

### 33<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN OT—Year A—M11-D15-Y2020

01. *“...so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground.”*  
In today’s Gospel, Jesus uses a very harsh analogy to **really drive home the point**, how detrimental it is to **waste our God-given gifts and our God-given potential**.
02. Because God really wants us **to become ALL that He made us to be, and ALL that we CAN BE — for He knows by doing so, we will lead fuller and richer lives**—and will be much happier people — and that by NOT doing so, we will (one day) deeply regret it.
03. The slave who held on to the one talent he was given did so out of fear—which is often **the ONE thing that prevents us from taking risks and reaching our full potential**.
04. And all the events making the news these days are certainly enough **to fill us WITH fear—and to create a climate of fear** — as all the stories saturating the media lately are enough to make **even the most laidback of persons—uncertain and fearful about the future**.
05. But fear is something that God doesn’t will for His People—because the evil one FEEDS ON FEAR — and because **where there is fear, there is little faith**—because **faith and fear cannot occupy the same space, at the same time**.
06. Someone pointed out to me earlier in the year that the phrase: DO NOT BE AFRAID (or something similar) is mentioned **365 times in the Bible**—just enough to cover every day of the year — which alone tells us that God doesn’t want us to let our lives **be run by fear—and that He wants us to be people of faith, not people of fear**.
07. Some fear does serve a purpose, in the sense that it prevents us from taking UNNECESSARY risks—and doing foolish things like playing on train tracks or participating in dangerous stunts. But **irrational fear has no purpose—and only serves to keep us imprisoned**.

08. There's a movie that my friends forced me to watch some years ago—and I'm forever grateful that they did—because it's become one of my all-time favourites. **It's an obscure Australian film from the 90's called *Strictly Ballroom***—about the eccentric world of ballroom dance competition.
09. Although it's essentially a romantic comedy, I thought it had a **powerful statement about living in fear** — as one of the recurring lines throughout the film is: ***a life lived in fear, is a life half-lived.*** In other words, when we live in fear—**WE'RE NOT REALLY LIVING AT ALL.**
10. Because, believe it or not, **the most dangerous plague in the world today is not the corona virus, but FEAR itself** — and contrary to popular opinion, it's not money that is the root of all evil, but FEAR — **because it's FEAR that will persuade us to place money and possessions before people** — it's fear that will compel us to exercise undue control over those around us — **it's fear that will tempt us to put our trust in our OWN strength and resources rather than in God** — and it's fear that will transform someone into a selfish, hate-filled person—encouraging them to do all sorts of unkind and unloving things.
11. Even in the Star Wars universe they recognize fear as a source of great evil—as Yoda once said: ***fear leads to hate, and fear leads to the dark side.***
12. Not to mention that fear will **completely take away our peace of mind—profoundly affecting our quality of life**—and preventing us from living life to the full.
13. Because it is fear that will make us **waste a lot of time and energy worrying about all sorts of things—most of which never come to pass** — and there are ACTUAL studies which have shown this to be true—**that most of the things we tend to worry about never end up happening.**

14. Don't get me wrong, the things that are happening in the world, and with the corona virus, **are reasons to be VERY CONCERNED—and to exercise ALL necessary and reasonable amounts of caution in our lives** — but IRRATIONAL fear, to the point of obsessing about the future—or **obsessing about things outside of our control**—is obviously not a good thing.
15. Since fear and faith cannot occupy the same space at the same time, one of the best antidotes to **fear IS faith and trust** — and this faith and trust is not so much about whether God exists, as it is about **whether God truly loves us** — whether God desires the best for us — **whether God cares about our worries and concerns** — whether we can trust God to have our best interest at heart—**whether we can trust Him to not give us more than we can bare.**
16. But, of course, God is trustworthy—**and does have our best interest at heart**—but fear will often blind us to that truth. Still, the Lord constantly challenges us, and invites us, to live a life of **faith and trust versus a life of fear and worry.**
17. And the best way to cultivate this faith and trust in God (and His love for us) is to **KEEP OUR EYES AND FOCUS ON JESUS—fixating on Him instead of the media** — not dwelling on the headlines and giving into fear mongering—but, rather, **entrusting our worries to God, and detaching from the things that cause us anxiety.**
18. It's good to be informed about what's going on in the world—but it's **NOT good to constantly feed and fuel our fear.**
19. And keeping our eyes and focus on Jesus doesn't mean **having one's head in the clouds, and being OBLIVIOUS to the affairs of the world** — it actually means being **deeply invested IN THE WORLD**—but in the right spirit, and in the right way. Because as someone once said to me: ***we don't want to be SO Heavenly minded, that we're no earthly good.***
20. And so, keeping our eyes and focus on Jesus doesn't mean being UNCONCERNED about world affairs — rather it means placing our

trust in God's Love and God's Providence — it means recognizing **that, despite all appearances, God is in control—and truly has our interest at heart** — it means letting go and letting God—placing all our fears and worries into His Hands — it means trusting that **no tragedy, no disaster, no pandemic, no force on earth can ever separate us from His Love** — it means NOT allowing irrational fear to change our lives—and more importantly, to change WHO WE ARE—because this is one of **THE WORST things that fear does**—it changes us into people that **we are not meant to be**.

21. Just as fear and faith cannot occupy the same space — so too, **FEAR AND LOVE, cannot occupy the same space**. The famed **psychologist Elizabeth Kubler Ross put it best when she wrote:** *“There are only two emotions: love and fear. All positive emotions come from love, all negative emotions come from fear. From love flows happiness, contentment, peace, and joy. From fear comes anger, hate, anxiety and guilt.”*
22. She went on to say that: *“It's true that there are only two primary emotions, love and fear. But it's more accurate to say that there is **ONLY love OR FEAR**—for we cannot feel these two emotions together, at exactly the same time. They're opposites. If we're in fear, we are not in a place of love. When we're in a place of love, we cannot be in a place of fear.”*
23. And so, **THE MOST perfect antidote to fear IS love—because, AGAIN, love and fear cannot exist at the same time, and in the same space** — and, as St. John the Apostle once wrote: *perfect love casts out ALL fear*.
24. And this love St. John was talking about was primarily the Love of God. Because when we truly know that we are loved by God—**that we are precious to Him—that we are ABSOLUTELY irreplaceable to Him—then there's absolutely nothing to fear**.
25. But the only way to come to know this intensely personal love that God has for each of us is **to draw ever closer to Jesus**—entering into

a deep and intimate friendship with Him—**keeping our focus on Him no matter how frightening the storm is around us.**

26. Because the Lord **IS INDEED** among us in the midst of this storm in which we are ALL living—but we won't see Him **if we choose to live with fear instead of faith—if we choose to operate out of fear instead of love.**
27. And so, on this, the 33<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—the Lord is saying to each and everyone of us: ***do not be afraid, and keep your eyes on Me*** — *if you're concerned about the state of the economy, about your job and your finances, **keep your eyes on Me** — if you're fearful about the pandemic and the rising numbers, about your health and the health of your loved ones, **keep your eyes on Me** — if you're worried about the future and what it holds for you and your family, **keep your eyes on Me*** — because Our Lord knows that it is by keeping our eyes on Him—**by drawing closer to Him, and making Him the focus of our lives—that we will be able to weather ANY STORM that comes our way. AMEN.**