

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Year C)
9-21-2025 Homily

I. Introduction

One morning a boy felt like playing hooky from school, so he called the school office and, making his voice as deep as possible, said, “Thomas Bradley is sick and won’t be in today.” The school secretary was suspicious, and asked, “Who’s speaking?” The boy answered, “My father.” A young girl had the bad habit of lying, so her mother chided her, “Sally, people who tell fibs don’t go to Heaven.” The child thought about this and said, “Gee, Heaven must be pretty lonely, with no one there but God and George Washington.” Thankfully, Heaven is filled with angels and saints, but it’s true that almost everyone has lied or stretched the truth at one point or another. A priest was walking down a street when he came upon a group of boys gathered around a stray dog; when he asked what was going on, one of them answered, “Well, Father, we found this stray; he’s cute and friendly, so all of us want to take him home. We’re going to decide who gets him by seeing who can tell the biggest lie.” The priest was shocked, and said, “That’s terrible! When I was your age, I never told lies like that!” The boys looked at each other; then one of them sighed and said, “Okay, Father you win; you get the dog.”

We can laugh about lying, but dishonesty is a serious matter. A survey of over 2100 college juniors and seniors conducted by the magazine *Psychology Today* found that 70% admitted to having cheated in high school, and almost as many still did so in college. Also, surveys taken by the newspaper *USA Today* found that 91% of Americans lie routinely—including to parents, siblings, spouses, employers, and friends, and about their feelings, income, and job performance. Furthermore, U.S. businesses lose many billions of dollars each year to employee theft, embezzlement, and shoplifting; individual Americans lose billions more to computer fraud and identity theft—and with the rise of artificial intelligence programs that can perfectly imitate our voices and speech patterns, that number will surely be going up (Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, & Quotes*, p. 443).

Fortunately, there are still many honest people. Years ago a young man named Adam was hired as a salesclerk in a dry goods store, which specialized in selling silk, satin, and other fine materials to an upper-class clientele. The store manager instructed him to stretch out the silk when he measured it; that way customers would get less material than they actually paid for—meaning a bigger profit for the store. Adam was horrified and offended, and responded, “Sir, your silk may stretch, but my conscience won’t!” (Michael P. Green, *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p. 193). This is the sort of integrity Jesus expects of His followers. Not only does dishonesty catch up with us sooner or later; more to the point, God knows perfectly and completely everything in our hearts. This world emphasizes getting away with whatever you can, and it admires shrewd operators able to pull a fast one on unsuspecting victims. The values of Heaven are radically different—and only those who are committed to living in the truth of Jesus Christ can be certain of one day entering into it.

II. Development

Jesus tells a story about a dishonest steward or business manager who was shrewd enough to plan ahead. Our Lord wasn’t praising the man’s dishonesty, but making an important point:

namely, if worldly or dishonest people are prudent enough to plan ahead for their future, we as followers of Christ should be even more determined to prepare for a joyful and glorious eternity once our earthly lives are done. This, of course, means living by the values of Heaven, not those of this passing world, and striving to be trustworthy in all things, whether big or small. As the 1st Reading from the Prophet Amos reminds us, God sees everything, including every act of dishonesty and every instance of mistreating the poor and lowly. Every such sin will be punished, and every good deed and act of integrity and compassion will be rewarded. As St. Paul says in the 2nd Reading, God “wills everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”—but only we can decide whether or not this will happen.

III. Conclusion

Helen Keller was a famous American author and lecturer, despite being completely blind and deaf from the age of two. She once said, “I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty and joy to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. . . For the world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of tiny pushes of each honest worker” (James W. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited*, p. 55). This means not only that each little act of honesty and integrity on our part makes the world a better place; living this way also makes us better persons—by forming our character, allowing us to grow in virtue, and preparing us for life in Heaven.

If we had the chance to be paid \$1 million for performing a simple but illegal act, and we were sure no one would ever find out, would we do it? If, instead of immediately thinking or answering “no,” we had to think about it, that suggests maybe our character isn’t quite as honest as it should be. Our first response to any situation must be, “What does God want me to do?” His Will should always be our primary concern, whether in big things or little things; all our decisions, no matter how significant or small, should help us come closer to Him. That may seem like a lot to keep track of, consider, or analyze—but the secret of living a life of honesty, integrity, and spiritual growth is love. The more we love God, the easier it will be to know and do His Will; the more we try to love our neighbor and treat others as we wish to be treated, the more automatic and natural it will be to treat everyone generously and fairly. Love makes the difference, and trying to act in a loving way assures us that we will never be ensnared by the false and spiritually-destructive values of this world.

As today’s Gospel warns, we cannot give our allegiance to both God and this world; divided loyalties of this sort will end up crippling our souls and sooner or later leading us astray. Jesus must come first in our lives. That way, when He asks us at the moment of our death and judgment “Are you My disciple?” we will truthfully be able to answer “Yes!”