

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Proverbs 31:10-13

Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Matthew 25:14-30

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It seems to me that the question for us today is what do the talents, the silver pieces in our Gospel, represent? What is it that God has given to each of us with the expectation that we should invest it wisely? How about life? Isn't that the ultimate gift of our Creator God? Didn't our Savior say "I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full?"

When I was teaching in Kenya, the African seminarians constantly reminded me that ours is the God of life, and whatever limits life is not from God. Could it be that our Gospel is about life? God has given us life and wants us to let it grow and mature, and reach its potential. And when we thwart life, when we bury our potential, or cling to immaturity, that would be sinful.

Life has its seasons. Remember St. Paul said, "When I was a child I thought and acted like a child." As well he should. A young child, who is properly loved, thinks it is the center of the universe. When it's uncomfortable, it cries and grown-ups rush to attend to its needs. No wonder little children sometimes act as if they think the whole world revolves around them. A little girl thinks it entirely unreasonable for mother to talk to her woman friend when *she* wants attention. In China, where most families have only one child, the situation is magnified to the point that commentators have referred to a generation of little emperors.

But then, at some point in early adolescence, children make the startling discovery that there are *other people* out there. “What could they all be thinking about,” the child wonders. And after a moment decides, “Why of course, they're all thinking about me!” And so adolescents spend an inordinate amount of time wondering what other people are thinking about them, and trying to act accordingly. But as we grow older we realize that other people aren't thinking about us as much as we assumed they were. In fact, they often don't notice us at all.

But if we're Christians we needn't lose the feeling that we are important, because we know that we, as individuals, are dearly loved by God. And that God's own Son would have lived and died for us, even if you or I were the only human being who ever was. As we grow toward maturity, we realize that God feels exactly the same way about all those other people out there. We are indeed a race of little emperors: Each of us is the treasured child of our loving God.

It reminds me of a P. G. Wodehouse play I saw a while back. In one scene, a prince says to his valet, "Joseph, surely you must grow tired of calling me “Your Highness.”” The valet responds: “Me Your Highness? Tired of calling Your Highness Your Highness, Your Highness? No Your Highness!” We are all “Highnesses.” But as we look around us, we see that many of God's sons and daughters are suffering. Poverty, violence, disease and despair prevent them from enjoying their birthright. And because we have grown-up, we realize that we have an obligation to reach out to them -- to let our hands be God's hands in the world. We reach out to them so that they may have life in its fullness. We are not children anymore. Behavior that is wholesome in children is not so for us. It is wrong for us to hoard the treasure that God has given us, by using it

for our needs alone. We have to give our lives back to God... with *interest*.