Sunday Homily: Parable of the Talents

Full Transcript

Good morning.

As we approach the end of the liturgical year, the Church gently turns our attention toward the ultimate horizon of our existence, not just the end of the world in general, but the end of our own lives, the day when each of us will stand before God.

This reflection, or homily, is not meant to instill fear, but to awaken us. The Church, during this time of the year, reminds us of a truth that we often overlook: that this life is not the entirety of our existence.

In today's second reading, St. Paul says something striking: “The day of the Lord will come like a thief at night.” Many people hear and interpret the message of St. Paul as a warning of fear. But it is not. Paul immediately reassures us by saying, “But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness. For all of you are children of light and children of the day.”

Notice the difference. The problem is not that the Lord will come unexpectedly. The problem is that many people are living as if He will never come at all. That is one of the greatest spiritual diseases of our age.

Many plan for retirement, but not for eternity. Many take care of their bodies, which is good, but often neglect their souls. Many devote countless hours to their careers, finances, and possessions, investing very little in their relationship with God. Many live as if death is merely the end and think that accountability before God is a thing of the past.

That is precisely why St. Paul tells us, “Let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay awake and sober.” This is exactly the same lesson Jesus taught us last Sunday in the parable of the ten virgins, saying, “Stay awake. Be ready. Do not presume that there will always be more time.” Even if there is, do not take it for granted.

But today's Gospel takes the teaching one step further. Jesus tells us how to stay awake. Today's parable is a parable of accountability. The master entrusts talents to his servants and then leaves. After a long time, he returns and settles accounts.

The issue here is not what those servants received, or what we are given, but what they did with what they received. One received five talents, another two, and another one. The first two servants took their gifts, worked with them, and produced fruit. The third servant did nothing, even accused the master of harvesting where he did not plant. He buried his talent. He wasted his opportunity.

The tragedy is not that this guy stole the talent, no, but that he did nothing with it. Many people always think sin is only doing bad things. But today's Gospel reminds us that there is also the sin of failing to do the good we could have done.

God entrusted each of us with gifts: the gift of faith, the gift of time, the gift of opportunity, the gift of family, in my own case the gift of priestly vocation, the gift of education, the gift of health, resources, and many spiritual gifts. One day, He will ask, “What did you do with what I gave you?”

Did you use your faith? Did you use your influence to bring others closer to Christ? Did I use my priestly vocation and ministry to win souls for God? Did you use your time to pray? Did you use your gifts to serve others? Did you use your voice to encourage, to defend, and build up?

Or did you bury your talents beneath excuses, fear, laziness, indifference, or worldly distractions?

The most frightening words in today's Gospel are not about the servant's failure. They are these words: “After a long time, the master came back and settled accounts with them.” A day of accounting is coming for every one of us, and that should not terrify us if we are living as children of light. Rather, it should inspire us to live intentionally, faithfully, and fruitfully.

Today's Responsorial Psalm gives us a beautiful summary of today's message: “Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways, for they shall eat the fruits of their handiwork.” The fear of the Lord here is not terror, no. It is living with the awareness that God matters, eternity matters, and the choices we make today matter.

So, brothers and sisters, one day our careers will end. Our bank accounts, achievements, titles, and earthly possessions will be left behind. But our love, our faithfulness, our service, our sacrifices, and the souls we helped bring to Christ will accompany us into eternity.

As the liturgical year draws to a close, we have only one week to go, the Church asks each one of us a very important question: If the Lord called me today, would He find me sleeping or serving? Would He find me burying my talents or multiplying them? Would He say, “Well done, good and faithful servant”?

May we live every day as children of light, alert and serving, using well the gifts God entrusted to us, so that when the master returns unexpectedly, He will welcome us into His joy. Amen.