

November 19th, 2017
33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle A

Enter into my Father's Joy

1st Reading: Proverbs 31:10 – 13, 19 – 20, 30 – 31.

God instructs us on the ingredients of a worthy life.

Psalms 128:1 – 2, 3, 4 – 5.

Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1 – 6.

Stay alert for the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Gospel: Matthew 25:14 - 30

God requires us to actively and responsibly share our talents as we await God's coming.

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.

These are certainly challenging scripture passages presented to us this morning for our breaking open. So I would ask you today to play along with me and accept some not-so-obvious possibilities. 1) the landowner is NOT such a good guy; 2) servant number 3 is NOT such a bad guy; 3) this parable is NOT an investment strategy, at least not for the Wall Street Market traders; and 4) the valuable wife portrayed in Proverbs is NOT only a rhapsody about women (although it could be).

God is our loving father and wants only what is best for us and ultimately to be in unity with God as one (eye has not seen nor ear heard). Thus God has given each of us talents, and I am not using it here as in the Gospel as this humongous amount of currency but rather as defined in the New York best seller, *StrengthsFinder 2.0*. "The landowner's leadership or command inspired two of his servants, but appears to have intimidated the third. We should embrace our gifts – physical, mental, and spiritual – even if they lead us down a different path than our peers."

At our Baptism, God has challenged each of us to grow in our relationship with God, by the activity described in the reading from Proverbs which includes not hoarding the gifts given to us but sharing them with the result of doubling them up as they come back to us: that is the way of Spiritual Growth and a valuable woman. So what keeps us from truly living these Christian values: FEAR?

Now Fear as an Acronym can mean: Forget Everything And Run. Which is often the case I find myself in when I experience fear, "get me out of here Lord." OR it could mean Face Everything And Rise! This is the Fear of the Lord that is being held up I believe in all of our readings today. This is the kind of fear that will lead us to courage, action and the aid of all our neighbors: honoring our Baptismal call and our Christ as we meet/honor him in the other.

Christianity without courage is Christianity without blood and spirit. God encourages us to jump into life and the risk of growing (it is not as big a chasm as you may think, so just jump). It doesn't take courage to hide in our fear. It takes courage to risk something new. Christianity is risky business! Love isn't Love until you give it away.

Let me quote Gustavo Gutierrez, a contemporary theologian of Peru, "Faith is life which is expressed in Love and gift to our neighbor. In the Gospels, being afraid is equivalent to having no faith....the parable of the talents teaches us that the joy of the Lord, as well as our own joy, consists in a Christian life based on grace, courage, and concern for others rather than on formality, self-protection, and fear."

I believe we all know people who have the courage to jump into the challenges of life and faith. Kate Shane was one such person for me and I never got to tell her how much she showed forth the "joy of the master" in her life. It is already here but not totally yet; because we are looking forward to the day when we will be invited into our Father's joy: this celebration of Eucharist is only a foretaste of it, we call it strength for the journey. Our homework this week is to let one of those people you see carrying the light of Christ into your world/life KNOW it; either in writing or in person.

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