November 15, 2026
33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time
Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus told his disciples this parable. "It will be as when a man who was 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. Then he went away.

Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.

After a long time, the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.' His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten.

For 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. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'"

Background:
This Gospel text is the second parable in the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel. The third parable in this chapter will be our Gospel for the Sunday after this one, the Feast of Christ the King. All three parables in this chapter are preparing the Christian Community for the return of Christ and the establishment of the reign of God.

In the parable for this Sunday, the master is going on a long journey and giving each of his servants an unbelievable sum of money. A talent was the equivalent of 6,000 denarii, and one denarius was the usual daily wage. From the perspective of those Jesus addressed, even the servant who received one talent has received an unbelievable amount of money. The difference in the amount each has received is not the issue. The master has placed a great amount of trust in each of the servants. The first two servants are very industrious and have found ways to double the master's wealth. The last, however, has protected the master's wealth out of fear, but returns it in full. He has not used what was given him so that it would increase, nor has he used any of it for himself.

When Jesus was telling the original parable, those who were hearing it would have been mostly peasants who had little or no wealth. For them, a person who had so much wealth that he could have divided it among three servants would have been scandalous. It would have been presumed that the wealth was gotten by depriving others, and should be used to expand his reputation by sponsoring others in the community. But instead, this one expects that the servants return what has been entrusted to them, with a profit. For the average person to whom Jesus told the parables, this story makes little or no sense. The parable only works as a story about something other than material wealth.

Matthew's 25th chapter consists of three parables about the coming of the reign of God. The first is the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) that was the Gospel text last Sunday. The second parable is of the generous master who shares his wealth with his servants (Matthew 25:14-30), which is the Gospel text for this Sunday. The last parable is that of the final judgment, when Jesus separates the sheep from the goats according to how they have treated the least among them (Matthew 25:31-46.). This parable will be the text for the Sunday after this, the feast of Christ the King. These are the last parables in Matthew's Gospel. He begins his 26th chapter with Jesus speaking to his disciples of his approaching betrayal and death. "When Jesus had finished all these words, he said to his disciples, 'You know that in two days' time it will be Passover, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified'" (Matthew 26:1-2). By the end of the 26th chapter Jesus is arrested, and Peter has denied him three times. It is helpful to understand these parables in light of their context in Matthew's Gospel, and in light of how the early Christians reflected on them to shed light on their own relationship to God.

Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever bought a lottery ticket, or thought about what you would do if you unexpectedly received a large sum of money?
2. What talents and gifts has God given to you?
3. Are there times when you are more aware of the talents and gifts of others than of your own?
4. How is the attitude of the first two servants toward their master different from that of the last servant? Of the two different attitudes, which is closer to the one by which you seem to live most of your life?
5. What are some of the things that motivate you to use your gifts for God's reign?
6. Is fear one of the things that motivates you? How do you experience fear as a motivation within you? Does fear as a motivator affect you in ways that other kinds of motivation do not?
7. What kind of temptations might arise because the master is a long time in returning?
8. Do you value your faith relationship with God as a gift to you? What do you do to protect that gift, nurture it, and foster its development?
9. Do you think God expects you to develop and share with others the gifts that you have been given?
10. How do you experience God's invitation to "come share your Master's joy?"
11. Can you take some time to talk to God about how you feel about the gifts that you have been given, how you experience God's desire for you, or what you hear God saying to you in this Gospel?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are prepared and distributed by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel, as edited from Reflections authored by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

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Excerpts from the readings for November 15, 2026, the Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize. She brings him good, and not evil, all the days of her life.
She obtains wool and flax and works with loving hands. She puts her hands to the distaff, and her fingers ply the spindle. She reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy.
Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
Give her a reward for her labors, and let her works praise her at the city gates.

Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways!
For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be, and favored.
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home;
Your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord.
The Lord bless you from Zion: may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

Concerning times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you.
For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night. When people are saying,
"Peace and security," then sudden disaster comes upon them, like labor pains upon a pregnant woman,
and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, for that day to overtake you like a thief.
For all of you are children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness.
Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober.

Jesus told his disciples this 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. Then he went away. The one who received five talents traded with them, and
made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man
who received one dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money. After a long time the master
came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents said, 'Master, you
gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done. Come, share your
master's joy.' Then the one who had received two talents said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have
made two more.' His master said to him, 'Well done. You were faithful in small matters, I will give
you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' The one who had received one talent said,
'Master, I knew you were demanding, harvesting where you did not plant, gathering where you did not
scatter; so out of fear I buried your talent. Here it is back.' His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked,
lazy servant! Should you not have put my money in the bank so I could have got it back with interest?
Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has,
more will be given; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.
Throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'"

Excerpts from Proverbs 31:10-31; Psalm 128:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; and Matthew 25:14-30