



Come and See!

November 19, 2017

The Word...

“A man going on a journey called in his servants...To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, Likewise, the one who received two....After a long time, the master came back and settled accounts. 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more. 'His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities...”
(from Mt 25:14-30)

Pondering the Word ...

I have mixed feelings about the readings today. If we are not careful, we can fall into the trap of thinking it is solely our actions that earn God’s blessings or punishment. Jesus is calling upon us not to waste the gifts—particularly the gift of faith—we have been given, due to fear or lack of trust in God.

But I see another nuance I hadn’t noticed before. We hear the two servants given more talents go out “immediately,” trade with them, and double their value. We also learn the master takes a long time to return. I wonder if, while waiting for the master’s arrival, these two servants might have been tempted to try to increase the return on their investments even more. What might have happened if they let pride sneak in because of their initial success? What if the lure of even greater rewards led them to take unwise risks?

Instead, they do what has been asked of them, within their current abilities. They don’t let success make them proud. They don’t squander the opportunity they have been given or get lulled into letting the gains they have made wane as time passes. They rest easy, confident when the master does arrive, they will be rewarded with joy and given even more faith and trust with which to grow the Kingdom.

Living the Word...

As we go about using our talents to further the Kingdom, we can fall prey to a few traps: First, like the third servant, fear of failure or low self-esteem can keep us from doing anything at all. We imagine the responsibility for “success” falls on our shoulders, rather than on God. Second, like the Apostles sent out by Jesus, the headiness of the mission can inflate our egos. Third, as time goes on, we lose interest. We become lax awaiting our reward, so fail to tend to the gains we have already made. Or fourth, we get discouraged that the gains we make will never be enough. Any of these sound familiar?

If so, maybe it’s time to objectively assess and discern, in prayer, how things are going in your tiny corner of the Kingdom. “God, am I doing your will? Have I allowed pride to enter the picture by puffing up my own ego, or conversely, telling me I’m incapable of serving you? Has boredom or lack of results caused me to become disinterested?” Ask the Spirit to enlighten you and renew your readiness and your joy as you go out to grow the Kingdom! *“We lay foundations...we provide yeast... We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something... It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning... an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest. ... We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.”* (from *The Prayer of Bl. Oscar Romero*, written by Bishop Ken Untener)

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Nov 20: *“What do you want me to do for you?” “Lord, please let me see.”* (Lk 18:35-43)

Are you willing to cry out to Jesus despite those around who might rebuke you? Jesus sees your faith and asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” What is your answer? What is the deepest desire of your heart? If you don’t know, then just say, “Lord, please let me see.”

Nov 21: *“By giving up my life now, I will prove myself worthy of my old age, and I will leave to the young a noble example...”* (2 Mc 6: 18-31)

Eleazar refuses an offer to spare his life. He knows by taking part in the ruse his persecutors suggest, he would set a bad example for the young Jewish community. There’s a saying, “A parent’s life is a child’s guidebook.” Most of us are not asked to sacrifice our mortal lives, but faith does demand we set good examples for young people. Teens are also important role models for the youngest members of the community. There’s another saying: “To tolerate is to teach.” Consider today the example we set: do we tolerate the pervasive hatred, violence, and injustice or do we speak out? Do we ignore widespread poverty in our midst or do we reach out?

Nov 22: *“Sir, here is your gold coin; I kept it stored away in a handkerchief, for I was afraid of you.”* (Lk 19:11-28)

This is Luke’s version of Sunday’s gospel. The Greek translation of “afraid” is exactly that: being scared, wanting to run away from, terrified of. This servant is paralyzed, unable to do anything but hold the gold coin tightly, hidden in a handkerchief. The other servants quite possibly “feared” the nobleman as well, but in such a way that brought about reverence and the desire to act on his behalf, despite the grumblings of their fellow citizens. Does being afraid of God keep me from fearing God? Does the threat of punishment or failure stop me from even trying? Does popular opinion influence my willingness to grow the Kingdom? Pray for the grace to reverence the Lord who banishes all our fears.

Nov 23: *When Mattathias saw him, he was filled with zeal; he sprang forward and killed him upon the altar.* (Mc 2:15-29); *As Jesus drew near Jerusalem, he wept over it: “If this day you only knew what makes for peace...”* (Lk 19:41-44)

In the Old Testament reading, we hear how a Jew, zealous for the Lord and the covenant, murders his fellow Jew as well as the king’s messenger. Then he and his followers flee to the desert until the enemy is crushed. In the reading from Luke, we see Jesus, overcome by love for the city of God, weeping as he foresees its demise. Yes, we know his tears quickly turn into anger against the merchants and those who have defiled the temple—he is human after all—but he then goes forward to redeem sins and crush the enemy by the sacrifice of his own life. Jesus’ question still rings in our ears: “If you only knew what makes for peace?” What does Jesus mean by this? Pray to be enlightened. What would make for peace in me and in the world?

Nov 24: *Judah decreed that the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness on the anniversary every year for eight days, from the twenty-fifth day of the month Chislev.* (Mc 4:36-37, 52-59)

Today’s reading from Maccabees recounts the first celebration of Hanukkah, which our Jewish brothers and sisters will commemorate from December 12 -20 this year. It celebrates the restoration of the altar, the renewal of joy and hope emerging from the darkness. Christians too will be celebrating hope in the season of Advent. Hope is a virtue we so desperately need these days. Help dispel the darkness by living with joy and gladness, and *“always be prepared to give the reason for your hope, with gentleness and respect.”* (1 Pt 3:15)

Nov 25: *King Antiochus heard the news (of his defeat) and was struck with fear...sick with grief because his designs had failed...* (1 Mc 6: 1-13) *“The nations are sunk in the pit they’ve made; in the snare they set, their foot is caught.”* (Ps 9)

Earthly power can be a very dangerous thing. It can seduce you and entrap you in its own web. If you define yourself by the power you have, it can also be your undoing. As long as you know and credit every day the source of your power, keeping the Spirit in your mind and heart, your power can be used for good, for what St. Ignatius Loyola calls “Ad maiorem Dei gloriam” (AMDG)—for the greater glory of God. Today, look for opportunities to use your God-given power for God’s greater glory.