

**Mt 25:14-30; 1 Thes 5:1-6; Prov 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31 Fear of the Lord**

**Judgement Day--the Day of the Lord—will come like a thief in the night (1 Thes 5:2). We know not when or how. But if you did know, what would you do? Visit family? Make amends? Buy life insurance? Make a huge donation to the Church? Maybe you should do that anyway.**

**St. Paul says: fear not the thief in the night (1 Thes 5:4). Because we are children of the light (1 Thes 5: 5). The light of Jesus Christ shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it (Jn 1:5).**

**So, how can we possibly not be prepared? (1 Thes 5:6).**

**Consider the parable. *A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one—to each according to his ability* (Mt 25:15).**

**In a similar way, Jesus went on a journey when He ascended into heaven. And He has entrusted us with many gifts...gifts we must use to do God's work.**

**What are those gifts? Our natural gifts are our time, talent and treasure.**

**But more important, our spiritual gifts are: the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord (Isa 11:1-2).**

**We received those gifts already in the sacraments, especially baptism, confession and Holy Communion...where we also receive the gift of God's grace. That means, our human virtues (good habits) get supercharged.**

**Prudence is doing what is right and good (CCC 1806). Justice is doing the right thing for God and neighbor (CCC 1807).**

**Fortitude is God's strength to endure and to resist temptations (CCC 1808). And temperance is controlling our desires (CCC 1809).**

**Not only that. The theological virtues are poured into our soul: Faith means we believe in God (CCC 1814). Hope means we desire heaven (CCC 1817). And Charity means we love God and our neighbor—simply because we love God (CCC 1822).**

**The key is this: we just have to act like we already have all these gifts.**

Back to the parable: What did the servants do with their gifts? The first two doubled their money (Mt 25:16-17). But the third dug a hole and buried the money (Mt 25:18). Why? Because he was afraid.

He was afraid to risk losing the money because his master was *a demanding person* (Mt 25:24). And that fear made him selfish. He was more concerned about himself and his own safety than about serving his master.

The same thing can happen to us. We are inclined to use our gifts to satisfy our own selfish desires--not to serve God but to serve ourselves--by amassing wealth, power and pleasure.

Then, we commit the sin of omission—the failure to do the good which we are called to do.

Because on judgement day, it won't matter if we say "I didn't commit any sins." That's not good enough. Faith without works is dead (Jas 2:17). What matters is: did we use the gifts God has given us to do God's work?

To the servants who use their gifts to do God's work, the Lord will say: *Well done, my good and faithful servant...Come, share your master's joy* (Mt 25:21, 23).

And to the servants who bury their gifts, the Lord will say: *You wicked, lazy servant!* (Mt 25:26). *Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten* (Mt 25:28).

That means: use it or lose it. *to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away* (Mt 25:29).

And as for the wicked, lazy, and selfish servant: *throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth* (Mt 25:30).

What can we do so that doesn't happen to us? We must live in fear of the Lord.

The first reading is about the ideal wife. Her value is far beyond pearls (Prove 31:10). She does good, not evil (Prov 31:12).

**She serves her husband with loving hands (Prov 31:13). And she reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy (Prov 31:20).**

**She is us. That is how we must use our gifts. Did you notice, her beauty came not from her physical appearance but from her character and wisdom. And her wisdom came from fear of the Lord (Prov 31:30).**

**Fear of the Lord is not fear of punishment. Fear of the Lord is fear caused by love. We fear to offend God and to lose God by sin, because we love Him. And we are in awe of Him because He is so beautiful, great and powerful.**

**Cultivate that gift with daily prayer and worship here at mass. Examine your conscience and go to confession. Go to adoration and contemplate the majesty of God.**

**You'll know it when you have it. Because you will be motivated to avoid sin, even the near occasion of sin. You will crave to do penance to atone for your sins. And it will motivate you to do God's work simply because you love Him.**

**And like the psalm says: *Blessed are you who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways!* (Ps 128:1). We must walk in His ways always—the way, the truth and the life, which is Jesus Christ. How?**

**Pray for people. Forgive people. Heal people and drive out demons with the love and peace of Jesus Christ.**

**Evangelize people by sharing your faith story. And serve people by caring, loving and doing good things for them—like Jesus Christ did for you!**

**It doesn't matter if the gifts God gave you are five talents, two talents or only one talent. Use your gifts to live in fear of the Lord.**

**Walk in His ways and do His work, carry the cross and save the world—because for us, to whom much has been given, much is expected for the glory of God.**