

Homily – Nov. 15, 2020

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We celebrate God who today, through his Son Jesus, will lead us to a key way for building and enjoying the kingdom of God—namely, by graciously using what God has given us. However, one of our most common human foibles—fear and anxiety about ourselves—eclipses or deeply compromises our chances for experiencing the joy of the Kingdom here and in the hereafter. So, we call upon our compassionate God.

The parable about the talents is yet another depiction of what the kingdom of God will be like. In that kingdom, even guys like that third guy, who went scared and doubtful about his one talent, are being called to appreciate what they have. One time, Jesus said to the Pharisees complaining about him eating with tax-collectors and sinners, “I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

Jesus addresses his talents parable to “disciples,” namely, to a group of all kinds of folks following him and wanting to hear him. Some may have been the kind of folks with many talents. Talents, by the way, are not just huge sums of money or lots of personal skills, but giftedness in life. Some disciples had many, some a fair number and then some who deemed themselves minimally blessed in life. One talent, by the way, was no small amount in Jesus’ day, because it represented at least \$1,000, and therefore symbolized a life reasonably gifted. And remember, the talents were the “master’s” possessions—symbolically God’s possessions shared out.

The basic take-away for all three categories of disciples—owners of 5 or 2 or 1 talent—is seen in Jesus’ affirmation of the first two guys. “Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come share your master’s joy.” In other words—you were grateful for and make good use of whatever you had, and therefore you will experience lasting and true joy—rather than some temporary quick fix or pleasure.

The first two guys heard affirming language compared to what the poor guy with one talent heard. We all must remember, Jesus is using a parable, complete with the extreme language sometimes common in a parable. So Jesus was trying to make some extremely important points with the master’s horribly unmerciful language and actions—calling the servant “wicked, lazy and useless” and having that servant thrown into darkness, wailing and grinding of teeth plus having his one talent given to the first one who already had ten talents.

So, what are the extremely important points Jesus is trying to impress on his disciples—especially those feeling less gifted—including us, who sometimes think we have been short changed and given only “one talent.” Jesus is telling us,

1—Don't follow fear. Evangelist John says it well in his first letter. "There is no fear in love. . . . And so one who fears is not perfect in love." That's all of us. I think all of us have or still do experience a certain level of fear and anxiety about ourselves. So Jesus is telling us through this parable—make a choice to not follow fear, because it's going to make you bury your God-given goodness and talents. Yes, if we follow fear we become paralyzed, like that third servant, and we end up literally giving up our goodness, as if handing it on to all those other folks we think are so much better than we are. We literally give away our life. No wonder we sometimes feel like we are in the darkness, wailing away.

Jesus is inviting us, especially those of us feeling like we have only one talent and realize how big that is. To trust in the love God has shown us by giving us health, a friend or two, a hand or two, and eye or two, etc. St. Paul just told us in the second reading, "We are children of the light, not of darkness."

I close with a story about a child of BRILLIANT light. He is an Australian preacher named Nick Vujicic. He has no arms or legs since birth. He struggled immensely, physically, psychologically and spiritually. Eventually he set fear and jealousy aside and grew to love himself, God and others. He even obtained several academic degrees and finally became a preacher who says, "It's a lie to think you are not worthwhile. Do not keep saying, 'I wish I had . . . , I wish I had . . . , I wish I had. . .'"

Please complete this homily by taking time today or tomorrow to view one or two of the many YouTube presentations about and by this astounding man. Simply Google or YouTube, "Man without limbs" or "man without arms and legs" and let yourself be inspired, awed and invited to recognize, be grateful for and use the talent-filled life God has given you. Then you and I will be collaborating with God in building a new world here and hereafter, which all people long for. Then you and I will hear Jesus say to us, "Well done, my good and faithful servant . . . come share your master's joy."