



The Episcopal Church of the Advent
September 23, 2025 Newsletter
Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost



23 September: [Thecla, apostle and proto-martyr among women, c.70](#)

Thecla was born to a rich family in Iconium, a town in Asia Minor. She was expected to marry, and marry well. In fact, her mother had a young man picked out for her. He had an excellent position and could offer Thecla a secure life. This was important in Thecla's day because an unmarried woman could find herself with no support and no money. Marriage assured a stable place in society, with children to carry on the family name.

But something happened to Thecla that made her turn away forever from her mother's dream. The apostle Paul, who had been in Antioch, traveled to Iconium and began teaching at a house near Thecla's. She sat in her open window for three days and nights, listening as Paul spoke about the blessings of giving everything to God. Thecla decided not to marry and to devote her life to Jesus Christ.

Her fiancé Thamyris was furious and complained to the local governor that Paul was a bad influence. Because Thamyris was so prominent, Paul was arrested and imprisoned.

Late at night Thecla secretly went to the prison, bribed the guards, and stayed to hear Paul's teaching. When her family found her, they turned her and Paul over to the authorities. Paul was driven from the city and Thecla was sentenced to death. Her mother was so angry at her daughter's disobedient "madness" that she wouldn't intervene.

Thecla was tortured, but she escaped. She found her way to Antioch and soon met Paul there. She helped him preach, and together they did good work for the Lord.

But once again a powerful person, this time the city governor, tried to turn Thecla toward marriage. When she hurt his pride by refusing, he denounced her to the authorities. She was arrested and sentenced to die in the arena. But the wild beasts wouldn't harm her, and when their attempt to drown her also failed, the officials were so frightened that they let her go. She retreated to a rocky desert cave in the mountains near the town of Ma'aloula, Syria. Through her prayer she converted many and gathered other women monastics around her. She counseled people and healed the sick, never asking for money.

Even there, though, she was pursued. Jealous pagan doctors sent young men to harm the saint, now an old woman. But God heard her prayers and opened up a fissure in the rock of the cave. Thecla rushed into the space, which immediately closed up again.

Today you can visit Thecla's cave, and see in it the still-running spring that provided water for her. The nuns who live in the Mar Thecla monastery there will tell you her story, and show you the fissure in the rock where this saint, "Equal to the Apostles", left the world and joined her Lord in the Kingdom.

Sermon Notes – The Parable of the Unjust Steward

Jesus loves parables, and in Luke 16:1–13, He offers a challenging one: the story of a rich man and his shrewd manager, who is accused of mismanaging resources. This story stretches our understanding of discipleship. As our rector, Tryggvi Árnason, asks, "Is Jesus messing with us?" Yet, through this perplexing tale, we're invited to embody grace and radical generosity, living out our Baptismal Covenant in a complex world. Tryggvi reminds us, "God never gives up on us," as we are called to trust in God's grace as we navigate life's challenges.

This parable appears in Luke's Gospel, amid teachings on wealth, stewardship, and God's kingdom, following the Parable of the Prodigal Son and preceding warnings about the dangers of serving money. Spoken to disciples and a crowd, including critical Pharisees, it challenges us to reflect on how we use God's gifts. As Episcopalians, we hear this passage in light of our Eucharistic worship, where we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, and our Baptismal Covenant, which calls us to seek and serve Christ in all persons and strive for justice and peace.

Jesus tells of a rich man whose steward is accused of "squandering" his master's resources. Facing dismissal, the steward acts shrewdly: he summons the master's debtors and reduces their debts. Surprisingly, the master commends him—not for dishonesty but for his cleverness in preparing for what's ahead.

During Sunday's sermon, Tryggvi offers us a fresh perspective on the parable and challenges us to see it as a story of forgiveness. "What if squandering is actually generous living? What if the mismanagement is actually the fruit of his compassion? In his imperfection, the manager embodies grace and forgiveness," said Tryggvi. He painted a vivid picture of the steward risking his job over the years to ease the financial struggles of the rich man's workers. Though his methods are dishonest, as Jesus makes clear, could they reflect a heart of grace?

Even on his way out, the steward reduces debts, risking further wrath. This bold act invites us to see forgiveness and generosity as the central theme of the story.

Jesus often draws lessons that resonate with our call to faithful stewardship, offering us an opportunity to advance God's kingdom in our own lives, perhaps by forgiving debts or supporting ministries that reflect Christ's love. This echoes our vow to "proclaim by word," and the steward's drastic move to reduce debts, even at personal risk, mirrors the radical generosity we encounter in Christ's sacrifice, celebrated at the Eucharist. If read as forgiveness, the rich man's commendation becomes an act of grace. As Tryggvi notes, "If the rich man loved his wealth over anything else, he wouldn't find it in his heart to extend grace to the manager and his workers." Yet he does, pointing to a God who loves this world deeply and works through our flaws.

We live in a complex world where self-centeredness often seems to prevail, and integrity can feel inconvenient. Tryggvi reminds us, "Jesus was acknowledging that to be His disciples in this world was challenging. And He's telling them that He knows it's hard, but to trust Him." Our decisions—what we eat, where we shop, how we confront corporate greed or systemic injustices—have consequences. Jesus' parable reminds us of this complicated reality.

As children of light, we're called to be shrewd, creative, and compassionate. Tryggvi asks, "In what areas of contemporary life have we lost relevance as Christians? How might we be more shrewd, more clever, more creative?" Whether it's advocating for fair labor practices or addressing environmental concerns, we're challenged to engage the world's injustices with the urgency of the steward and the grace of Christ.

This parable isn't about excusing dishonesty but about living with urgency, grace, and radical generosity. The steward's flawed yet bold actions and the rich man's surprising mercy point to a God who never gives up on us. As Episcopalians, we're called to live out our Baptismal Covenant with creativity and faithfulness, trusting in God's grace to guide us. In our worship, service, and daily lives, to be shrewd stewards of grace, proclaiming Christ's love where God is—where forgiveness and liberation abound.

Tryggvi's closing words ring true: "Where there is forgiveness, there is God. Where there is unburdening, there is liberation. Where there is radical generosity, there is God as well. And where God is, that is where we should be or seek to be also." This perspective calls us to repent of our complicity in a compromised world and to embody God's grace in our actions.

Reflection Question: How can you embody shrewd grace and radical generosity this week, living out your Baptismal Covenant in a world God loves? Peace be with you, Kim

Blessing of the Animals - October 5 at 1 P.M. at the Church

Saturday, October 4, 2025 is the feast day of St. Francis, patron saint of animals. On the nearest Sunday, October 5, Church of the Advent will commemorate St. Francis by inviting our animal friends to be blessed. This 15-year-old tradition is a joyous occasion open to all the community. The event takes place behind the church at the corner of Academy and Porter streets. Owners can bring their pets in cages or on leashes for a formal blessing. At the Blessing of the Animals, we honor and emulate Francis' example of love for animals and appreciation of God's creations.

Father Tryggvi contact information and office hours: Father Tryggvi's email is priest@adventmadisonga.com. He typically holds office hours at the Parish House on Mondays and Tuesdays. For pastoral emergencies, please call his cellphone number at 828-446-7843. For an appointment, please call the church office at 706-342-4787 and leave a message to schedule an appointment.

Stewardship Campaign Chair: Vestry member Mary Horton is this year's Stewardship Campaign Chair. The Campaign will begin this month. Parishioners will soon see mail and email which will contain pledge cards and other information.

Foyer Sign Up: The Vestry encourages everyone to sign up for this season's foyer dinners, which are small gatherings held monthly at someone's house on a rotating basis. They are fun and provide a way to interact with your church family outside of church. You may sign up in the Narthex at the Church or by emailing foyers@adventmadisonga.com by the end of September.

First Wednesday Get-Together
Steffen Thomas Museum • 4200 Bethany Rd, Buckhead, GA 30625
Wednesday, October 1 • 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Our October First Wednesday gathering will take place at the Steffen Thomas Museum. This unique venue will allow us to explore the current exhibitions: Art Inspired by Steffen and Sara's 1972 Trip to Germany, Steffen Thomas Through the Eyes of Young Adults, and Tribute to Richard "Ole" Olsen. The museum is a warm and welcoming space, complete with a full kitchen and plenty of room to gather. They'll have tables set up for food and drinks, so just bring what you'd normally share and join us for a relaxed evening with great company in a beautiful setting.

Rota for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 28, 2025

LEM: 10:30 A.M. Roman
1st Reading: Freyer
2nd Reading: Ramfos
Altar Guild: Bennett-Roman
Flower Guild: Eskew
Organ Tech: Jackson-Lewis
Vestry of the Day: Booker

Readings for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 28, 2025

[Link to Readings](#)

First Reading: Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15
The Psalm: Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16
Second Reading: 1 Timothy 6:6-19
The Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

Parish Prayer List

Fr. Dann Brown, Lynn Cupples, Bob Cupples, Flossie Dodge, Mary Ann Edelman, Anita Hunt, Kate Jackson, Beth Tamplin Jones, Julie Hancock Jones, Mary Mack Jones, Jan Kozel, Bill Kurtz, Susan Kurtz, Kathy Lehman, Brian Lehman, Jack Leo, Jerry Maddoz, David Medlock, Dutton Morehouse, Jennie Newton, Annette Piazza, Lynne Roach, Dick Schmidt, Emily Sigman, Betty Thomas, Jack Ward, Gloria Ward, Jay Whitcomb.

September Birthdays: 26 Devon Dartnell, Harrison Yost, 28 William Wood Burriss

Recurring weekly calendar

- Rite I Eucharist: Sunday, 8:00 AM
- Sunday school (adult): Sunday, 9:15 AM
- Rite II Eucharist: Sunday, 10:30 AM

- Morning Prayer service: Wednesday, 9:00 AM
- Off the Rails AA group: M, Tu, Th @ noon
- Madison AA group: Th, Su @7:30 PM, F @ 7:00 PM

The Episcopal Church of the Advent

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