



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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SUNDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2019 – THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

EPISTLE The Reading is from Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians [2Cor 6:1-10] We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: *“In an acceptable time I have heard you. And in the day of salvation I have helped you.”* Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation. We give no offence in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour or righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known, as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

EXPLANATION: Here St Paul pleads to the Corinthians to be reconciled with God by taking full advantage of the **grace** of Christ’s saving work. That is, the opportunity for salvation through Christ. He begs them not to waste this gift, which is available to everyone. God has offered knowledge of this grace to mankind through those who have continued Christ’s work through the ages. Inspired authors of Scripture, Fathers of the Church whose writings preserve its intended meaning, priests, monks, theologians, teachers, parents and all who have really believed the Gospel have passed on the same urgent message – use life for its ultimate purpose to learn about God’s plan. That is, those who would like to live eternally with Him must try to live according to God’s plan in order to demonstrate faith and be rendered righteous. **(6:1)** Quoting Isaiah 49:8, St Paul relates that God helps us to fulfil life’s potential of union with Him by reaching out to each of us in an **“acceptable time”**. That is, in our lifetime – the time allotted to ponder and

pursue salvation. We never know when this life and, therefore, this opportunity will end through death or the Second Coming of Christ, so the present day is the only one of which we can be certain. Therefore, the **“day of salvation”** is now, the present. Our chance to consciously commit or recommit our lives to Christ is now, for tomorrow may be too late. During the Divine Liturgy we are prompted often to “commend ourselves and one another and for our whole lives to Christ our God.” These are valuable reminders of the purpose for life. **(6:2)** St Paul strives to set a good example of the Christian life in all ways so those observing his way of life will have no cause to reject the Gospel on His account. **(6:3)** In carrying our God’s work, St Paul says that we must endure all **trials and tribulations**, just as he willingly endured beatings, imprisonment and often went without adequate food and sleep. He stresses the discipline of fasting because it affords spiritual strength to be able to continue the struggle. **(6:4-5)** Through purity of heart, man acquires the gifts of the Holy Spirit, kindness and sincere love. St Paul attracted the grace of the Holy Spirit through his good works and toils and used these gifts to unite all believers to Christ. Those who use these gifts to bring glory or worldly gain to themselves misuse these gifts and cause divisions within the Church. Their proper use should be only for the glory of God and to promote unity within the Church. **(6:6)** The **power of God** is available through the Sacraments of the Church, which are vehicles of grace. St Paul’s effectiveness in his ministry stems from acting according to the **“word of truth”**, God’s will, by which he clothes himself in the **“armour of righteousness”**. This advantage is accessible to all who develop, teach and live by an understanding of the fullness of the truths preserved by the early Church. **(6:7)** St Paul dealt with the extremes of life, as do all who sincerely try to live and teach the fullness of the Gospel, He was honoured by some, and dishonoured by others. But he warns that **“honour”** presents a particular danger to the recipient. It is difficult to accept praise humbly, in a Christ-like manner, and sincerely give all glory to God. The sin of pride will undo all the good that has been done, whereas humility adds to what we do not have. The Apostles were poor in worldly possessions yet rich spiritually and made many rich in that which really matters – knowledge of Christ. They lived as **“having nothing, yet possessed all things”**. They **rejoiced** in their sufferings because they had truly committed their lives to Christ and believed that through Him they could live eternally with God in His Kingdom if they endured to the end. **(6:8-10)**

GOSPEL The Reading is from St Matthew [25:14-30] For the *kingdom of heaven* is like a man travelling to a far country, *who* called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had

received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents, “And likewise he who *had received two* gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, “Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.” His lord said to him, “Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” He also who had received two talents came and said, “Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.” His lord said to him, “Well *done* good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord. Then he who had received the one talent came and said, “Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground.” “Look, *there* you have *what* is yours.” But his lord answered and said to him, “You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance, but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.” And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

EXPLANATION: This Parable illustrates the use of gifts given by God. Jesus is the “**man travelling into a far country**”. He became man for our sake, suffered and died and “**travelled**” in His ascent into Heaven and will return suddenly to ask for an account of all gifts that he has given us. We are stewards of every gift, using each for our own and our neighbour’s salvation. Idleness is a renunciation of God’s grace, as well as a lack of love for God and humanity. Since people are managers or stewards of God’s gifts each of us will give account of how we used our surplus or “**abundance**”. His “servants” are those who have been entrusted with the ministry of the Word, such as bishops, priests and deacons, and who have received spiritual gifts, some greater, some lesser, each one according to his strength, that is, according to the measure of his faith and purity. This also applies to laity, to all “**servants**” of God who are obliged to put God’s endowment to good use. These gifts vary according to each person’s ability – such as personality, natural talent, commitment, wealth, etc, but whatever the recipient’s condition is, God’s gifts are abundant and carry enormous responsibilities. St Paul says, “whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.” (1Cor 10:13) The good and faithful servants, even though they were not told what to do with their talents by their Master, nevertheless took advantage of their freedom and while recognizing their role as stewards of their Master’s endowment and desiring to please him whom they

loved and trusted, worked diligently to prove themselves good servants and doubled his money. The first two servants understood that they were obliged to put the Master's money to good use. Immediately he who had received the **5 talents** went and traded with them and doubled what he had received. Likewise the second servant doubled the **2 talents** he received. For if a man gifted with wealth, skill, power and authority and desires only to benefit himself, he buries the talent given to him, The 3rd servant was only interested in using his talent for his own benefit and cared not for others. Such a person is condemned. So if you see an intelligent and skilled man or a powerful and wealthy person misusing his talents in the pursuit of earthly affairs such as personal power, glory and wealth, without care for others, you may say that such a man has buried his talents in the earth, that is, in earthly matters. But after a long time he who bestowed the silver talent returns and demands a reckoning. The first two servants who had worked hard and doubled their talents received praise, **"They had shown themselves faithful over a few things and were made rulers over many things"**. That is, they stored their treasure in heaven where they will receive unimaginable rewards. The saints have the Lord as their wealth and rejoice in Him. But the slothful servant justifies himself by calling his Master a **"hard man"**, and **"you reap where you have not sown"**. Thus you require an obedient disposition from all men, but you have not implanted in man an obedient disposition. However, God did not create obedience within man, nor did He sow in him an obedient disposition. But instead, God gave man free will to choose to obey Him or not. When the servant says that the Master is hard, he condemns himself. For the servant ought all the more to have been diligent knowing that his Master was hard and severe. For if the Master required this of others, so too would the Master require this of him. Christ calls disciples **"bankers"** for both exact account for that which has been delivered to them. For the disciple who receives the Word must keep it and give it back in its entirety with interest which is by doing good. So God takes the gift away from the wicked and slothful servant and gives it to those who are more diligent. More grace will be given to those who do good works and in abundance. As Christians, we must learn God's will and work unselfishly for Him and His Kingdom. We do these things because of His love for us and the love that we must return to Him. To compare our vocation with others and then to fall into jealous rivalries is to question his wisdom and to rebel against His will.