

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 21, 2025

Gathering
Welcome
Announcements and Prayer

Prelude Christopher A. McCroskey
(Prayerfully prepare your hearts and minds for worship.)

*Call to Worship
Like a whisper that lures us to safety,
Strong as a shout that calls us home,
Gentle as a prayer that eases our worry,
Clear as a bell that rings out our name,
Your Word comes to us, Loving God.
It calls us, comforts us and urges us to depart
from evil and do good, to seek peace and pursue it.
Living God that still speaks to us today,
Open our hearts to hear you,
And free our voices to sing your praise!

*Opening Hymn *“To God Be the Glory”* 98

*Opening Prayer
Loving God,
We gather as your people, hungry for your word, longing for your touch. Breathe new life into our
lives. Cast out our fears and doubts, and call us into your grace that we may be your witnesses and
do your will. Give us the courage to love and fill us with gratitude, that we may praise you all the
days of our lives. Amen.

*Psalter Reading Psalm 113 834

*Affirmation from 1 Timothy 889

*Gloria Patri 70
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and
ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

Passing of the Peace: *Let us greet one another with love and peace.*

“Let the Children Come!” Patsy Boggs
(Those 3 years of age through 8 years of age may go to Children’s Church.)

Anthem *“Majesty”* Choir

Scripture Lessons Amos 8:4-7 Page 810 (O.T.)
1 Timothy 2:1-7 Page 198 (N.T.)

*Gospel Lesson Luke 16:1-13 Page 77 (N.T.)

Homily Shrewd Children of Light Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

*Hymn of Invitation *“I Surrender All”* (vs. 1-3) 354

Pastoral Prayer
The Lord’s Prayer
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those
who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the
kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Presentation of Tithes & Offerings
Offertory Christopher A. McCroskey
*Doxology 95
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him all creatures here below; praise him above ye
heavenly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen

*Closing Hymn *“This Is My Song”* 437

*Benediction
*Benediction Response *“May the Lord, Mighty God, Bless and Keep You”* Choir & Congregation

*Please Stand As You Are Able

Leading in Worship Today

Pastor: Rev. Darlene L. Kelley AV Director: Marie Stiles
Music Director: Christopher A. McCroskey AV Assistants: Chris Derrick; Candice Garner
Liturgist: Tom Geddens Time Together: Joyce Robinson; Slone Taylor

VISITORS ARE WELCOME in the service of worship! Please make use of the visitor’s tags
(located in the pew backs) to help us better welcome you as a visitor to Trinity this morning.

A Gift to Trinity is given to the Glory of God and in honor of **Brandon and Kelsey Jones’ 2nd**
Wedding Anniversary, by “E”.

“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS ...

Marilyn Lloyd	Ruth Frady	Rhett Hook	Kaye Floyd	Libby Strickland	Christopher McCroskey
John Ballentine	Diane Muszynski	Ray Frady	Latson Lewis	English Percy	Jeanette Hornsby
Hannah Glanz					

Shut-Ins: Gillett Hipp; Linda Maloch; Jean Raynor

Family and Friends: **Kati Flowers** (mother of friend of Blake Kamoroff); **Wayne Young** (brother of Faye Grah); **Berry Cochran** (son-in-law of Charlyn McNeill); **Jim Lewis** (father of Mark Lewis); **Christina Lindemuth** (daughter of Karen Carter); **James Leonard** (previous coworker of Mark Lewis); **Kathleen Varnadore** (Ted & Ruth Frady's neighbor); **Paul Frenzel** (friend of Chris Derrick); **Sissy Henry** (former member of Trinity), **Keith James, Jay Clark** (friends of Darlene Kelley); **Sean & Tucker Smith** (cousins of Darlene Kelley); **Sonny Hardee** (brother of Lynn Martin); **Colby Martin** (son of Donna Muszynski); **Lynne Powell** (friend of the Ballentines and Branhams); **Bryan Collard** (brother-in-law of Mary Sue Lewis); ; **Michael McNeill** (brother of Mary Sue Lewis); **Missy Abrams** (stepdaughter of Lissa Abrams); **Mary Davis** (daughter of Bob & Libby Strickland); **Chuck Hardee** (cousin of Lynn Martin); **Bruce Beatty, Sandra Hornsby, Gloria Erd** (friends of Lynn Martin); **Nancy Wilson** (friend of Jeanette Hornsby); **David Turner** (brother of Pam Turner); **Chip Mixon** (friend of Tommy Gleaton); **James Boggs** (father of Claire Boggs); **Robert Bradley** (Business Associate of Simon Ross); **Monnie Tiller** (friend of Chris Derrick); **Adrin & Linda Hargett** (stepfather and stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); **Haidee Baehr** (friends of Ruth Frady); **Denise Paul, Scott & Karen Nelson** (cousins of Gale Frady); **Dan Conner, Max Johnson** (friends of Gale Frady); **Janet Beck** (friend of Jo Ann Heiting); **Adam Lavender** (son of Phil Lavender)

If you have a friend or family member on the Prayer List, we ask you to please keep us updated. If no word is received, we will trust that our prayers have been answered and remove the name. To update us, please call the office or e-mail us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com.

OUR PRESENCE ...

Attendance **09/14** SS: 12 Worship: 36

OUR GIFTS ...

General Fund **09/14** \$ 3,295.00 Epworth **09/14** \$ 485.00

OUR SERVICE...

OUR WITNESS.”

Upcoming Events

09/22 Exercise, 10:30 a.m.

09/23 GLIA Articles Due

09/24 Choir, 6 p.m.

T.a.G., 7 p.m.

09/25 Exercise, 10:30 a.m.

09/26 Office Closed

09/27 Trinity Ladies Group Breakfast, 9:30 a.m. @ Lizard’s Thicket #1
The Pines, 2 p.m.



Ministers
Pastor
Resident Bishop
District Superintendent

The Congregation
Darlene L. Kelley
Leonard Fairley
Rev. Fran M. Elrod

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform



Whoever is faithful
in a very little
is faithful also in much ...

Luke 16:10, NRSV

1201 Mohawk Drive
West Columbia, SC 29169
Telephone: 803.794.7777
E-mail: trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com
Website: www.trinityumcwc.org



Saturday, September 27
9:30 a.m.

The Ladies Group will resume Saturday morning breakfasts on the fourth Saturday of September, October, and November. We will again meet at the Lizard's Thicket on Highway #1 in Lexington, at 9:30 a.m. on September 27, October 25, and November 29. For additional information or to sign up for the group texts, please see Marie Stiles.



We will continue our ministry to **The Pines** on **Saturday, September 27, at 2 p.m.** with apple & pumpkin pie to celebrate Fall.



Sunday, September 28

Taste of Trinity, our church-wide covered dish luncheon, will be held on **Sunday, September 28**. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to share great food and fellowship!



Sunday, October 5
11 a.m.

We once again invite you and your beloved pets to our Blessing of the Animals Worship Service on Sunday, October 5th at 11:00 a.m. Inspired by the birthday of St. Francis and adapted from our own United Methodist Book of Worship, this unique service is a wonderful way to celebrate the joy and companionship of our pets, and to thank God for all the wonderful gifts of Creation.

Whether your pet has fur, feathers or fins, all creatures are welcome! We'll gather outside (weather permitting) on the Gunter Circle side of the building for a time of prayer, reflection and blessing. A pet is not required for attendance; this is our Sunday worship service. Bring the whole family—some may require leashes or carriers. If your pet is unable to attend, please feel free to bring a photo, and we'll bless them in spirit. Blessing certificates with your pet's name will be available. Palmetto Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation (a non-profit rescue for orphaned and injured wildlife) will once again be joining us. A Love Offering will be taken up for them.

If you have a pop-up or canopy tarp that we might borrow for our outside service that day, please contact the church office at 803-794-7777 or email us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com. We'll also need three or four volunteers to set up chairs outside on the morning of the event. A volunteer sign up sheet will be available in the lobby.

Let's use this opportunity to invite friends, family and neighborhood animal lovers to this special worship event at our church! Say a prayer, spread the word and give God the glory!

If you have any questions, just ask Rev. Kelley at 845-416-7308. Thank you!

Trinity UMC
September 21, 2025
Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

Shrewd Children of Light

Thank you for all your support of last week’s rather extemporaneous, down-on-the-floor sermon. I promise I will preach wandering around the room again soon, but in the meantime...this morning’s text needs the support of a pulpit, and lots of oxygen from on high because this week’s parable has inspired debate for centuries. So, if are you confused by this story, you are not alone.

It may be wise to pull out our best commentary to learn that last week, with the lost coin and the lost sheep, this week and next, we are walking squarely through the parables of Luke.

And this week and next, Jesus starts the parables the same way: *There was a rich man.*¹ He seems to be speaking directly to the Pharisees whose greed he earlier denounced.² At the end of this morning’s passage, we hear Luke warn: *No 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* (Lk.16:13). But that’s how this morning’s lesson ends. Let’s start at the beginning and see what if we can figure out what Jesus is trying to tell us with this tale of the “shrewd” manager. Like the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son, this parable has a title and has become known as the Parable of the Shrewd Manager.

First, let’s look at the word “shrewd”. If someone called you “shrewd” would you take it as a compliment? How many of you would be pleased to be called “shrewd”?

For us postmodern folk, the word shrewd may seem a bit unflattering. But if you check your dictionary, you’ll find that the definition of “shrewd” is “having sharp powers of judgment; astute, keen”. We can’t really be sure if this *shrewd manager* is just a bad caretaker, a bad steward of his bosses’ property or if he’s really dishonest—and right up front that’s where scholars begin the debate, but for the sake of our story, let’s assume that Luke is telling us that the guy is pretty smart. He has some *sharp powers of judgment*.

So, we’re starting out with a pretty sharp guy—honest or dishonest.

But, sharp as he is, he’s angered the boss and he’s getting fired. And now he has to come up with a plan. So, he calls all the guys who owe his boss money. And he says, “How much do you owe The Boss?” And then one by one he knocks down their debt. We can’t be sure if the manager is wiping away his own commission or if he’s ripping off his boss, but either way, he’s making some friends. And that’s exactly what he wants to do—he wants to make some friends that will help him out while he’s standing in the unemployment line. He doesn’t want to dig ditches and he doesn’t want to stand on the corner panhandling—so he needs some friends, some folks who are feeling grateful enough to ask him over for dinner.

¹ New Interpreter’s Commentary, Volume IX, page 306.

Now, the boss finds out what the manager is doing.

But surprisingly enough, he’s not mad—he’s impressed. Luke tells us,

“And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly”. Are you with me so far?

Ok. Now here come the verses that get our heads spinning.

“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. 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.”

Are you confused again? Don’t worry. St. Augustine himself was so troubled by this parable that he said: *I can’t believe that this story came from the lips of our Lord.*

But Augustine didn’t have the benefit of hanging out with us here at Trinity. We know Jesus, and we can be sure that he’s not praising dishonesty. So what is his point?

One of the things that helped me understand what Jesus is trying to teach us with this parable came from a story about Henry Ford that is legendary in the fundraising community.

Henry Ford had a whole lot of money. And he took a trip to Ireland, where his family originally lived. And he planned to visit his ancestral town. Now there was a hospital in this town that was struggling to make ends meet. They wanted to provide more services and better care for the poor folks in the town, but they had very limited resources. So, a couple of the hospital’s trustees thought:

“Hey, Henry Ford is coming to town for a visit. He’s got a lot of money. Let’s see if we can get a meeting with him and ask for a donation.” So, they finagled a meeting with Ford and they asked for some money for the hospital. But it seems that Ford was a reluctant giver, so they only got a pledge from Ford for five thousand dollars. It may have been a lot of money in those days, but it wasn’t nearly enough—and they knew Ford could afford to give a lot more. But they were gracious and they thanked Ford and then they had a great idea.

They went straight to the editor of the local paper, and they asked him to run a headline in the next day’s paper that said, “Henry Ford donates 50 thousand dollars to the local hospital”.

And the next morning—right there on the front page in bold print: *Henry Ford gives 50 thousand to local hospital.*

Now, Ford reads the headline and he’s furious—and he goes right to the trustees of the hospital and says: “What are you doing? I only gave you 5 thousand dollars”. And the trustees say, “Oh, Mr. Ford—we’re so terribly sorry. Maybe it was just a bad typographical error. We’ll take care of this right away. We’ll go straight to the editor of the paper and tell him to run a retraction. And we’ll make sure that tomorrow’s headline reads: Ford only gave 5 thousand, not 50 thousand to the local hospital.

Well, Ford may have been many things, but he wasn't dumb—and he realizes how bad that headline will make him look, so he doesn't have much choice—he forks over another 45,000 dollars.³

The trustees of that hospital were shrewd children of light. They were using sharp powers for the work of the kingdom.

Perhaps, that's just what Jesus is telling us to do. He's not telling us to be dishonest, certainly. But maybe he's saying, "Hey, folks in the world can be pretty clever when it comes to taking care of themselves. Why not be astute, keen and sharp for the work of the kingdom? If we can be smart about worldly things, why can't we be smart about how we take care of one another and ourselves in the right way?

Think for a moment about how much energy some folks use to scam and cheat others. Think about how much energy some of us use just getting by. What if we were really smart about the way we do God's work? What a different world it would be if those scoundrels on the dark web used their intellect and creative energy to solve problems instead of raiding the wallets of their poor victims.

What a different world it would be if the CEO at Walmart said: *We don't need to wipe out every mom & pop store in the neighborhood to do business. We don't need to make millions and millions in profit every year. We need to make sure that our workers are well taken care of and that we are giving back as much as we possibly can to the community?*

According to Oxfam, an organization concerned with world hunger: *In 2024, the world's billionaires got \$2 trillion richer, growing their wealth by roughly \$5.7 billion a day. Their fortunes increased three times faster than in 2023, with nearly four new billionaires minted every week. At current rates, the world will see five trillionaires within the next decade. Meanwhile, the number of people experiencing poverty remains pretty much unchanged from 1990.*

We are facing one of the greatest eras of income inequality the world has ever known.

In her essay in the Christian Century, a former chaplain at Duke University, Jennifer Copeland tells us: *In the Bible as a whole, Jesus offers more commentary on how to deal with wealth than on how to handle sex -- a fact ignored by today's church, which is preoccupied by matters of sex while it says very little about money. Those with a supposedly high moral character are not always the shining examples in these stories. "Shady" characters may demonstrate the ability to make worthwhile decisions -- and inform those of us who have high opinions of our personal morality. The Lukan parable is about money. How {Copeland asks} do we make decisions regarding our possessions?*

*The shrewd manager in this morning's parable may indeed be a 'shady character', but Jesus shows us that we can learn something from his story. Jesus wants us to be smart about our spiritual lives, and just as invested in our souls, just as willing to work for the kingdom as we are eager to make our lives more comfortable.*⁴

Somewhere along the line, we decided that money shouldn't be discussed in polite society. We think that money is the root of all evil, but that is one of the most misquoted verses in our Bible.

³ Irish Examiner, "Henry Ford and the great 50,000 pound Hospital Riddle", Dave Hannigan, 15 April 2017.

⁴ Jennifer E. Copeland, "The Christian Century", *Shrewd investment: Luke 16:1-13*, Sept. 7, 2004.

Check 1 Timothy for yourselves. We are reading from his letter today, and we have proclaimed his affirmation of faith.

1 Timothy 6:10 - *For the **love of money** is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.*

As people of faith, we need to see money as a means not as an end.

We all need money in this world. Our church and our community need money and resources. Jesus is telling us to be smart about it—just as smart as the shrewd manager was—but we need to be shrewd for the work of the kingdom. We need to be shrewd children of the light.

Scholars and theologians may be confused about this parable, and there may be lots of ways to interpret it—but one thing is certain, most of us have been anxious about money in our lives, just like the shrewd manager was; and most of us have seen examples of economic injustice and greed.

We work on our retirement accounts and wonder what talents we have that will make us a buck—how often do we work on our spiritual accounts? How often do we wonder what skills and experience we can give to God?

The parable of the Shrewd Manager may be confusing—but Luke’s commentary at the end is very clear: *You cannot serve God and wealth.* In a struggling world, Luke’s advice may be ironic, but it is also a world full of many idols. Let’s make sure that here at Trinity, we are putting God first and surrendering all things to God. Let’s be shrewd children of the light.

Will you pray with me? : Gracious God, teach us your ways. Help us to place you at the center of our lives. And help us to do all we can to be sharp and keen and very shrewd for the work of your kingdom. Amen.