

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Nov 19th 2017

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel an important man has invested in his servants. He gives them money to care for while he is away. Two of the servants invest the money and can give back more than they were given when their master returns. One servant, afraid of losing the money, buried it to protect it and so was able to give the master exactly what he had been entrusted with. The two with a good return on the investment are understandably rewarded. Their master praises their resourcefulness and trusts them with greater responsibility after their good job. The servant who returns his coin intact, however, is not praised. He is reprimanded for not increasing his wealth. The others doubled the money, and this guy didn't. He thought he would be praised for not losing the money, but that was the base line. Returning the coins was the least he could do. He didn't show any initiative. He didn't go above and beyond. The others took a risk. If their investments had not paid off, they might have ended up with less money, or even none of the money they were given. That would be bad. The third servant was afraid of such a situation and chose to take the safer route and preserve the money so he wouldn't have to explain a potential loss to his boss. If he got in trouble for returning the exact amount, what would have happened if he had lost the money?

And of course we are those servants. What will we do with what God has given us? Will we hide our light under a bushel, or will we make the best use of our talents and give back more than we have been given. Preserving our lives is the least we can do. The best we can do is to appreciate and take advantage of what has been entrusted to us. We can use our hearts and minds to give glory to God and to help each other. We can be like the wife in the first reading who takes her husband's love and gives back even more. We should be like the enterprising servants who take a risk, but return even more than they were given. Life is risky and uncertain, but we need to actively do our very best. And we have to act now. We can't hide our light. We can't bury our talents. We don't know when the master will return and when we will be held to account. Will we waste our lives, or use our talents to make a greater return to God?

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