

SUNDAY 33 (A) (2020)

A) THE ENTERPRISING EMPLOYER

- In today's Gospel we meet a man who entrusts his property to his servants while he is abroad.
- He is an enterprising employer: he doesn't instruct them what to do with the talents
- he trusts them to use their own initiative
- our attention is drawn to the third servant: he is someone who refuses to take risks
- he believes that the safest way to handle his talent is to bury it and then return it to his master, just as it is.

B) THE SCRIBES & PHARISEES

- Jesus is making a point against the scribes and the Pharisees.
- Their chief aim was to keep the Law which they had been given exactly as it was - not to change it, not to develop it, not to alter it in any way.
- By doing that, they would retain control over the Law and over the people
- but the Law was not intended to be a set of rules to be kept
- rather it was to be an expression of a living relationship between God and his people
- and relationships are intended to grow and to change.

C) WHAT GOD IS LIKE

- This parable is about relationships
- First of all it tells us something of what God is like.
- Through the story we are invited to imagine a God who bestows gifts on all of us - and so we are gifted.
- He is a God who gives talents to all of us - and so we are talented.
- What matters is not what people's talents are, but how they are used in the service of the kingdom.
- The parable imagines God as a gambler, one who is forever taking risks in entrusting us with his gifts.
- He has no guarantee on his return, but that is the risk.
- He invites us to join him in his plans;
- and he trusts us to do it in our own way

#### D) ATTITUDES TO GOD

- The parable also explores different attitudes to God.
- The attitude of the first two servants towards their master is completely different from that of the third.
- they know that their master is expecting them to share his business attitude, to accept his trust and to take risks
- it speaks of a good and positive relationship between master and servant
- and their reward is to hear him say on his return: well done, good and faithful servant...come and join in your master's happiness.
- but for the third servant it's very different
- His relationship with his master is a very negative one
- he regards his master as a fierce, exacting man.
- He is afraid of him, and plays safe
- instead of rejoicing in his talent, he does nothing, risks nothing, and gains nothing
- when his master confronts him, the servant blames the master's meanness, rather than accepting responsibility for his own actions or lack of them
- and his reward is a stern rebuke: you wicked and lazy servant,
- and total rejection: throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

#### E) OUR OWN FAITH

- We can ask ourselves, how do we imagine God?
- and how does that influence our attitudes and behaviour?
- do we see God as an exacting master who demands that we return to him exactly what we have been given?
- or do we see him as someone who loves us and trusts us with what is most precious to him?
- do we recognize and appreciate the gifts and talents he has given us?
- do we enjoy them?
- do we thank him for them?
- above all, do we try to put them to good use, not just for our own benefit, but at the service of others, and at the service of his Kingdom?

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