

As we bring our liturgical year to a close

We continue our reflections on the end times and last things

Today's readings are a reminder

We are called to build God's Kingdom

We are not called to maintain what we were given

We are called to build

And to build means taking a risk

It is to be called out of our comfort zone

It is easy to maintain

To walk through life looking at what was

But when we do this we become stagnant

Our businesses, our schools,

Our towns, our nation

Even our parishes and faith lives can become stagnant

Our readings point the way to avoid this danger

In our reading from Proverbs

We are shown a virtuous, worthy woman

Her value is worth more than rare gems

What is it that makes this woman worth so much?

It is how she gives herself to her task

Not holding back

Not trying to maintain the status quo

No, she brings good, not evil

Not only to her family

But to the poor and needy as well

She is industrious, versatile, trustworthy and steadfast

At a time when society was centered around men

This woman takes charge of her family

Building God's kingdom through strengthening her family

But she doesn't hoard the family wealth

She is generous with those less fortunate

Reaching out to others

Taking a role in public life as well as in her family

She possesses the wisdom that flows from fear of the Lord

And this gives her more than charm and beauty that pass

She holds to what is eternal

And gains more by giving what she has away

This is one paradox of the Christian life

This is what the Gospel shows us

These three men are each given a certain amount

A talent is a large sum of money

More than a year's salary

One receives five, another two

The third receives one- still a significant amount

Then the master goes away

They do not know when he will return

After a long time, he returns

He calls them in

The one that had the five returns with ten

The one who received two returns two more

But the one that received one talent

He has refused to risk

And he has only what he was given

For this he is condemned

Give his one to the man with the ten

And this servant is thrown out into the darkness

We see the trust the master has in his servants

God creates us without our help

He will not save us without our help

The money in this parable belongs to the master

Our lives are not our own

We belong to God

Paid for by the blood of His Son

These readings continue the theme from last week

Preparedness

But they also help us to grasp how to be prepared

We see the two servants getting to work

They take their talents and invest them, taking risks

The third accepts the talent he is offered

But he does nothing with it

In the spiritual life

Doing nothing does not preserve anything

In fact, it is how we lose what we think we have

We are called to build the kingdom

God doesn't judge as we do

He is not looking for material success

He is looking for good and faithful servants

We are given a special gift, Fear of the Lord

Not a fear that paralyzes

Rather a fear that recognizes God in our lives

We recognize the source of all our gifts

Whatever they might be

And seek ways to offer a return

Not in a competition with each other

But in ways that maximize our return

The one with two talents is not in competition with the others

He is praised because he is industrious with what he has

God Himself is gift

The Father gives Himself completely to the Son

The Son gives Himself completely to the Father

And that relationship between them is the Holy Spirit

In the same way God simply gives to us

And He asks we return the gift to Him

By living lives for others

Even if we become destitute materially

We can be successful spiritually

By human standards, Christ's life was a failure

In the eyes of the state he was a convicted criminal

In the eyes of the religious leaders he was a fraud

He was abandoned by almost every one of his disciples

And yet in reality he was successful beyond any measure

And he shows us how to live our lives

Not to be takers

But givers

Conforming our lives to God's

Living this paradox that the more we give the richer we become

As sinners, we are easily confused

We try to fill ourselves with His life

Holding on to what we have

And we become empty

So how do we do this?

We need to find a way to give of ourselves

Have you considered volunteering with CCD?

Becoming a lector, Eucharistic minister or usher?

Singing in the choir?

Get involved with parish events when they come up

Helping with funeral dinners

There are so many ways to become involved

What about your witness

Do you pray before meals?

What about when at a restaurant?

If someone comes to visit your home

Could they tell they are in the home of a Catholic Christian?

These things can stretch us

Take us out of our comfort zone

They are a few of the ways we can give of ourself

Emptying ourselves of the ego

And allowing God's life, grace, to grow within

Where it will grow 20 and 30 and 60 fold

So one day we will hear

Well done my good and faithful servant

Enter into your master's joy