



16th Sunday of Matthew 25:14-30

"The Lord said this parable: "A man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability..."

One should pray that the talent should be light and hope giving forever. Easy to carry so that the bearer would never be afraid of being stolen, but on the contrary, that it may always help you see and recognize with trembling and gratitude the one who comes your way. For whoever comes, they would not come to steal but to trade; bringing in a burdened consciousness, in order to look for hope and forgiveness; to come lacking so as to become full, by trading. Because the faithful servant has witnessed the joy of the resurrection and can trade the signs of hope for the ones of fear and violence of death. Because it is not the servant who carries the burden but his Master. So the servant is free to trade as much as is needed, for his barns would never be empty and he would never find himself in debt because the one Who pays is the Master. That's why the servant is called to have and to bear within himself a clear consciousness at all times. And not a heavy talent. ,

This is for those who are faithful in small things and are able to count the talents. For us though, those who are hardly moving because of the heaviness of the talent that became like a mill stone buried within one's being, taking us deep into the sea where the monsters are lurking around, today's parable is good news. It does not say that what you see and what you feel on the bottom of the sea is not real, because it is. The sight is accurate within the deep troubled waters, only that there is a way out. Not to run away, but rather for the water to be cleansed around us and for us to start trading with the monsters if nothing else is coming our way. And to do so especially when the monsters belong to you, coming from within you.



The waters above the heavens are always clean, welcoming and life giving because they reflect within the face of Christ.

We can easily connect with and feel for the unworthy servant. We find excuses for his idleness and we have empathy for his wickedness. We can identify with it because either we have been there or we are still looking for a way out.

We also see within our community so many people who “failed” their life. Or if they did not fail, for sure they do not look like winners. It looks like there is nothing left to trade, there is no desire to do so. The talent, if it ever existed, is now buried who knows or who cares where. There is nothing to steal, nothing to buy only empty pockets and a general attitude of being left alone. You bury your talent alone, you go look for it and find it the same way, alone. “Like a poor man who eats in secret”(Psalms).

This image looks familiar to us because we’ve seen it many times and we lived it many times. Sometimes, early in the morning, other times when we are just about to close in the afternoon or evening. And this familiarity resonates with what you live within yourself, the burden of emptiness that cannot embrace and suffer with the pain of others. There is no real success in the way we

live the scene and at times we wonder if this is really what God desired for us. Is this what is pleasing to Him? Is he present?

There is an invitation within this reality because those who seem to lack are actually rich in talents. The scene is sorrowful because having talents, nobody is trading with them.

The parable of the talents is among the last ones that Jesus tells before his passion. There is a sense of gravity and reality of sin that needs to be named because Christ was just going to take it upon Himself entirely on the cross. His last words uttered by Him in the parable, before everything was going to be revealed, make our heart difficult to reconcile with. Because, we all share within the unfaithfulness of the servant. In which way though? Let us try to see more so we can carefully choose the good.

Jeremiah 4:19-23 *"I am pained to the depth of my belly and in the senses of my heart. My soul is in great commotion, and my heart is torn asunder... It calls for a ruinous crushing, for the whole land is in ruin. For the leaders of my people do not know Me. They are foolish and unwise sons. They are wise to do evil, but do not know how to do good".*

The wicked servant who buried his talent is not passing only judgment upon himself but creates desolation around him as well. The land upon which he makes his bed becomes a ruin. Suffering is spread like that with no cure and no hope for healing. From the beginning God made us out of the earth and blew unto us the breath of life. The love he gave us continually, the talent, is not for us to bury and lock within ourselves. By doing so it becomes heavier and heavier paralyzing in time the whole being and the land around us. We see in Jeremiah, because of this unfaithfulness of those called to serve, life is perishing in the land.

By struggling and failing to love with a perfect love, we share in the desolation of the land. Today the land is a ruin, and we don't really know how to do good. We don't really know, in this time, when Christ appears and when He is prolonging his coming. The shared emptiness within the communal body leaves us with no knowledge of what is good. What is really pleasing to God. And then we have only one option: to take ad literam the words uttered in the parable. To trust Him in what He tells us.

Matthew 25: 33-40

Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in: i was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me...

Lord, when did we see You...?"

At the Last Judgement, neither the wicked servant nor the faithful one remember when they met Christ in their life. Jesus spoke about this just after the parable of the talents. That's why we need to see them together to better understand how our lack of knowledge can become a source of joy instead of a source of condemnation.

There are good servants who do good out of their own will because “they loved much and suffered much”. We, the others, who suffer little and know little only to forget again, must go back again and again to basic things, if we don’t want to be wicked. To literally give a glass of water or a cup of coffee to those who are thirsty and cold in winter, to share our clothes with them, to reach out to those who are forgotten and to listen to those who are in distress. We do all these within a desolate land, who refuses to surrender completely to wickedness. We do all this without knowing and seeing much, like the good servant, but like a servant who remembers where he buried his talent and he is rushing out to get it before the master comes. To trade it with those who are rich in talents but neglected because nobody wants to trade with them.

Many times at the mission we find ourselves trying and thinking about how we can do things better, how we can be more welcoming. At times we do this with a feeling that nothing is perfect and not too much changes. It is not for us to know, because the wickedness of many troubles our mind and closes our heart. But we can find a resistance to this by looking at the gospel with trust and with a desire to live. With a desire for joy. And we can start to practice the basic aspects of faith.

During the pandemic, we found ourselves unable to do complicated aspects of our work and we had to restrain ourselves to the basics. Listening and sharing what we have. It is true that, in the eyes of many, both the people who come through our doors and those who help keep them open look as people who failed their vocation or didn’t accomplish much. But we live with gratitude, because where there is a deeper hunger and thirst after righteousness we find everyday partners with whom we can trade whatever we have. And being so much alike we don’t really know who gives and who receives, but rather give thanks for everything together in prayer.

The parable today is good news, it tells us that regardless of how little love we have or how deep we buried within ourselves, we do have enough today to enter within a relation with Christ, by trading our talent with those who are lacking because nobody wants to trade with them.

“It will be given to him who already has and he shall abound, for everyone who has the gift of charity receives other gifts beside. But he who has not the gift of charity will lose even those gifts which he seemed to have. So it is necessary brethren, that charity should be the motive of all your actions for...no idler is completely deprived of talent...”

St Gregory the Great. Parables of the gospel

The parable today speaks to every human soul in a way that only the gospel can. Because it is true and loving. We often struggle to reconcile with the lack of love in our lives, forgetting the one we received. The lack of love creates trauma that has different layers, depending on the gravity of sin experienced. What we find out today is that there is a powerful temptation for those who lack to fall in love with their own misery and to confuse the fear of God with the fear of being alone.

There is in every heart something given to witness and testify kindness, love to discover and share. It does not look the same and sometimes, it is not poetry on the outside. But, there is a way for every heart to be faithful to life. On Wednesday, I think Daniel summarized well this truth with his own words when we shared our thoughts on the gospel of the day. He mentioned again about his PTSD and how difficult it was for him to live with this. But he said, “I had to make a decision in

my life, I decided to stop serving my own disability but instead I started to serve Jesus. To be present to others and to do things for them in the way I can. That took me out."

Many people talk today about suffering and dying. But all this can at times hijack people's desire to live. Because all of us are tempted by the one talent we have and we feel like giving up on it because it is not worth trading. Especially with all these rules that leaders imposed on trading today. The voice of the church is not the voice of many that want to keep you heavy by keeping your talent on the bottom of your heart. The voice of God calls you out from this in order to free you and to enter in a relationship with you.

As Br Luke said on Thursday when we talked about the young rich man. "The rich young man was addicted to his riches. Christ wanted to free him and to have a relationship with him. He showed him the path in order for that to happen." We are the same, only addicted to what we don't have and we don't see the gift that is offered. Christ is calling us to enter in a relationship with Him through the gift we have. And we'll do this sooner than later...as soon as we will have realized that there is no earth big enough to conceal the gift. Because when the love grows within the heart, it transcends the body and reaches out to God up in heaven, after we share a cup of coffee with a troubled poor man, here on earth, early in the morning, during a cold winter day, in a city of Toronto under lockdown.

The faithful servant

There are faithful servants who trade with God alone. "To give to Cesar what belongs to Cesar and to render to God everything that God rendered unto them". (Mathew 22:22)

I wrote before about R and I'll have to write again more extensively. When we pray for those who are persecuted by their faith, R is one of them. Not like the Christians who complain here in North America that their freedom to pray is being restricted by the government. R. was physically persecuted back in his home country. He bears the signs in his fingers, his ribs, his knees and his body. He spent months at Mount Sinai Hospital before being hardly able to walk, and coming to volunteer with us. He reconnected with our community after one year. I can say that living martyrs resemble and are at the same time different than those in the icons. In the icons you see the healing wounds, in reality we get to see them in need of healing. However, there is a deep hope and genuine confession of faith. And a lot of suffering. The wounds within the soul are so much more painful than those in the body. There is also a natural way of being human. It makes so much sense, even though it is so radical.

The cross is not consumed within the experienced abuse. It opens a path of confession and leads to more wounds. As R. was telling me now, what he lives is so painful and so close in bringing him to despair. Because his loved ones are now living what he lived in the past. And he cannot do anything but cry and pray. There is no hope he sees now for them. They are persecuted now because of his witness.

R. does definitely not look now like a martyr that people imagine in churches. He is not to be seen and looked for his counsel or his witness. Rather, he looks defeated, like the Christian in the arena with the lions feasting on him.

The depth of his suffering is hard to imagine and difficult to write about because it is so genuine. He kept repeating, "they want to force me to do something that I cannot do. I told them, I just

wanted to be close to Christ and to live as He guides me to live. I don't need their riches and power."

This is the only truth he knows. And this gives him strength to carry his cross. For now.

Mission Stories

Br Luke

These days many people come to the mission who don't have a place to stay. When someone used to tell me that they couldn't find a space in a shelter, I would suspect that there was more to the story. A couple of guys last week told me they couldn't get a spot, and we called most of the day trying to test this hypothesis. Again and again we were told to call back again in an hour. Most of the time they didn't have a spot by day's end. One guy explained to me how with the six-foot spacing regulations, it meant a lot less beds. The only bed they would offer me was a priority mail bed but I've used those in the past and don't want to take them away from someone else who might need that. They keep telling me to go down to the warming center on Lakeshore but I don't want to waste their cab fare and get down there just to be turned aside at the door and be stuck there. Most of these guys seem to accept this as a fact of life now and jump between TTC cars, transit hubs like Union Station, abutments, hospital waiting rooms etc. One guy left the mission in a wheelchair without having found a place for the night. He left wheeling himself backward down the side of the busy street.

A man who mops the floor at the mission told me about his brother who lives up North near the reservation. You can see so many stars up there, he says. In the woods you can hear yourself walking. The animals don't smell you coming, they can hear you, he says. Have you ever been up there? No, but my brother tells me about it.

After a couple of days not seeing X, we hear a burst of profanity during morning prayer. We are glad because it means that she's alive.

There is a man at the mission like a whirlwind. He brings garbage with him. He loses his temper a lot. Once he comes it is hard to get him to leave. He wears bright red pants and a big hat. His life is complete chaos and that chaos spills over wherever he goes. The mission is relatively untouched by him, he is "at war" with the security guards of most of the buildings in the area. Bouncing between court and the hospital. Most of the people he knows and cares about are either dead or on their way. As he leaves one day, I offer to get him a croissant. You know why croissants were invented don't you? Yes, I say! To celebrate the victory over the Turks! I celebrate every time I eat one, I say, pumping my fist. He starts telling me about what the English ambassadors did to the Turkish viceroy, how they strangled him with silk scarves. He continues on about the Turkish rulers and what they did with their concubines. They sealed their feet with concrete he says, then tossed them into the water. For all the unease and frustration this man sometimes visits upon the mission he is certainly not capable of doing any of these things that fill the history books. Please pray for:

Please pray

the family of

Kenide

Sathiya

Sena

Vinothiny

Yvienne

Abdul

Sakanthalathevy

Jumke

Naimi

Anish

all have asked information on the Orthodox church or priest visit

for health and salvation

Jonathan

Richard

Richard

Mary

Elizabeth

Michael

Rejoice

Bill

Robert

Alan

Joanne

The staff and residents, with families, of the Caressant Care Mclaughlin LTC home: 30 residents and staff who have tested positive for Covid-19.

Navpreet; Manpreet; Jamie; Sue; Reishma;Anne; Kevin;Bob; Nazia; Barb; Angie;Shaibi;Marilyn;Jean;Katie;Janine;Karen;Flora;Patricia;Katrina;Judy;Bob

From St John's

Colin, Michael, Peter, Henry, George, Kelly, Michael;Tom;Steve
Ricky and his family from back home for the hope of reuniting