

From the Homily Library of Fr. Callistus Iyorembor

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A – November 15, 2020

The Talents

Notice Jesus used a lot of parables during His earthly ministry. He would draw on something from this physical world of time and space to explain some reality in the spiritual order. He would draw on something in the material world to explain something fundamental in the spiritual life. Well today Jesus uses an image close to our experience taken from the world of business...that of investment, risk and return as a model for the spiritual life.

Notice that today's Gospel gives us the wonderful and challenging Parable of the Talents. We know the contours of this story well.

A man goes on a journey, but before leaving, he entrusts his money to three of his servants. To one he gives five talents. To another he gives two talents. And to the third he gives one talent. Each according to his own ability.

One thing to note here is this: a talent was a good deal of money in the ancient world. According to scholars, one talent was worth about 15 years' wages of a working person in ancient Israel. So, even the servant who received just one talent received a fair amount of money. This is not a trivial sum with which we are dealing.

The story continues. The first and second servants went and traded with their money, risking it in the open market. Each received a rich/huge return on his investment; doubling his master's money.

The third servant who received one talent was cautious. He buried his talent of money to ensure he could return it upon his master's return. The owner returns and praises the first two servants and gives them greater responsibility. The third man he addresses:

“You wicked, lazy servant! So, you knew that I harvested where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now take the talent from him and give it to the one who ten.”

Three lessons we can draw from this parable are:

- Of all of us gathered here today, no two of us are alike. God has given each of us special gifts, unique talents and expects us to use them well. When we use them the way God intends, they will enrich our lives and the lives of others. The woman in our first reading is held up as a model. She is kind, industrious, caring, wise, virtuous. She used her talents in the service of her family, her neighbor and the poor. She earned the respect of the entire community. Life is God’s gift to us. What we do with our lives is our gift to God. Whatever talents we received - whether one or five - we must use them in the service of God.

Notice that the talents did not belong to the servants. They belonged to the Master and the servants had to give an account when their Master returned. We, too, must realize that our lives are not about us. Your life is not about you. It is about God’s purpose for your life.

- The reward of work well done is there is still more work to do to. The two servants who had done well are not told to lean back and rest on their laurels because they had done well rather. Rather they were given greater tasks and greater responsibility in the work of the Master. God expects us to grow in our spiritual lives, grow in our relationships with God and one another.
- Last, we learn that success is a product of hard work. The two servants worked really hard, took some risks, and their efforts yielded good results. Hard work

pays. St Paul tells us: *“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling...”* (Phil 2:12) but the Grace of God matters. God is the one who grants increase ultimately. *“For if the lord does not build a house, they labor in vain who build it”* (Psalm 127).