

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time A - Investing Wisely November 15, 2020.

This Sunday we have the parable of the Talents. (25:14-30), a continuation from *Matthew 25, following the parable of the bridesmaids*. This is the parable of the three men who were called upon to invest money, or talents. Just as last Sunday's Gospel, this Sunday's Gospel is also about preparing for the Lord to come, this time to seek a reckoning. It might seem strange that those who are entrusted with more talents should be expected to return a greater number, and the one who protected the money would be admonished. But this parable isn't about money. It is about the Word of God and about Grace. The parable demands that we consider the grace that we have received and how well we are using this grace to spread the Kingdom of God. As St Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, "**There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit, there are different forms of service but the same Lord; ... To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.**" Each of us receive the same grace but different talents to invest.

What do we do with the Grace we have received? That is the question we have to answer when we come before the Lord at the end of time or at the end of our own life. How well have we lived our faith? Is the Kingdom of God stronger on earth because of us, or have we squandered the grace we have received and done little or nothing to enrich the world with the Presence of the Word Become Flesh? Back at the beginning of his pontificate when Pope Francis said, "Who am I to judge?" he was not making a comment on any particular group of people. He was simply stating that he was a man called to respond to the grace he had received and not in a position to comment on how others have responded to the grace they have received. We also do not have the right to judge how others have responded to the Grace they have received. We do not know what Graces they have received, nor do we know anything that they have experienced in life.

My deepest concern, and my deepest regret, are both the same. That is: how many times have I not taken advantage of all the Lord has given me? How often have I allowed His Grace to slip through my fingers like sand? How many people would have come closer to God if I had only invested better what I was given? We just finished watching a 2015 TV drama **Life Made Simple** (阿旺新傳). It is about the life of a 30 years old man, Wong, who has mental disability and behaves like a 7 years old. But he uses his "limited" talents to make everyone around him happy, sharing his treasures, possession and time, willing to sacrifice himself unconditionally for his family, his friends, his enemies, those who bully him and call him dummy, retarded, useless. **He doesn't return evil for evil or insult for insult, but returns a blessing and forgiveness instead** as St Peter says in 1 Peter 3:8-9. Wong's motto is **he will be happy if others are happy**. Remember the 1971 oldie by Doris Day "Make someone happy": "**Make someone happy. Make just one someone happy, And you will be happy, too.**" Wong's talents are well invested! Maybe we do sometimes need to "**become like children to enter the kingdom of heaven**" as Jesus says (Matthew 18:3) with purified hearts to love, care, be filled with kindness and compassion.

A University classmate of mine just published a book sharing the ups and downs of his life. One long chapter is about how he fights the cancer that crawls back four times after thinking

it was cured. He shared about his strong faith in God and how he believed that ***“It is impossible for man, but not for God, because in God everything is possible.”*** (Mark 10:27) He questioned himself “Should I believe that God will save me again and let me get over this hurdle?” He used his God sent engineering analytical mind to analyze the situation. After sorting out his thoughts, he decided to adopt the following mentality: 1. Believe that God will help overcome this struggle. 2. Don’t guess about the possibilities, don’t worry about tomorrow, tomorrow is in God’s good hands. 3. Give all the ability to live today. Bring positive energy and joy to self and others. 4. It is not self who lives now, but Lord Jesus. Therefore, he wants to think like Jesus, speak like Jesus, and act like Jesu. Rational analysis is not difficult, but it is not easy to truly let go of his heart to Jesus. **He uses the grace of wisdom and integrity to share God’s mercy, compassion and love. Be not afraid, spread the Good News. God is carrying the cross with us.** Talents well invested!

During the wildfire evacuation, people were giving us free food and bottled water at major intersections along the highway. Even Subway offered free sandwiches in Glassland (a town midway between Fort McMurray and Edmonton). Shops in Edmonton gave the evacuees discounts for things we bought. Instead of “none of my business”, they used their talents to support the needy. During the Spring flooding, close to 13,000 people had to leave their homes in late April when an ice jam formed on the Athabasca River and caused water levels to rise. A lot of volunteers helped build sandbag dam around the hospital and helped evacuees to move to safety. After the water receded, hundreds of volunteers from the community helped the victims to clean up the mess. **They used God’s spiritual gifts of strength and wisdom wisely to support the community.** Again, talents well invested!

God’s gifts are not ours to dispense as we please but to share with others. We have 168 hours a week, how do we use the time to build up the kingdom of God? **Eternal life is the only truly secure investment we can make.** Eventually all material wealth will fail since we cannot bring it with us beyond the grave. However, even the little good we do for others with enthusiasm and a willing heart will help the love of God to be made visible in the dark corners of life. **We need to have faith, hope and love** to well invest the gifts from the Holy Spirit: to **“Think well. Speak well. Do well. These three things, through the mercy of God, will make a man go to Heaven”** (St. Camillus de Lellis). At the end of the Church year, we are told to consider the end of time, including the end of our own time. We are reminded that the end has not yet come. **There is still time, time to take advantage of a bull market of grace. We can and we must reach out to others, avoiding apathy and the “couldn’t care less” approach. In this way, we can offer back to the Father the lives given to us, more fulfilled, more enriched, better invested.**