

Homily For the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A
St. Peter's Sunday 9:30/11:30/5:00 Masses, November 19, 2023
(World Day of the Poor)

Proverbs 31 10-31 "Charm is deceitful and beauty vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is praised."

Psalms 128:1-5 "Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord."

1 Thess 5:1-6 "Beloved, you are not in darkness for the day of the Lord to surprise you."

Matthew 25:14-30 "As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness."

Well Done Good and Faithful Servant

Introduction

There is a story about a man praising his neighbour for his beautiful yard and his garden, with both flowers and vegetables. Because he was a religious man, he said, "Isn't it wonderful what God and man can do working together? The neighbour was not very religious. He answered, "Well I guess that's true, but you should have seen how terrible the yard looked when God had it by himself."

We are coming to the end of the liturgical year, and so the themes from Sacred Scripture are about the end of our lives and the end of time. Jesus will tell a story about what three different people did with what they were given. It won't just be flowers and vegetables. It will be about what God gave us to work with, in ourselves. What kind of people are we? What kind of people should we be? How can we become that kind of people? What should we do in our lives? The bible, especially in the life of Jesus, gives us some pretty strong clues.

Matthew

We get the parable of the talents. Talents could be money. A talent was a lot of money. Or it could be the gifts that he God has given each of us. A master gave to one servant a lot, five talents, a second one not quite as much, two talents, and a third, only one talent. After a long time, the master came back and asked what the three had done with their talents. Now, "a long time" could mean 'at the end of our lives', or it could mean 'at the end of time'. Jesus doesn't tell stories just to

entertain people. He wants each person listening to think about themselves in the story. So, we should see this story as being about Jesus giving each of us something valuable, then coming to us at the end of our lives and asking what we have done with what he gave us.

In the parable, the first two double what they received. They took what the master, which is really God, and made more of it. To them, Jesus will say, "well done good and faithful servant," and they will be given a reward. That's important, but Jesus spends much more time, in the story, talking about the one who did nothing with what he was given. He buried his talent in the ground. He did nothing with it.

Do you see how, to Jesus, it didn't matter how much each person was given. We tend to praise people who have a lot of talents: actors or successful people in various fields. That's not how God looks at us. We don't all have the same amount of gifts. That's a problem in the world but it's not a problem with God. He has given every one of us equal dignity, equal love, but not equal talents. In the world, we are judged by whether we have a little or a lot. But with God, that doesn't matter at all. What matters to God is whether we want to become better people. Doesn't that sound more valuable?

To become better people, God gives us some work to do. The first work we have to do is become saints. That means to be good and holy people in this life and to be received into heaven as saints. The saints we honour didn't all start with amazing gifts. Some were very sickly. Some were very poor. Some were not very nice people. Some were very lazy. But all of them realized at some point in their lives that they were supposed to work hard to serve God by becoming better people. They stopped being lazy or mean and worked hard for the kingdom of God. Guess what? Those saints still have work to do. They have to help us pray for what we need. When we ask for the intercession of the saints, they have to take our prayers and bring them to God.

In the parable story, Jesus talks the most about the servant with only one talent. That is likely because most of us really need to hear that message. He has given

each of us some talent that we are to use for building up the kingdom. Maybe that servant was insulted because he didn't get as much as the other two. Maybe he got mad and refused to invest the talent. Have you ever felt that what you got was not fair? But it also says he was afraid of his master. In fact, he was paralyzed by fear. There are two kinds of fear of God. One makes us hate God because we think he hates us or wants us to fail. The other fear of God is to be amazed at everything about God.

The servant's speech reveals that he has the wrong kind of fear. So he becomes lazy with his talent. He buries it in the ground. But laziness is kind of useless to God, who wants us to help build a beautiful garden with our lives. The lazy one gets thrown into the darkness where. There, he will meet others who did nothing with their talents. Well, now they can idle away eternity, singing "I Did It My Way."

One moment changed how I looked at playing baseball. I reached for a ball that was hit to me, but I missed it, not because it was too far to catch, but because I didn't jump. Another player said to me, "You gotta want it." I remembered that. I didn't always catch the ball after that, but I made sure I did everything I could.

Yesterday, twelve men were ordained as deacons. They have worked hard for four years to prepare themselves for that moment, and their ministry afterwards. Bishop McGrattan said to them: "If you follow your calling, desiring always to do God's will, you will hear the Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." But this message is meant for every disciple of Jesus. The first job of a deacon is to help others develop their talents and use them for God. If we do what God has given us the talent to do, we are good and faithful servants. We will also be saints.

Proverbs

Now we have today in the wisdom book of Proverbs, a woman who has many gifts. Up to now, this book has been talking about wisdom as a kind of feminine quality of God. But all of a sudden at the end of the book, it is about a particular kind of woman who is wise because she is not lazy and she is not afraid to use the develop the gifts she has.

This woman works with willing hands, but she also goes out and finds what she needs. Her dignity comes from her work, not just the work of her hands, but also intellectual labour. She studies and teaches. She cares about others. She helps the poor. Whatever beauty she has physically is small compared to the beauty of what she does to show her many gifts. It is important for young people to realize that how they look on social media is not as important as how they develop their talents.

Today we get lazy because there are all kinds of technologies which will give us a kind of buzz, a shot of dopamine or adrenaline. This can take the place of productive work in our lives. It can make us lazy. Our young people are at risk because of this. Why do you think that there is more unhappiness today? But getting work done is a fantastic way of overcoming sadness.

In the Eucharist, the priest will say: "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands. It will become for us the bread of life." We bring to God our work. It's not much compared to God. But if we don't bring it to him, he can't do anything with it. God is always saying to us: "Work with me, will ya!?"

Call To Conversion

God has gifted each of us in so many ways. Name a gift that you have received and how you feel called to use it to serve your family or others? Name some accomplishment that has helped to define your life. What talent that you have been given has been buried but you can dig it up and give it back to the Lord with interest. Shall we return our talents to God and so hear him say to each of us: "Well done good and faithful servant."

Key Verses Today

Entrance Antiphon: *The Lord said: "I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction. You will call upon me and I will answer you, and I will lead back your captives from every place.*

Collect: *Grant us, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good.*

Proverbs: *A capable wife, who can find her? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her. She does him good and not harm all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. She considers a field and buys it. She plans a vineyard. She girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong. She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. She opens her hand to the poor and the needy. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. Her children call her happy and her husband praises her: "Many women have done excellently but you surpass them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates.*

Psalm: *Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways. You shall be happy and it shall go well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine and your children like olive shoots around your table. Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you all the days of your life.*

1 Thessalonians: *Now concerning the times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness for that day to surprise you like a thief. You are all children of light and of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness. So let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.*

Matthew: *Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: "A man going on a journey summoned his slaves and entrusted five talents to one, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. After a long time the master returned to settle accounts. The one who had received the five talents said, "Master, you handed over to me five talents. See, I have made five more." His master said, "Well done. You have been trustworthy in a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master." Likewise, the one with two talents said, "Master, you handed over to me two talents. See, I have made two more. His master said, "Well done. You have been trustworthy in a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master." The one who had received one talent said, 'I was afraid and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is returned to you.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You ought to have invested my money with the bankers and I would have received interest. So take the talent from him and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to those who have, more will be given, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*