GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 15: 4, 5

Alleluia, alleluia! / Live in me and let me live in you, says the Lord; / my branches bear much fruit. / Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 25: 14-15, 19-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Because you have been faithful over a few things; enter into the joy of the Lord.

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man on his way abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one; each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out.

Now a long time after, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness." '

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

Longer form, Mt 25: 14-30.

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Breaking Open the Word

THE PRAISEWORTHY SERVANT

Today's Gospel focuses on a parable in which an absentee landlord entrusts five, two and one talent to each of three servants respectively. He returns later to receive the fruits of his servants' labours with their respective talents.

Because the story is quite long, we have a choice of the shorter or longer version. The shorter Gospel selection ends with the focus on the servant with the five talents who returns five more back to the master. With this truncated version, the Gospel is about success: use your talents and you will be rewarded!

The longer version of the Gospel offers a very different teaching. A talent in the ancient world was a monetary value equivalent to a year's wage. The parable is not about *personal talent* or giftedness but about the use of wealth. In the longer version, the first two servants come forward having made a profit with their wealth and are praised by the Master. The last servant to come forward returns the one talent. In a world in which there was only so much of the economic 'pie' to go around, people become wealthy at the expense of others becoming poor. In a subversive way, the last servant is most praiseworthy.

And the Master in this parable is not an image of God, rewarding those who do what is right! What Matthew depicts for us is the reality of life that continues to confront disciples: injustice still pervades relationships in a world where the wealthy get wealthier and the poor become more impoverished.

Fr Michael Trainor



The Saving Word

FIRST READING

Prov 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31

A reading from the book of Proverbs.

Give her a share in what she has worked for.

A perfect wife – who can find her?
She is far beyond the price of pearls.
Her husband's heart has confidence in her,
from her he will derive no little profit.
Advantage and not hurt she brings him
all the days of her life.
She is always busy with wool and with flax,
she does her work with eager hands.
She sets her hands to the distaff,
her fingers grasp the spindle.
She holds out her hand to the poor,
she opens her arms to the needy.
Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty;
the woman who is wise is the one to praise.
Give her a share in what her hands have worked for,
and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.

■ **The word of the Lord.**



RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 127: 1-5. R. v. 1

R. Happy are those who fear the Lord.

1. O blessed are those who fear the Lord
and walk in his ways!
By the labour of your hands you shall eat.
You will be happy and prosper. **R.**

2. Your wife like a fruitful vine
in the heart of your house;
your children like shoots of the olive,
around your table. **R.**

3. Indeed thus shall be blessed
the man who fears the Lord.
May the Lord bless you from Zion
in a happy Jerusalem
all the days of your life. **R.**

SECOND READING

1 Thess 5: 1-6

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians.

The day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night.

You will not be expecting us to write anything to you, brothers, about 'times and seasons', since you know very well that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. It is when people are saying, 'How quiet and peaceful it is' that the worst suddenly happens, as suddenly as labour pains come on a pregnant woman; and there will be no way for anybody to evade it.

But it is not as if you live in the dark, my brothers, for that Day to overtake you like a thief. No, you are all sons of light and sons of the day: we do not belong to the night or to darkness, so we should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober.

■ **The word of the Lord.**