

The Parable of the Talents (33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Proverbs 31—A Wife “More Precious Than Jewels”

1. Virtuous: a “good wife” is “far more precious than jewels” (31:10)
2. Faithful: the “heart of her husband *trusts* her” (31:11)
3. Loving: “she does him *good*, and not harm, all the days of her life” (31:12)
4. Diligent: “she *works* with willing hands...” (31:13, 19)
5. Generous: “She *opens her hand* to the poor” (31:20)
6. Interior Beauty: “a woman who *fears the Lord* is to be praised” (31:30)
7. Praised by Her Husband: “let her works *praise her* in the city gates” (31:31)

Psalm 128—Blessed are Those Who Fear the Lord

1. Happiness in the Home: “fear the Lord” (v. 1-2)
2. Wife and Children: “a fruitful vine within your house,” like “olive shoots” (v. 3)

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6—The Lord will Come Like a “Thief in the Night”

1. Timing of the *Parousia*: “the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (5:2)

Matthew 25:14-30—Parable of the Talents

1. Context: a man “entrusted” his “property,” each “*according to his ability*” (25:14)
(cf. CCC 1936: “the ‘talents’ are not distributed equally”)
2. Three Servants: a “talent” = a large amount (1 silver talent = 15-20 years wages)
 - a. 1st Servant: given “five talents”; traded them and “made five talents more”
 - b. 2nd Servant: given “two talents”; traded them and “made two talents more”
 - c. 3rd Servant: given “one talent”; dug a hole and “hid his master’s money”
3. Return of the Master: after “a long time”; to “settle accounts” (25:19)
 - a. 1st Servant: “well done...” “*enter into the joy* of your master”
 - b. 2nd Servant: “Well done...” “you have been faithful over a little...”
 - c. 3rd Servant: “Master, I knew you to be a hard man... *have what is yours.*”
4. Response of the Master:
 - a. “You wicked and *slothful* servant!” (Sin of omission; laziness)
 - b. Rebuke: “you ought to have *invested* my money with the bankers...”
 - c. Twist: “take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents”[!]
5. *Nimshal*: Sins of Omission have Consequences
 - a. “To every one who has... more” but “from him who has not... taken away”
 - b. Eternal Damnation: “cast the worthless servant *into the outer darkness*”

St. John Chrysostom: The Master Leaves the Easier Part to Us

“You should have deposited the money,” he says, “and left me to reclaim it, which I should have done with interest,” meaning by interest the good works that are seen to follow the hearing of the Lord. “The easier part is all you were expected to do, leaving

The Mass Readings Explained

the harder part to me.”... What is the meaning of this? *That whoever has received for the good of others the ability to preach and teach, and does not use it, will lose that ability, whereas the zealous servant will be given greater ability, even as the other forfeits what he had.* (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 78; trans. E. Barnecut).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. What do you think of the ‘Proverbs 31’ woman? If you are a husband, what characteristics do you see in your spouse? If you are a married woman, what gifts do you see in yourself? Are there any areas you could pray about, either for your wife or for yourself?

2. The Parable of the “talents” presupposes that God does not distribute his gifts equally. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no 1936 likewise teaches that “the ‘talents’ are not distributed equally.” Review this paragraph and ask yourself: Why? How can a good God give gifts so ‘inequitably’?

3. What do the talents in the parable symbolize? And how can we ‘invest’ the gifts that God has given us so as to bring him a ‘return’ on his investment?

4. Nowadays, people do not often think of laziness toward God as a sin. And yet the lazy servant is cast into the outer darkness not for committing adultery, or killing, or anything other than *failing* to use the gifts he has been given. What does this say about the sin of *spiritual sloth*?

For Further Study

1. Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), pp. 321-24.
2. Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 14-28* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 220-229.