

(33) THIRTYTHIRD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

(NOVEMBER 15TH, 2020)

Readings: *Proverbs 31:10 -13, 19, 20, 30,31; 1 Thessalonians 5: 1 – 6; Matthew 24: 14 – 30.*

Perhaps the first – if not the most important – thing that we can notice from today’s gospel is that our Lord frequently uses a parable about wealth or money to teach us about the Kingdom of God – “the treasure hidden in a field”, “the unmerciful servant”, “the labourers in the vineyard”, and today’s parable of “the talents”. All of these come in the Gospel of Matthew: Luke has more – “the rich fool”, “the dishonest steward”, “Dives and Lazarus”, “the widow’s mite”, and his version of today’s reading, “the parable of the pounds”. Jesus seems to take it for granted that the way we use our possessions is an indication of our relationship to God and his kingdom. And his saying *where your treasure is, there will your heart be also* should be a constant warning to us to get our priorities right.

And that is one way of understanding today’s Gospel reading about the “talents”. [*Perhaps a reminder is needed that the word Jesus used doesn’t have the meaning we give to a talent, that is a personal skill or ability. A talent was a sum of money – perhaps equivalent to three years’ pay for an ordinary worker.*]

The master – presumably a travelling merchant – gives his three servants the opportunity of making a profit while he’s away. He shares out his capital with them: Two – given different sums, presumably because of their master’s judgement of their different abilities – make the same decision. They take up their master’s challenge and make profits in proportion to their capital. But the third servant refuses both the master’s command and the opportunity to make a profit. So he receives a double condemnation: He is *wicked* because of his disobedience, and *lazy* because of his unwillingness to take the chance of trading – what’s more he tries to put the blame on his master: *I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered.*

How are we to apply this parable to ourselves – particularly in the setting provided both by its place in Matthew’s gospel and by the approaching season of Advent?

There’s a warning – to conduct ourselves as our Lord has commanded; and there’s a promise – better translated as *Enter into the joy of your master*. That’s the future awaiting the faithful.