

November 15, 2020

Prov 31:10-13,19-20,30-31; 1 Thes 5:1-6,13; Mt 25:14-30

Throughout scripture, and through the life and inspired Tradition of the Church, it is clear that God is calling us to act in certain ways, to do certain things, to live in certain ways in this life. God give to us all that we need to live and also to fulfill what is asked of us. But our culture tells us that we get to define what the boundaries are, we get to decide what we will do with all parts of our lives and all things in our possession, we even get to try to define who God is. But this is not what Jesus tells us when he says: *Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.* We must seek to do the Father's will, not our own. Jesus is clear in this section of Matthew that not all enter eternal life: there are sheep and there are goats, there are those who come into the banquet and those who are left outside, some inherit the kingdom and others do not. It is not doing of the Father's will alone that gains one heaven, but it is through following that will that we learn to love God fully and have a deeper faith in the Lord who saves us.

In the Gospel the man going on a journey entrusts a sum to three servants. Each is given an amount that matches his abilities - no one is being expected to do more than he can reasonably do. The word "talents" makes us think of the word in English which represents personal gifts and skills. It could mean this - but it has a deeper meaning. The word "talent" really is a measure of weight. So it can represent an amount of coins or precious metal, it can refer to the figurative weight of the gifts we possess, it can also mean a share in the grace of God given to us personally (which to the Jewish mind is regarded as heavy) - in short, it can symbolize all the gifts God has given us. Regardless of the weight of these gifts, each has been given a portion by the master specific to the individual; and each knows that one day the master will return seeking an accounting. Two of the servants in the Gospel do something with these "talents" and each one gains in proportion to the amount he risks. One risked and invested five - it grew by five, the other risked three, it grew by three more. The final one did less than the minimum (held it so tight he didn't even let it grow on its own). The master returns and is pleased with the first two, but not with the last one. Jesus is trying to tell us what God expects of us from the gifts that we have received. All three in the Gospel recognized that the talents belonged to the master when he gave them, and also the profit gained from them is his - they, like we, are stewards of these gifts.

Jesus is calling us to discover and invest the “talents” - the quantity of skills, gifts, possessions, money, time, energy, and abilities that he has given to us. He wants us to not fear to use these as he asks, to have faith that through his power they will multiply if risked - as long as we are following the will of the Father. This multiplication enriches our home on Earth (like the faithful wife from the first reading enriches her home) it brings us closer to God in faith, and it enriches us - as Jesus said: *For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich.* The two faithful servants risk the sum because they know that the master is merciful, they know that it is only by giving out the sum that it will grow, they know he will forgive if they risk in faith and any gets lost. They are not focusing on escaping the master’s wrath, but on gaining his love and respect - they have faith in the master, and they know his will. Their gamble pays off - the quantity of those talents grows, and in his love the master rewards them. The other is left out in the cold for his lack of faith, for his fear to use the “talents,” for his lack of knowing the master’s will. He, as we sometimes, try to hide the gift, to store it and not risk, to clutch too tight to the material while missing what the master wanted.

In the first reading the wife is diligent, she seeks to please her beloved by using her talents and energies to enrich the house - she gains a deeper place in her husband’s heart: Notice that she worked hard, not because she feared the husband (that’s clear from other parts of this same passage that we don’t read today), she worked hard for him in love. Now if we can place ourselves (regardless of gender) as the wife in this image, and God as the husband. If we can not just focus on the specific acts of the wife in the reading (which are specific to another culture and time) but rather replace these with things that we can do to serve the Lord, then we will be able to apply today’s readings to our life. We like the servants have been given a “weight” of gifts - be they financial, or abilities, or our personalities. How can we invest these by using them? Not holding on to them, but use them to serve the Lord in worship, prayer, caring for those in need - showing love like the faithful wife who brings honor and peace to her house. This may not be the world’s focus (which centers on personal possession and self advancement), but as St. Paul reminds us: *We are children of the light ... not of the night or of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do.* Let us instead be awake in the knowledge of God and act as good and faithful stewards of the many blessings God has given us to use.