



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As I mentioned last weekend in my homily, the Church (at the end of the liturgical year) focusses more on "the end". This weekend's readings point this out.

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that "**the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night**" (I Thes 5:2). St. Paul points out to us that we must be prepared, and he encourages us by reminding us who we are – "**we are not in the darkness**" but rather, we are "**children of the light and children of the day**" (I Thes 5:4, 5).

So how are we to prepare? I mentioned last week that remembering the four last things (death, judgment, heaven and hell) helps us keep focused on choosing Jesus in this moment, so we can choose Him at our last moment on earth. But how do we do this? What does this look like? In this weekend's Gospel, Jesus gives us one way to follow Him. We are to use the gifts He gives us to build up His Kingdom.

In the parable, Jesus tells of a man who gives his three servants five talents, two talents, and one talent, respectively, each according to his ability. A "talent" was a coin of significant value, and our modern understanding of "talents" comes from this parable. Two of the servants used the talents and doubled their investments. Wow! They doubled investments! The third buries the talent and returns it unused to the master. For this, he is punished.

This parable points out to us that the gifts that God gives us – the "talents" – are not our own. We are stewards of these gifts. How we use them matters. Sometimes we don't think much of our talents – wishing we had something else. I remember when I was in seminary, I was known primarily for my music talent. In an effort not to be pigeonholed, I purposely got involved in non-music areas – running the daily newsletter for the seminary and being a sacristan, to name just a couple. Despite this, when talking with the Rector of the Seminary, he only remembered that I was a musician. In that moment, I wished for some other talent! But our talents are not ours to choose, but to use. One amazing thing is that if we use them for the Lord, He will multiply the talent beyond our imagining! It comes with much work, of course, but He has a way of transforming five loaves in order to feed 5,000 men!

Sometimes, though, we bury our talents. We don't want to invest the time and energy, the "blood, sweat and tears" required. Those times that we would rather waste our time binge-watching "The Mandalorian" or surfing YouTube, or hours playing "Fortnite". This has consequences, Jesus said, since we are responsible for what has been entrusted to us. The talents we do have: do we use them simply for our own gain? Almighty God created us to be in relationship – not lone-rangers. Our talents are not just for ourselves, to make us look and feel good, but for others. What talents do you have? Whatever those talents are, and however many we have, Jesus says we are to exercise them, practice them, and use them for the building up of His Kingdom.

We don't know the time of reckoning, when the "thief" will come. Jesus invites us to use the gifts He has given us *today!* May we recognize, appreciate and use all that God has given us, so that we may build up His Kingdom. May we never hear, "**You wicked, lazy servant,**" (Matthew 25: 26), but rather, "**Well done, my good and faithful servant**" (Matthew 25: 21).