

# Scripture Study

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



## Opening prayer

Proverbs 31:10-13,19-20,30-31 (Ps 128:1-5) 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 **Matthew 25:14-30**

### Overview of the Gospel:

- In this Sunday's Gospel, as we come closer to Advent, we hear Jesus continuing to speak to themes of vigilance and preparation in anticipation of the end times: the end of the Jewish temple in A.D. 70, the end of our lives as individuals, and the end of the world when he will come again.
- In the parable of the talents, he is teaching his disciples, and us, that while we wait for the end we should not, out of fear of failure or fear of accountability, neglect to use our talents.
- The talent spoken of in the parable was a valuable piece of money of undetermined value—usually a silver bar. Note the servants did not earn them, but were given them in trust by their master. The amounts he gave them depended on their abilities to manage them—apparently the master knew his servants and their capabilities very well.
- At the return of the master, they are judged on what they did with what they were given: contrast the judgment of the “good and faithful” (verses 21ff) with the “wicked and lazy” (v 26).
- Like the talents given to the servants, we are all given talents by God, according to our ability. He also gives us, for the asking, the means (grace and wisdom) to use them.

### Questions:

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading, from the chapter of Proverbs that extolls the virtues of the idealized wife, what qualities are praiseworthy in this person? Is it her looks? Her charm or her wit? What is it, and how does that relate to what God expects to see in you?
- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, Paul is reminding the Thessalonians that they are not to sit around complacently waiting for the Lord's return. What does he exhort them to be doing instead?
- In Jesus' parable, who does the master represent? The journey? The talents? The servants?
- What happened to the two servants who doubled their investment? To the servant who hid his talent? On what basis were they rewarded?
- How does the master's treatment of the one-talent servant seem to you: Fair? Harsh? Lenient? Why?
- Why do you think Jesus found it necessary to repeat his point so many times and in so many different ways (as in chapters 23—25)?
- If the master returned today, what would he say about how you have used what he has given you? How have you developed it? What kind of responsibility do you feel toward God regarding your talents? Have you been hiding them?
- Which of the three servants in the parable can you relate to most? Why?
- What does it mean to you to “share your master's joy”?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 546, 682, 1029, 1040—1041, 1936—1937, 2683**

## Closing prayer

*Whatever is done out of love, be it ever so little and contemptible in the sight of the world, it becomes wholly fruitful. For God weighs more the love out of which a man works, than the works he does.*

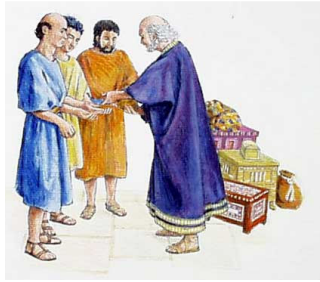
-Thomas a' Kempis

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!**

# "To every one who has will more be given"

**Scripture:** *Matthew 25:14-30*

*For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the*



*bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.'*

**Meditation:** What can economics and productivity teach us about the kingdom of heaven? Jesus' story about a businessman who leaves town and entrusts his money with his workers made perfect sense to his audience. Wealthy merchants and businessmen often had to travel abroad and leave the business to others to handle while they were gone. Why did Jesus tell this story? Most importantly it tells us something about how God deals with us, his servants. The parable speaks first of the Master's trust in his servants. While he goes away he leaves them with his money to use as they think best. While there were no strings attached, this was obviously a test to see if the Master's workers would be industrious and reliable in their use of the money entrusted to them. Third, the master rewards those who are industrious and faithful and he punishes those who sit by idly and who do nothing with his money. The essence of the parable seems to lie in the servants' conception of responsibility. Each

servant entrusted with the master's money was faithful up to a certain point. The servant who buried the master's money was irresponsible. One can bury seeds in the ground and expect them to become productive because they obey natural laws. Coins, however, do not obey natural laws. They obey economic laws and become productive in circulation. The master expected his servants to be productive in the use of his money.

What do coins and the law of economics have to do with the kingdom of God? The Lord entrusts the subjects of his kingdom with gifts and graces and he gives his subjects the freedom to use them as they think best. With each gift and talent, God gives sufficient the means (grace and wisdom) for using them in a fitting way. As the parable of the talents shows, God abhors indifference and an attitude that says it's not worth trying. God honors those who use their talents and gifts for doing good. Those who are faithful with even a little are entrusted with more! But those who neglect or squander what God has entrusted to them will lose what they have. There is an important lesson here for us. No one can stand still for long in the Christian life. We either get more or we lose what we have. We either advance towards God or we slip back. Do you earnestly seek to serve God with the gifts, talents, and graces he has given to you?

*"Lord Jesus, be the ruler of my heart and thoughts, be the king of my home and relationships, and be the master of my work and service. Help me to make good use of the gifts, talents, time, and resources you give me for your glory and your kingdom."*

