

Sunday Message

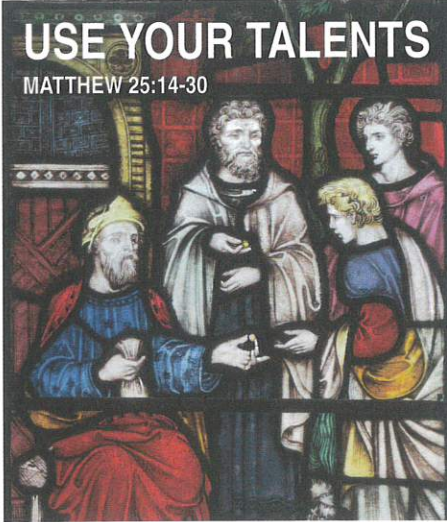
33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 19 November 2023 • Psalter Week 1

USE YOUR TALENTS

MATTHEW 25:14-30



In today's Gospel, Jesus talks about a man who goes away on business and leaves three of his servants in charge of his property.

To one servant he gives five talents, to another two, and to the third he gives one talent. A talent was a lot of money in Jesus' day, about \$20,000 in today's money. The master doesn't tell the servants what to do with his property, but allows each to use his own initiative.

The first and second servants take risks with the money and decide to invest it. Their gamble pays off and they double their fortunes. But the third servant is afraid. He buries his talent in the ground for safekeeping.

Upon his return, the master is delighted with the first two servants. They have shown themselves worthy of their master's trust and so he invites them to share in his happiness. But the third servant is castigated for returning his talent intact and unused. The master is furious with him for his fear and lack of initiative. He calls him a good-for-nothing. The story ends with the third servant being thrown into the dark, where there is weeping and grinding of teeth.

Throughout his Gospel, Matthew is at pains to show that fear can cripple discipleship and stand in the way of a genuine following of Jesus Christ. He is trying to encourage his readers to avoid complacency and timidity, and to take risks for their faith.

The servant was punished not for misusing his talent, but for not using it at all. In Jesus' eyes, what is important is to not be afraid to use our talents and to take risks in the service of the Gospel, remembering that effort always matters more than results. ■

REFLECT

It is over 12 years since Steve Jobs died. A co-founder of Apple, Jobs was an American businessman and inventor widely recognised as a charismatic pioneer of the personal computer revolution, a visionary whose company has become one of the most valuable in the world.

Steve Jobs was responsible for everything from the imac to the ipad, all those gadgets starting with the letter i. At the time of his death, Jobs was listed as either primary inventor or co-inventor in 342 United States patents or patent applications related to a range of technologies.

A man of rare talent, he used his talents to make a difference to people's lives.

Today's Gospel tells the famous parable of the talents. It is about how the disciples of Jesus are to live in the in-between times as they await the return of the Son of Man. We are to use this time to build God's kingdom. We are to use our talents, our knowledge, our gifts, to do good and to give glory to God.

Sadly, we don't always succeed in doing this. We can use our talents only for personal gain, to help ourselves. Or we can fail to recognise or use our talents at all. Many people today, influenced by our celebrity-obsessed culture, look at themselves and think they have nothing to offer. They look at their body shape, or their exam results, or their bank accounts, or their job or lack of a job, and think they don't measure up, that they are useless, even that they are failures.

In fact, they only fail to appreciate their own gifts and talents and abilities. They fail to make the most of what they have been given.

On these last Sundays of the Church's year, we are thinking about the end times, judgement day, when we will be called to account for how we have lived our lives.

Today's liturgy reminds us that God has graced, blessed and gifted us in so many ways. We may not be a Steve Jobs, but we are talented. The Gospel story invites us to do three things.

First, think of the talents that you have. Tot them up. Note them. Acknowledge them. You are talented in many different ways.

Second, consider whether you are using all your talents. Are there talents that you have neglected to make the most of? Talents maybe that you don't even realise you have.

Third, examine how you are using your talents. Have you made the best use of the talents you possess? Are you using them to give glory to God? Are you using them to make a difference in people's lives? Do you use them for good?

When the moment of reckoning arrives for each of us, will God praise us, like he praised the first two servants, for how we have used the gifts we have received, or will God judge us harshly, as he judged the third servant, because we were afraid or unwilling to use what we were given? It is up to us. ■

LEARN

We are called to use our talents to bring hope and joy to others, to build God's kingdom.

Talents come in many different guises.

DO

Try this week to acknowledge the gifts and talents of a family member or friend who needs to hear encouraging words.

SAY

"Thank you, God, for the gifts you have given me. Give me the confidence to use them for your glory. Amen."

PRAY

Pray for all those who feel that they have nothing to offer in life. Ask God to give them courage and a belief in themselves.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The Lord said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction.

You will call upon me, and I will answer you, and I will lead back your captives from every place.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING Proverbs 31:10-13,19-20,30-31

A reading from the book of Proverbs.

A perfect wife – who can find her? She is far beyond the price of pearls. Her husband's heart has confidence in her, from her he will derive no little profit. Advantage and not hurt she brings him all the days of her life. She is always busy with wool and with flax, she does her work with eager hands. She sets her hands to the distaff, her fingers grasp the spindle. She holds out her hand to the poor, she opens her arms to the needy. Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty; the woman who is wise is the one to praise. Give her a share in what her hands have worked for, and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 127

Response:

O blessed are those who fear the Lord.

- O blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways! By the labour of your hands you shall eat. You will be happy and prosper. (R.)
- Your wife will be like a fruitful vine in the heart of your house; your children like shoots of the olive, around your table. (R.)

- Indeed thus shall be blessed the man who fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

You will not be expecting us to write anything to you, brothers, about 'times and seasons', since you know very well that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. It is when people are saying, 'How quiet and peaceful it is' that the worst suddenly happens, as suddenly as labour pains come on a pregnant woman; and there will be no way for anybody to evade it.

But it is not as if you live in the dark, my brothers, for that Day to overtake you like a thief. No, you are all sons of light and sons of the day: we do not belong to the night or to darkness, so we should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Even if you have to die, says the Lord, keep faithful, and I will give you the crown of life. Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 25:14-30

(For shorter form read between >< Matthew 25:14-15, 19-20)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

>Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man on his way abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one; each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out. <

'The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

> 'Now a long time after, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made." "His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness."

'Next the man with the two talents came forward. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with two talents; here are two more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I

will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness."<

'Last came forward the man who had the one talent. "Sir," said he "I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered; so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is; it was yours, you have it back." But his master answered him, "You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have recovered my capital with interest. So now, take the talent from him and

give it to the man who has the five talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant, O Lord, we pray, that what we offer in the sight of your majesty may obtain for us the grace of being devoted to you and gain us the prize of everlasting happiness. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

To be near God is my happiness, to place my hope in God the Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We have partaken of the gifts of this sacred mystery, humbly imploring, O Lord, that what your Son commanded us to do in memory of him may bring us growth in charity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.