital). It didn't look good, so the embassy staff members began to shred classified documents as fast as they could. And they continued to do so, right until the crowds broke into the building.

-- We know the story of what happened in the next 14-15 months—the taking of American hostages and all the events subsequent to that. But the staff had taken drastic action to try to preserve US interests and security there.

-- That incident may help us a bit to understand the gospel parable Jesus tells today. This money manager was in deep trouble, and he needed to take drastic action. True enough, his trouble was of his own making, but at least he was doing something about it.

-- Jesus certainly was not approving his financial mismanagement and dishonesty. Indeed, prophets such as Amos (1st reading) rightly condemned dishonesty, especially when directed against the poor.

-- But he did admire his willingness to take action, and to take action quickly, in order to accomplish his goal of getting a new job.

-- And Jesus wants us to be willing to take our own drastic action to further the kingdom of God and to promote the values of the kingdom.

-- No, Jesus doesn't condone bombing abortion clinics, or lying about someone because we don't believe what they are doing is right, morally speaking.

-- The drastic action Jesus wants us to take for God's kingdom is different from that, though it can come about in a number of ways. I might suggest just a few of those:

-- Jesus wants us to take drastic action for justice, especially for the poor. In the spirit of Amos the prophet he asks us to "out" those who exploit the poor. We should take on companies who make profits off foreign workers who are paid a pittance to work in unsafe conditions.

- Too many stories have emerged of workers being killed in fires in substandard factories. And, for that matter, he expects us to oppose employers in our own country who exploit undocumented workers, paying substandard wages because they aren't likely to fight back.
- Jesus wants us to take drastic action in the Church to spread his forgiveness. God forgives us so much. We must do the same, and not simply as individuals. God wants us to address issues such as third world debt in a manner which would allow those countries to take care of their people.
- Even the unjust manager reduced debts of his master's clients, most likely forgiving them the interest they were paying on that debt.
- And Jesus expects his followers to make prudent use of money and worldly wealth to accomplish good and just purposes. The key, though, is to make use of money without allowing money to rule your life. And that is a challenge in our society.
- Perhaps the people in the American embassy in Iran were trying to cover up unsavory activities by shredding those documents. We may never know. But at least they were taking action.
- Shouldn't we be willing to take our own decisive action to further the kingdom of God, by promoting justice, love and forgiveness?