Blessed Trinity Catholic Community ✠ Spirit of Christ Mission



33rd Sunday Ordinary time Year "A" November 15, 2026 + Homily, Father Ed Hislop

Proverbs 31:10-13; Psalm 128:1-2.3,4-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Matthew 25:14-30

This portion of Matthew's Gospel is often, sometimes deliberately, misinterpreted. Jesus speaks from the reality and struggles of the ordinary people of his day and time. The culture of the day, the society in which Jesus lived, and particularly the people with whom he found himself, including his own family, were ordinary people, working each day to care for their loved ones, too often only "eking" out a living.

The goal for most was simply to earn enough to care for their family day by day. Those who amassed large amounts of money for themselves would be regarded as greedy and wicked, and indeed they were, since their wealth robbed dignity and life from the poor and the ordinary.

In this Gospel parable the "master" is not represented as God, but rather as one who amasses his wealth from the work and sweat of the laborers of the day. His demand from them was to work for him. The workers, servants, as the Gospel describes them, amassed wealth, not for themselves or their families, but for the "master." This "master" praised them **for the profit they made for him.**

The surprise in this parable is that we, almost naturally presume, that the two who made money for the master were the good and "wise" ones, the ones to be emulated, while the third servant, we tend to consider, like the Master did, as worthless, wicked, and lazy, or at least unmotivated. Jesus reminds us that the master, in his own words, harvests what he did not plant and gathers where he did not scatter. The "master" lives off the sweat of those he considers to be beneath him. He makes himself superior, better, and more deserving. He makes his money, his living, from the sweat and struggles of others but does not seem to care about their lives—he was a "demanding" person.

Jesus is reflecting the reality of his, and our, day: too many get more and more, while the poor, the laborers, have taken from them what they worked for and need: their dignity, independence, hope, and ultimately their livelihood. The poor, the lowly, perceived as useless, too often thrown into the darkness, where the struggle continues. Even what they have is taken away while the rich and powerful thrive.

This is not just an ancient story but one that is alive and well today. The very next section of Matthew's Gospel, however, which we will hear next Sunday as we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, puts this parable in a striking context.

It is the description of the Last Judgement, which is a judgement, not of individuals, like the master in today's Gospel, but of nations, made up of too many "masters." Jesus will remind us that God calls these *nations* to account. "When the Son of Man comes in his glory…," we will hear next Sunday, all the nations will be assembled before him and he will judge them: I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink; ill and you did not care for me; a stranger and you gave me no welcome…." Today "the Master" casts out the one he determines is worthless and lazy. Throws him into the darkness of continued poverty because he is of no profit to him; and no longer of any use to him. It seems this story is not so old.

Next Sunday, as the story continues, we will hear something quite different, made more poignant by this parable. Jesus will describe the Last Judgement of the nations: *"Whatever you did to the least of these you did to me."* What you did not do to the least ones, you did not do for me— *"Depart from me, you accursed."*

The end of next Sundays Gospel connects vividly and deliberately with the end of today's Parable. Today the perceived "worthless servant" is cast out; next Sunday those who threw him into the darkness are cast into "eternal punishment."

Today Jesus reminds us of the reality of the plight of those enslaved by the ones, whose desire for wealth, power and greed is their greatest value. Jesus almost seems to lament how even the poor, like those first two "servants" can be caught up in the diabolical values of the day at their own expense. Deciding against their own interest and the interest of the other. But perhaps more daring and challenging is what Jesus tells us next Sunday about the last judgement: individuals alone cannot change the plight of the many, only the whole community and whole nation. It is the nation that will be judged by what the whole community allows to happen to those whose lives are deemed expendable, those considered by too many as useless and so easily cast into the darkness of injustice: the hungry poor, the stranger, the immigrant, the innocent victims of war, like those in Middle East, and Ukraine, like those perceived as "different," the naked, the imprisoned, the sick.

Our concern is not just what I do or do not do, but what we do or do not do together. Like the third despised servant of the Gospel, we are not to collaborate with those who exploit the poor; we are to take courageous measures as a people to expose greed, hate, and division for the sins that they are, burying them in the ground from which they cannot rise again. We do this in our own heart, in our homes, in the place we worship, and among those we love. But we do this also in neighborhood, city, state, and nation, remembering that it is the nation, of which we are a part, that stands before the judgement of God.

As we speak and act for those rejected by the powerful and stand in the company of so many who have cried out through the ages, we must be ready to find ourselves, like that third servant, thrown out of the "Master's" house, to dwell among the many who wail from injustice, and whose spirit is ground down from hatred. Our voice can no longer be silent as we join their chorus: *"Let us not sleep as the rest do but let us stay alert and sober"* as children of light—not any one of us alone, but all of us together!

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