

Why does God *have* to like even horrible people?

I recently saw the play "Angels in America" at the Soulpepper theatre.

Roy Cohn is the bad guy. He is cynical, powerful, foul-mouthed and a bully.

Roy gets Aids.

He denies it, he fights it but, miraculously, he accepts the horrible truth of it.

Roy abandons his hold on power and political leverage.

He uses his contacts and calls in debts to ensure unfair access to the best health care.

He threatens to expose the illegal activity of a member of Congress in order to get ATZ drugs, a drug still deemed experimental.

Towards the end he even bullies the ghost of a woman he had executed to sing Shiva over him (he is Jewish, (though utterly lapsed) at his death.

What makes Roy loveable in the play is that he remains utterly selfish, but he can give up all his political status, his financial position in life, his public persona when he needs to. Roy *recognizes* that the moment has come. He sees illness and death coming and he *abandons* his old way of Life to prepare to negotiate his Death.

What would you do differently if you knew you were going to get severely ill and die soon?

Would you pretend you hadn't heard?

Would you keep it a secret?

Would you see if you could possibly slow it all down?

What would you give to stretch days into weeks or months or years?

[Write down three things....I challenge you, if even secretly only for yourself, go on! write down three things you would do...]

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The unjust steward in Jesus' parable in Luke's Gospel is suddenly found out!

He faces the probability of poverty, begging, labouring.

But he could prolong his standard of living. It means having to let go, in one fling, of every hold on power he ever had.

It is a "do-or-die" moment.

He chooses to face it full-on and then uses every dishonest tactic open to him to earn favours, gain blackmail advantage and make peace with his boss's clients.

This is a story about facing a huge change in your life. And about using all your assets, skills, abilities.

When I felt called to follow Jesus I thought I had to leave everything. Then my priest wrote, "God wants you. All of you. Not some emaciated saint. "

I was to bring all of my skills and abilities, even ones that didn't seem holy.

Roy in the play is like the Steward in Jesus' story. Neither of them are "good people" but both are good at their jobs in a way. Both of them are faced by a sudden, non-reversible catastrophe. Both of them use all the survival skills they have developed and learned to make it through. And both the Master and the audience end up admiring them.

Behind this Jesus is teaching two important things to us who consider ourselves his disciples.

The first is this: When God faces you with the biggest change in your life use everything you have to go through that change well. If God is acting on you then it is *all of you* he sees, not some morally edited version of you. He loves you "warts and all".

The second is this: Don't despise anyone else's way of coming to faith or living in Christ. You don't know what they were like before. We cannot imagine the burdens they carried or the sins they repent of. Jesus has the sleazy Steward welcomed in. The play had the wholly reprehensible Roy welcomed in and loved too.

They are loved not because they deserved God's love. [The Pharisees accepted only the deserving.] Jesus challenges us to accept the dreadful, the rotten and the unacceptable.

So for us in Grace Church we need to hear God's call to challenge people to face the big questions of life head-on

And we need to be ready to receive anyone who comes, without judgment, or hesitation and with a welcome, even when we are most inclined to shut the door quickly and turn off the lights.

Why does God *have* to like even horrible people?

Maybe so he can have grace enough to love me.....and you too.