

## **HOMILY for 33<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A**

This Sunday's Gospel reminds us to make good use of God's gifts & talents for us. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story I'd like to share with you.

A junior-high boy with a prematurely deep voice had been pressed into service in the Church Choir. Unfortunately, he lacked all knowledge of music.

"In the basic choir," the director explained, "there are two male vocal parts. One is the tenor. Do you know the other?"

"Well, uh, the boy stammered, "the elevener?"

Anyhow, among all the parables in the Bible, this Sunday's parable has an apocalyptic tone to it. In other words, today's parable is not just a nice story for us to hear. Rather, it gives us a prophetic warning to help us have a good life on earth while being able to stand tall before the Judge of the living and the dead on the Last Day. Now, let's unpack this Sunday's parable & get right to its warning message.

The parable tells us that an owner went on a journey & left his possessions with his servants according to each servant's abilities. He gave the first servant five talents, the second servant two talents, and the third servant one talent. The first one immediately took his gift & invested it to make another five. The second one did the same and made another two. The third one simply buried his master's treasure & made no profit at all. When their master returns, he wants to settle accounts with all of them. The master is delighted to see the first two servants double the treasures assigned to them & says to them, "Well done! You are an industrious & reliable servant. Since you are dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come & share your master's joy!"

Meanwhile, the third servant reported that he buried his gift & blamed it on being afraid of the master for "reaping where he did not sow & gathering where he did not scatter." The master is disappointed to see this servant not produce anything with the entrusted treasure & says to him, "You worthless, lazy lout! You know I reap where I did not sow & gather where I did not scatter. All the more reason to deposit my fund with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest... Take the thousand away from him & give it to the man with the ten talents. Those who have, will get more until they grow rich; while those who have not, will lose even the little they have." He continues, "...Throw this worthless servant into the darkness outside, where he can wail & grind his teeth."

First of all, if you did not believe in the Judgment Day, this Sunday's parable should be a great warning for you to prepare for it & get your life together before that day. You certainly do not want to be thrown into the darkness outside & have to endure the punishments that would make you wail & grind your teeth. That would be a terrible tragedy; & we want to avoid it by all means.

Second, today's parable wants each of us to do a self-examination & see if we are given five talents, two talents, or one talent. If we are blessed with five talents or two talents, how have we invested it & produced more for God & His Kingdom? However, if we are given only one talent, have we felt sorry for our misfortune & buried everything? If we have acted like the servants who were given five talents or two talents & make good use of what the Creator has entrusted to us, it is wonderful! Keep up the good work! We're surely ready for the Last Day. That day will come like a thief in the night as being described in today's Second Reading; but we

have nothing to worry about. For we have done what God has wanted us to do with our lives & everything being entrusted to us. However, if we have squandered God's gifts to us or have not made good use of them, we better change that bad habit & maximize their potentials. Otherwise, we'll have to face God's harsh punishments on the Last Day. Surely, this parable is a great warning to folks who have been blessed with great wealth, power, fame, or other privileges in this life to make good use of it for God's Kingdom, not for their own needs & pleasures.

Third, some of us might wonder why the master would want to take the little of the third servant & give it to the first servant who has already had a lot. Our human justice system would consider that to be unfair & unjust. For that system typically wants to assist & give a helping hand to the underprivileged & the misfortunate, not the rich & the powerful. But, today's parable seems to tell us that if we work hard & make good use of God's gifts for us, God will bless us with more. But, if we are lazy & do not know how to use our gifts & talents, God will take away even the little that we have. Yet, that is the divine justice system even though we might not like it. That is why people with deep faith & generous hearts often grow stronger in their relationship with God even in the face of many terrible tragedies in their lives.

Finally, this Sunday's First Reading might make us wonder how we might acquire a worthy wife/spouse because that person brings a long life & lots of wonderful blessings to her/his spouse. The answer for it can be traced back to today's parable. But, the first part of the answer can be found in today's first Reading as following, "...She brings him good & not evil all the days of her life... She obtains wool & makes cloth... She reaches out her hands to the poor & extends her arms to the needy... Give her a reward of her labors, & let her works praise her at the city gates." In other words, she works hard every day & always brings good things not only to her spouse but also the poor & the needy. She surely acts like the servants who were blessed with five talents and two talents and deserves God's praises on the Last Day. So, if we act like an industrious & faithful servant, we will bring lots of blessings to people around us in this life & make our God proud of us on the Last Day.

My dear brothers & sisters, most people do not pay attention to the Judgment Day or think that God will not hold them accountable for what they had done or not done in this life. This Sunday's Gospel & Second Reading are the stern warning to them to change & be prepared for that day. Otherwise, it might be too late & they will face terrible consequences on that day. So, have you made good use of God's gifts & talents for you yet? And are you well-prepared for the Judgment Day?