

Homily for October 23, 2019
29th Week of Ordinary Time

Once upon a time there was an emperor, touring his domain and receiving the accolades of his people. When the entourage reached the market square of one village, his carriage was surrounded by cheering villagers and peasants. To the amazement of his neighbors, one brash young farmer stepped out of the crowd and approached the emperor's carriage.

"Give me a something that will benefit me, Sire," he pleaded. "Grant me a special blessing."

The villagers were even more amazed at the emperor's reply: "Of course, my good man," he said. "Get into my carriage. Come with me. Live in my palace. Eat at my table. Marry my daughter. Be my son-in-law."

The young man exclaimed his delight. To be the emperor's son-in-law! Then he thought about it. No more Saturday nights at the pub with his friends. No more dirty, comfortable peasant clothes. He'd have to get dressed up. He'd have to take a bath - maybe every week. He'd have to clean his fingernails. He'd have to learn the manners of the court.

He sadly shook his head and lowered his eyes. "No, Sire," he said. "I would be too uncomfortable. It would pull me out of my comfortable customs. It would be too hard to live up to. It would take too much of me."

"If you want to do something for me, give me a plot of ground, a farm, a house of my own; but to live in your palace, eat at your table, be your son-in-law - this is too much." So, he declined it.

You see - he wanted the emperor's blessing; but he wanted it on his own terms. He wanted to be blessed in doing what he wanted to do - not what the emperor wanted him to do. He wanted to be blessed right where he was, not moved out of his comfortable customs. He wanted the blessing, but not the responsibility that went with it.

In today's Gospel Jesus speaks a word that is expressed in this story. For those to whom much is given much will be required. We are to live our lives with the awareness that each and everyday has been given to us not to do what we want, but to live with gracious generosity in our dealings with others. There is in the parable Jesus tells the principle of reciprocity. Those who live generously in this life, will in the life to come, know and experience the generosity of God. Those who live cruelly in their treatment of others will receive reciprocal treatment in the world where, all will stand before the judgement seat of Christ. Jesus also makes it clear that the degree of culpability is proportional to what the person knew of the master's expectations.

This is why Paul in the first reading speaks about the two ways we choose to live while in these mortal bodies. We can choose to live like the prudent manager of Jesus' parable or like the wicked manager. How we live each day is one where we have the choice to be instruments of righteousness or of wickedness. The latter says Paul obey their passions, like the manager who beat the other slaves living a life of careless self-centredness. To give our lives so as to be

instruments of righteousness means that we want to be like the wise and prudent manager. Such a man or woman knows that we have been welcomed into the King's Household and delight in the opportunity to each day grow in grace-filled faithfulness so as to pray with our Collect:

Direct our actions according to your good pleasure, that in the name of your son, we may abound in good works.