

Homily for the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020

To understand our readings today, it is important to look at the liturgical context. At Vatican II, it was determined that our celebrations of the Eucharist should be enriched by having much more Scripture read to us. Throughout the year, then, for Sunday readings there are three cycles—A, B, and C—corresponding roughly to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which are highlighted. The Gospel of John is spread over the three year cycle particularly around the major seasons of the church year: Advent, Christmas Time, Lent, and Easter Time. When liturgists were putting these readings together after Vatican II they also wanted to give a sense of direction for these Scriptures: they wanted the Liturgical year to begin with the anticipation of the coming of Jesus, his birth, public ministry, Passion, Death and Resurrection, and then to prepare for his Second coming in Glory at the end of Time. Jesus' coming in glory, or Eschatology, is the theme we hear in our readings today, particularly from St. Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians---"*...you know very well the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night.*" and in the Gospel of Matthew: "*After a long absence, the master of those servants came home and settled accounts...*".

Some additional background: Our Gospel today describes a parable of the talents. It is story about a man who was going on a journey and handed over some of his money to three of his servants or slaves according to their abilities. Most of us, when we think about the word TALENT, think about special abilities or skills that we or someone else has. But in the ancient world, a talent referred to a measure of money. A talent is equal to about 6,000 denarii. A denarius was a standard Roman coin, and it was used to pay a laborer's daily wage. Therefore, a talent would be roughly equivalent to 20 years wages for the average worker. Five talents, the largest amount entrusted to any of the servants, is comparable to one hundred years-worth of labor, an astronomical amount of money.

So let's put all this background material together to understand better parable: The Parable is located in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus is teaching his disciples to get prepared for difficult times and live in anticipation of the final coming of the Lord. We can see in this parable a message similar to last week's where we had the five foolish and the five wise virgins. The wise virgins that brought along extra oil in case the Groom was late—they brought along a store of the fruits of a life of virtue and good living. They were prepared and the Lord is pleased.

In this story a wealthy man prepares for a journey by entrusting a sum of money to three servants according to their ability. Although the first receives five times as much as the last, each receives a significant sum of money. The return of the master is certain, but the timing is unknown. And so after a long absence, the master returns and finds out what each servant has done with his property.

The first two slaves—very clever day traders in today's terms-- invest the master's money and double it. Although the first slave earned more than the second, each has done remarkably well with what he has been given. They have, if you will, fulfilled their potential. That is what the master saw in each of them, thus the different amounts. They have been faithful to do what

the master has required of them. The master's response to each is the same. He commends them for being good and faithful, entrusts them with more authority, and invites them to enter his "joy." The positive rewards for two of the servants are based upon their faithfulness to properly use what Christ entrusted to them.

The third servant is not so fortunate. The master is not happy that all he did was bury the money he was given. Now in a time of war, sometimes this was the safest way for people to protect their assets. Even today they find buried hoards of treasure in England or France.

The parable tells us a lot about the master and why the third servant acted the way he did. The master is a man who reaps where he does not sow and gathers where he has not scattered. He aggressively seeks to expand his wealth. He even reprimands the servant for failing to invest the money with the bankers so that he might have gained interest.

The master is disappointed and angry with the third servant. He had entrusted him with a portion of his wealth to test his abilities — abilities that must have been evident in the past or he would not have selected him. This time, however, the servant was too afraid to take a risk even for his master. Instead, he attempted to be content with protecting himself. In the end this inaction cost him everything. He was thrown into the darkness.

The moral of the parable is that the master expected the servants to continue acting on his behalf as they no doubt had done so in the past. He has high confidence in each of them. Each was different, and so different amounts were given, each according to ability. The idea was to take risks and turn a profit, to follow the example of the master who was very shrewd and risk-taker. Two servants were found to have done a good job, and they are rewarded. Their industriousness had increased the master's wealth. The third was more fearful than faithful and did not take the risks necessary.

So what is the lesson we are to draw from this parable for our own lives? Preparedness is not being passive, but being active. The most faithful follower is the greatest risk-taker in order to bear fruit. What does faithfulness look like in a time of waiting? In Matthew's Gospel faithfulness is imitating the life and ministry of Jesus and taking every opportunity as it arises. The Incarnation of Jesus clearly announced the arrival of God's kingdom and the signs of the kingdom that Jesus did are manifest by feeding the hungry, curing the sick, seeking the sinners and serving the least. This is how the kingdom breaks into our world.

All who would follow Jesus, at a minimum, are to preach by their lives the good news of the kingdom to the whole world by doing what Jesus did and showing how it changes our lives and our world. The list of actions indicating the kingdom would include, visiting the sick and imprisoned, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, and feeding the hungry. One's future does not rest on the extent of one's abilities, but on how one utilizes the abilities we have as we wait for the coming of the Lord. Those who are found faithful will hear their Master say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant."*

With material from Carla Works, TORCH, Dominican Fr Luke Doherty, WIKI commentary on Matthew 25, Sr. Diane Bergant, PREACHING THE NEW LECTIONARY .

Announcements – November 14 & 15

- *For 5:30 pm & 10 am Masses both the Church & Parish Center*
We ask for FOUR to FIVE volunteers to please stay and help us clean & sanitize. Please leave your kneeler down so we know which pews to clean.
- A BIG THANK YOU to all who donated, sponsored, participated or helped in any way to make our Virtual Auction a successes.
- Sign ups for next weekends Masses will be opened on Tuesday at 12 noon. We are continuing with online signups for the weekend Masses. Each week you will need to go online and sign up for Mass. If you do not have internet and need assistance, please call the parish office.
- The bulletin can be found by the doors of the church and parish center as you exit
- And now let us pray the St. Michael Prayer:

St. Michael the Archangel defend us in battle.
Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, an do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen