

Related topics

For further study:

Eschatology; last judgement; parousia; end of the world; heaven; evangelisation; Christian service; discipleship; ministry; social mission of the church, preferential option for the poor; pilgrim church; virtues of faith, hope, and trust

Closing Prayer

O God,
from whose own abundance
all gifts and skills are lavishly bestowed,
encourage us to use our talents
as generously as you have allotted them,
so that, being faithful to your purpose,
we may become sharers in your glory.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Ordinary Time, 33A²

CPL • LBC Year A before Advent 2.odt • 2020-10-04

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*

The Second Sunday before Advent

Sunday between 13 and 19 November inclusive

Principal Service readings

Zephaniah 1.7,12-18	The great day of the Lord is near
Psalm 90.1-8 [9-11] 12 [or 90.1-8]	To you, a thousand years are like yesterday
1 Thessalonians 5.1-11	The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night
Matthew 25.14-30	Parable of the talents

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Parable of the talents

¹⁴For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." ²¹His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." ²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." ²³His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." ²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed;

²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.” ²⁶But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25.14-30 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

This is the third in a series of parables dealing with the proper attitude and actions in the face of the coming of the Son of Man. It puts an emphasis on positive action.

Matthew gives special attention to the Markan theme of constant watchfulness because no one knows when the Son of Man is coming (Mark 13.35). This theme is developed by the parables of the two servants (24.45-51), the ten wedding attendants (25.1-13), and the talents (25.14-30). All three parables contribute to the idea of what counts for responsible behaviour in preparation for the coming of the Son of Man.

In Matthew 25.14-30 the master has been ‘away on a journey’ (25.14,15). Then, ‘after a long time’ (25.21,23) he returns and settles accounts with his servants. Those who have acted properly and responsibly he invites to enter their master’s joy (25.21, 23), while the one who failed to act out of either fear or laziness is condemned to the outer darkness (21.30). This parable leads into the judgement scene in Matthew 25.31-46 in which the Son of Man acts as judge ‘for all the Gentiles’. The parable in Matthew clearly concerns the coming of the Son of Man and how one should behave in anticipation of this. Its message commends positive action instead of fearful or lazy inaction. In the parable the first motive of the master in entrusting his property to his servants is to see which ones were capable of more responsibility. This gives way to a second motive: to determine who should share in the joy of the master.

¹ New Revised Standard Version Bible is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

When used today the parable can be thought to be about using one’s talents, with a loss of eschatological perspective. In Matthew’s time, it is likely to have concerned more particularly groups of people who were either prepared or unprepared, like the parable of the wedding attendants. Perhaps the parable is criticising a group within Judaism (or the Jewish people as a whole), for seeking to preserve – by burying – the Torah and so freezing it in time. Seen like this it would be an attack on a failure to preserve a proper apocalyptic spirit. In contrast, the Christian programme, with its missionary activity, makes the treasure more productive and fruitful, and will bring joy to the Son of Man. In Matthew’s time, Jerusalem and its temple lay in ruins. Rather than trying to preserve traditions, the enterprising first two servants show a way forward in reconstructing Judaism for the future. By taking account of the coming of the Son of Man urgency is added to the task.

Quotations

1

Perseverance is not merely the crown and stamp of perfection, it must accompany every step in the growth of every grace; just as the texture of the tree must be woven from in every stage of its growth, so perseverance has to watch over the growth of each virtue day by day; every day in which it fails, the graces which are under its care begin to droop and lose their bloom.

Some principles and practices of the spiritual life / B. W. Maturin. 1899. p.195

2

The path of discipleship is narrow, and it is fatally easy to miss one’s way and stray from the path, even after years of discipleship. And it is hard to find. On either side of the narrow path deep chasms yawn. To be called to a life of extraordinary quality, to live up to it, and yet to be unconscious of it is indeed a narrow way. To confess and testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and at the same time to love the enemies of that truth, his enemies and ours, and to love them with the infinite love of Jesus Christ, is indeed a narrow way.

Discipleship / Dietrich Bonhoeffer. tr. R. H. Fuller. 1956, p.162