

November 16, 2008

Pentecost 27, Proper 28

Matthew 25:14-30

“The Parable of the Talents”

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It is Tuesday of Holy Week. Having taught in the temple earlier that day Jesus and the disciples retreated to the mount of Olives where they asked Him privately, saying, **“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the ages” (Matthew 24:3)?** As they sat they heard Jesus speak many familiar words to them (and to us) , **For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ, and they will lead many astray (Matt. 24:5) and For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect (Matt. 24:24) and Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. (Matt. 25:13)**

As the disciples heard these last words they would have had two options to choose from. They could have become complacent with their lot in life and sat back and waited, and waited, and waited. Yet even during that time of waiting the Church and the disciples of our Savior could have decided, He isn't going to come back, so what difference does it make to me. But here in our Gospel text we dispel both of these schools of thought. **For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his**

**servants and entrusted to them his property. To one five...another two, to another one, to each according to His ability. Then he went away (Matt. 25:14-15).**

Though the master went away He entrusted His slaves with His property. They were entrusted with His property to do what was best for the master. The three slaves were not to just sit back and await the return of the master. For one thing they were to go about the business of the master. The Lord gave them gifts, callings, to go about His work while He is away. We take care of His treasures while God prepares a place for us.

Some have more gifts than others. As we heard one was given five, another two, and another one. The gifts that God gives to us are given to us individually, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. It is your privilege to carry out these callings, these gifts. If you're a parent, raise your children. If you're a student, study. If you're a citizen, honor your rulers and pray for them. If you're a member of a congregation, continue to use the gifts faithfully that God has given to you. Do these things as God's servants, for you do not know when He is coming back.

Watch out for two things, though. First, don't be over eager for the Lord's return. Deciding that it is so imminent (how often have I heard that lately) that our work no longer matters. Thus some go as far as selling everything and awaiting the Lord's return with their breath held. For many that is probably not a real strong temptation but other one is.

The other is to grow weary of waiting and living as if the Lord's won't be coming back. This temptation allows us to become lazy. We don't have to worry about what our children learn, where our country is headed. We could care less about what the Church teaches and does because there is no judgment. Dear friends, the Lord is coming back, He has given you talents to use. His Law is harsh upon those who grow lazy and do not use His gifts. When we are like the third slave we forget that it is the Lord who is responsible for the return on the investment. It's not what we did with the gifts God has given us, it's what we didn't do. We are too afraid to do something with the callings God has given us.

That third servant was afraid that if he invested the master's money, he would lose it. In fear we are like the third servant. We are satisfied to just use God's gifts enough to make do. If weariness can tempt us to slack off in our vocations what about the means of grace? While our King waits to return, He provides you with all you need to be ready. His Word and Sacraments. These means strengthen your faith and give you forgiveness.

But beware of being swept up in urgency, of all the things you think you need to do and get done, but then you forget about the things you really need. Urgency about many things robs us of the means of grace when we say, "I'm too busy to attend church. I've got a business to run and money to earn." Where will that busyness get you when you lack forgiveness on Judgment day?

Likewise the one who make enjoyment the center of their life; rather lies in bed, makes memories, experiences, and a low blood pressure the center of life rather than hearing God's Word and receiving the Sacrament. No matter how calm you may be, if He does not have the one thing needful, even the peace and calm will be taken away.

When we remember only the Law, we imitate the third servant. We become hypocrites. We may think we know Jesus, but our ideas are incomplete. We hear only the impossible standard, **You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48)**. There is nothing else we could do but join the unfaithful servant in saying, **Master I knew you to be a hard man...so I was afraid**. In our fear we do not go about the things God has given us to do. And left to ourselves the unfaithful servants place will be ours as well...**And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:30)**.

Instead, friends, we rejoice. We rejoice in our Lord's promise that to everyone who has will be given. By God's Word, you are not deceived. You know that everything in this world is temporary and headed for destruction. You know that when urgency and enjoyment become your idols, they won't do you much good. They are attractive when you have means and health and ability, but they leave quickly when you are sick or poor. Therefore, you rejoice in your Savior, who has gone to the cross and died for your redemption. And while He has not yet

returned in visible glory, He visits you today in order to forgive your sins.

And if you have forgiveness, you have eternal life and more will be given to you. Where you are poor in health, He promises perfect healing at the resurrection. Where you may be poor in resources, He makes you an heir of the kingdom of God.

Whether you have much or little in this life, what matters is that you have the Lord's grace and favor, freely given in His Word and Sacrament.

As we await His return you can rejoice because we are prepared. You are prepared because He prepared you, giving you forgiveness that He has won for you on the cross. Because He give you this forgiveness, you are ready for the Judgment Day. The risen Savior Christ, declares, **Well done good, doo and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.** You will have this promise for eternity, because right now you have God's grace; for He forgives you of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.