
Money and Relationship

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Dean Sam Candler**

This article is an excerpt from Dean Sam Candler's sermon from last Sunday, September 22. You can read or watch the entire sermon [here](#).

...In the curious parable of the gospel today (Luke 16:1-13). Jesus seems to be praising a dishonest manager. The manager got into trouble for crossing his boss, so then he decided to fudge the books, making friends for himself. He uses dishonest wealth for something good.

Maybe it startles us that Jesus would lift up this admittedly dishonest manager as a positive example. But the deeper lesson is that wealth is not the final standard. Money is not the goal. There are some things in life, there are many things in life, greater than money and gold. For the dishonest manager, friendships and relationships are better.

So, there is one other word I like to use instead of money, or gold, or mammon. It is the word "currency."

A current has energy. The current of a river, or the current of a conversation, has energy. An electrical current certainly carries energy. Well, this money stuff carries a lot of energy. Even if our monetary exchanges are accomplished only by check or electronic transfer, each of those exchanges is currency. The current of our money carries and creates energy.

Money, at its best, carries a current. And the current it carries best is that of relationship. Money is about relationship. When any of us exchanges money, we are really engaging in relationship. That's why the Church has every right and reason to talk about money: because we are in the business of relationship. Right relationship is what we call righteousness.

The church exists for holy relationships, a holy relationship with God, certainly, but also holy relationships with each other, relationships of trust, truth, and long-term commitment.

Almost all of Jesus's parables about money are really about relationships. Consider today's strange story about the dishonest money manager (in Luke 16:1-13). When he heard he was to be fired, he went to the debtors and discounted all their bills, so that they owed less. Maybe he was dishonest on a mammon level, but Jesus actually praises the dishonest manager on the relationship level; he had "made friends for himself with unrighteous mammon." Jesus was praising the man's ability to make friends, to engage in relationship.

The church needs that kind of current. Healthy churches need the energy of holy relationships. And money is always, always, a sign of that current. The currency of money carries energy, and that energy can be holy indeed.

At one particular church where I served many years ago, I remember an important stewardship call. The person I was visiting was not especially active at the local church – in fact, I had rarely seen him at church at all—but he was said to be a nice guy. I had met him a few times previous to our visit, and he was direct-speaking old Southerner.

We talked about life, about ourselves, and about the church. Finally, he looked me in the eye and declared, "You just want my money, right?" The question startled me into an answer just as direct as his question. I peered right back at him and

proclaimed, “No, we want your heart!” The Church could have used his financial generosity, to be sure, but what the Church really needed was him: his heart and his soul.

Ultimately, all of us put our money where our heart is. The money is a sign of our relationship. The money carries the current of our relationship. ...

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip