

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Sep 2nd 2017

### Mathew 25, 14—30

The parables in which a king or lord entrusts his inheritance to his slaves before his departure, are very frequent in the Jewish tradition. One of the duties of these slaves was, in effect, to make money, with the money of their master so that the money and the profit returned to the owner. Jesus uses this reality to reveal to his disciples another element that characterizes the final judgment.

A quick and superficial reading can lead us to interpret that Jesus justifies exploitation and abusive profit, and approves of capitalism and the slave trade. However, the fact that the parable is an allegory helps us to interpret the meaning of the parable from the meaning that underlies each of the symbols. In it is narrated the reaction of three slaves. One of them received five talents, the other two and the third one.

The first two were astute and they set about using the talents to generate more profits for their lord. These symbolize those who have received the gift of the word of Jesus as witnesses of their transforming presence and who, without fear, have used the received gift effectively by means of good actions. While the third considers that the sum of money is a closed deposit that must be guarded. In fact, hiding money underground was a common practice at the time as a safe mode of conservation. The third slave symbolizes the fearful person who seeks security, who refuses to assume responsibility and so overburdens others? The lord symbolizes Jesus whose reaction to the first two slaves contrasts with the third.

The return of the lord symbolizes the return of Jesus and the judgment, above all, of the present life of the Christian community. Talents symbolize the gift of God that does not belong to the Christian, but are tasks that the Lord entrusts to the community. The great monetary unit "talent" comes to mean that the members of the community have received something great from Christ; it is the distribution of tasks that the Lord gives to his disciples. But every task has its accountability, which here come to symbolize the final judgment.

We are struck by the harshness and intransigence of the judge - Christ - of the third slave. What does this characterization of the final judgment mean? On the one hand, it means that Christ will be a demanding judge who is not indifferent to the works we do, but rather rightly looks at our actions because with them we can serve the Kingdom of God or we can overshadow its realization. On the other hand, it means that Christ is the Lord who trusts in those he has chosen and not an evil merchant who looks at his own interests. The discourse of the final judgment is a call to contemplate the present, the present of our life and our history.

Our day is not the time of an empty absence of the Lord, but the latent presence of the God who sustains history. It means that in each day we play life and salvation and that, therefore, we are urged to risk putting trust in God. The parable should not inspire fear, but confidence. On the one hand, we must trust in ourselves knowing that we are capable of God and serving His Kingdom with our good works. On the other hand, we must trust in Christ who is always present in our history and who does not look according to the interests of an evil lord, but through the eyes of a just and merciful God who seeks our salvation.

The question that evokes this parable is how we live today, from fear, or from trust in God? The final judgment is not an event disconnected from our present reality. On the contrary, the final judgment is an event in continuous determination. So, in each day, in each hour and in every moment, our reaction-our way of being and acting-before the reality we live determines it. We must walk looking less at the sky and more at the ground that we tread. The ground is a silent metaphor of God's presence that sustains life and history.

It is the ground on which we walk, it is the firmament on which we build; it is the common place that we share and it is at the same time, scene by scene of our life because in it we prepare for the eternal homeland. This is the presence of God, because in God we live, move and exist. God is always sustaining us.

*Can we ask, do I live more focused on what has to happen tomorrow than on what I can and should do today? Do I live convinced that God sustains my life? How do I relate to God, from fear or from Trust? Do I live every moment of life giving thanks to God? Do I ask for forgiveness for my faults and seek to correct them? How are my works with others? What should I improve?*

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