

33A 2020 SML  
MT 25:14-30

At the beginning of Advent this past year, I gave a homily introducing Matthew's Gospel, and in that introduction I taught that Matthew is the most ordered of the four gospels. Matthew very distinctly alternated five narratives with five sermons, and each sermon addressed a topic of concern in Matthew's Church:

1. Matthew's famous Sermon on the Mount
2. Matthew's missionary sermon
3. His sermon on the kingdom
4. His sermon on the Church
5. And finally, Matthew's sermon on eschatology: the four last things: judgment, heaven, hell and purgatory,

This last sermon, like the others, is very ordered with seven parables all about judgment:

1. the Parable of the Fig Tree: that the day of judgment is at hand;
2. the Parable of Noah's Day: but of that day and hour no one knows; neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone;
3. the Parable of the Burglar: had the master of the house known when the burglar was coming, he would have stayed awake;

4. the Parable of the Honest and Dishonest Servants, whose master came on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour;
5. last Sunday's Parable of the Ten Virgins, even though the bridegroom was long delayed in coming, there was still no time to get more oil for their lamps
6. this Sunday's Parable of the Talents,
7. and next Sunday's Parable of the Sheep and Goats when there was no more time.

This Sunday's gospel is not about how much talent you have, nor is it about how many talents you have. It is about how well you use them. It is all about effort. Men can be very unequal in talent, but they can be quite equal in effort.

In this Sunday's gospel, while talking TO the disciples, Our Blessed Lord was talking ABOUT the scribes and the Pharisees, because the scribes and the Pharisees were L-A-Z-Y! The third servant returned his talent exactly as it was, and the master called a spade a spade. "You wicked, LAZY servant!" It is the same way the whole aim of the scribes and the Pharisees was to keep the Law exactly as it was: no change, no alteration, no development. Stated simply, the scribes and Pharisees were at a stalemate. Theirs was a paralyzed religion whose goal was to stand vindicated before Almighty God for having done nothing

wrong. The scribes and Pharisees may have done nothing wrong, because they did nothing - PERIOD! They were lazy, and Our Blessed Lord has a real problem with those who are lazy, yet are given the talent to work.

Our country is at a stalemate. Our country is pretty much split right down the middle. I came across an informal survey taken by an equal number in both political parties. The question asked was, "If after the investigations are completed, your candidate does not win the election, will you think the election process was flawed?" Every participant said yes. So yes, our country is at a stalemate, split right down the middle.

Regardless of how the election investigation turns out, there has never been so many who oppose the other candidate. The next president will need to unite this country and that will be a steep uphill climb, a real adversity. How is the president going to do that? Where is his answer? Who has his answer? What's his answer?

Well, for us believers, the answer to the how, the where, the Who and the what is right there (point to the tabernacle). Jesus not only has the answer. He is the answer. Prophetically, the sign on the Rectory front lawn is spot on, "Jesus 2020." You might answer, "Well Father Dan, not for anything, but Jesus is

not the president.” True, but better than that, Jesus is God! Here’s what came to me while I was in adoration before Jesus this past week.

The genius of the Gospel is that it includes the solution inside the problem. God knows what you and I know - that sooner or later, for every one of us, life will not go our way. You won’t get your way. And, while these events may lead us to catastrophize everything, let’s realize it must be business as usual for God, at least six billion times a day.

Judgment day did not go all that well for the lazy servant. “Throw this servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.” However, until judgment day, Our Blessed Lord uses inclusionary thinking: “My Father’s sun shines on the good and the bad, His rain falls on the just and the unjust. (MT 5:45) Or “Don’t pull out the weeds or you might pull out the wheat along with it. Let the weeds and the wheat both grow together until the harvest.” (MT:13:29-30) Let’s let the truth of life teach us on its own terms.

- ✓ Sunshine on the good and the bad
- ✓ Rain on the just and the unjust
- ✓ The simple as doves and the wise as serpents
- ✓ The weeds and the wheat

- ✓ The sheep and the goats
- ✓ The prodigal son and the older son
- ✓ The foolish virgins and the wise
- ✓ The hard working and the lazy
- ✓ The list goes on . . .

The lesson learned on life's terms is it is not all loss, but somehow gain, not losing but somehow winning. I have met enough people who have been gifted with faith to know what is fairly common: those who have asked for and been gifted with God's grace to overcome what is adverse. Our Blessed Lord describes these persons. "From their breasts flow fountains of living water." (JN 7:38) These are the first two stewards in today's gospels who expanded their talent exponentially.

Part of the winning solution is forgiveness. Just as vitriol breeds vitriol, forgiveness breeds forgiveness. To borrow a phrase from the fight against COVID, forgiveness slows the spread of vitriol.

Failure and crosses are the great equalizers and levelers among us. Communities and commitment can form around suffering and adversity much more than around happiness and prosperity. Just compare commitment to one another, to the world and to truth in

a “happy clappy, fast food religion” versus the deep solidarity that forms in the Church times of adversity.

I witnessed this first-hand in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. St. Benedict Parish where I was pastor at the time of the hurricane was at her best in the face of adversity, and I have no doubt that if some catastrophe were to hit Medford, St. Mary of the Lakes would be at her best as well.

The genius of the Gospel is that it includes the solution inside the problem.

- ✓ The falling became the standing
- ✓ the stumbling became the finding
- ✓ the raft became the shore.

The inexperienced cannot see this very easily, because they doubt themselves too much when faced with adversity. They have not lived long enough to see the big patterns. That’s why so many of our young commit suicide.

Many of us have discovered in times of such falling, the Greatness of God, the ultimate I-Thou relationship, which is always compassionate and all embracing. God embraces us in our falling and loves us for who we are, His son, His daughter, and gives us His grace:

- ✓ To stand after we fall

- ✓ To find after we stumble,
- ✓ To arrive at the shore once He gives us a raft.

Until you fall, until you don't get your way, you will never discover the Greatness of God, the ultimate I-Thou relationship, and the genius of the Gospel, which includes the solution inside the problem, and part of the solution is forgiveness.