

**The Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Adopted from 'Word of God'

**TALENTS** A talent in our Lord's time was a large unit of weight of a precious metal. A talent of silver came in two sizes, the larger one being used in the eastern part of the Roman empire. It was an ingot of about 80 pounds worth 6,000 times the daily wage of a casual laborer and therefore represented a considerable amount of investment capital. Those who argue that capitalism is intrinsically unjust should note that God is portrayed enthusiastically by Jesus in his parable as a capitalist. His whole creation is capital investment for the future, that is, for the kingdom of heaven. Man has been put in charge of this investment and is expected to make it fructify magnificently, immensely, infinitely, eternally. The very first command he receives, that which is recorded in the Genesis story of creation, is: Increase and multiply...From all that is given us: life, health, physical and mental faculties, faith, sacraments, charisms, etc., God expects a return. All these things are talents. To some he gives many; to others few. If I only have one talent, I am still the recipient and the instrument of God's tremendous generosity. And the opportunity and joy are given me to become generous like him, for I am made in his image and likeness. I can contribute to the happiness of God's kingdom. In God's capitalistic system, suffering and privation are also assets—they can be made to produce infinitely more good than could otherwise have happened. It is also to be noted that such capitalism must be consonant with the justice and morality that God teaches and must be for the benefit of all. When it becomes greed, exploitation, sexual depravity, etc., those who devote their lives to such sterile enterprises will one day "weep and gnash their teeth" when they finally perceive the truth of the proverb: "Of all the words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: It might have been!"

Proverbs 31:10-13,19-20, 30-31

The song of the valiant woman which comes as a fitting climax at the end of the Book of Proverbs has twenty-two verses in all. It has a fitting place also at the end of this liturgical year A and as a prelude to the Feast of Christ the King. It belies those who claim that the Bible belittle womanhood. But perhaps the whole of it should be heard instead of just eight verses. It is an alphabetical poem, the ABC's of the ideal wife. In the Jerusalem Bible, it is arranged with each verse opposite its letter: Aleph, Beth, Ghimel, etc. Mgrs. Knox has translated it into an English alphabetical poem. Verse 16 shows that the ideal woman believes in using her talents to the full: "She sets her mind on a field and buys it; with what she has earned...she plants a vineyard." And verse 25 speaks of her greeting the Day of the Lord, of which we are reminded

today by the second reading, with joy: "She can laugh at the days to come. Proverbs belongs to the group of wisdom books and this poem is a striking example of how wisdom is personified and, moreover, personified as a woman.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Last Sunday, we heard Paul telling his Thessalonians disciples not to worry if they were dead when the *parousia* or the Day of the Lord arrived. They would come alive for the event—that would be the very first effect of our Lord's coming in glory. The Gospel of today adds: Do not worry, just be fruitful while you are alive. Chesterton, in his poem about Mr. Mandragon, a bloodless, sterile type of millionaire, suggests humorously that he refused to be fruitful even as a corpse, having himself cremated instead: "And now he lies all fluffy and soft and grey and certainly quite refined, when he might have rotted to fruit and flowers with Adam and all mankind." The Thessalonians also worried about whether the *parousia* was imminent. We should live as if it were. The Gospel of today refers to the Lord's return as "a long time after" he had entrusted each of his servants with part of his investment capital. As with his talents, the Lord gives little time to some much time to others. However little or much, let it be fruitful. As for the time that remains before this world comes to an end, however long it may be, it will be cut short, says Paul, in that our Lord's return will be catastrophically sudden and unexpected—like a thief in the night.

Matthew 25:14-30

The godless society presents a world that is meaningless and drab, and many of its citizens take refuge in escapist pursuits and pleasures. Let us not be drowned by the huge volume of the nonsense that is printed, filmed, and broadcasted daily. Let us prepare ourselves to listen to the word of God as it comes to us every week on the Lord's Day and thus have the habit of looking forward to the Day of the Lord. It is not a question of straining every nerve and sinew like an athlete trying to be first in an Olympic contest but simply of putting what talents we have to work each day. A kind word, a smile, a cup of water offered to someone thirsty—the least act done for love of God and neighbor will not fail to be rewarded eternally. The meaningfulness of our present universe, mighty and marvelous as it is, is that it will be transformed through the exercise of faith, hope, and charity into the incomparably more wonderful kingdom of heaven.

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**READINGS OF THE WEEK**

Proverbs 31:10-31

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Matthew 25:14-30

November 16, 2014

## 塔 冷 通 的 比 喻

呂 漁 亭 神 父

我們以前已講過路加福音中那則「米納的故事」，這兩個比喻看起來好像大同小異，因此不少學者把它們放在一起來討論。但也有很多聖經專家，認為這是兩個不同的比喻，耶穌是在不同的場合以及不同的時間講的。首先，他們認為路加的那個比喻，直接的對象應該是經師及法利塞人。「祂本國的人一向懷恨祂，才在他後派代表去說：『我們不願意這人為王，來統治我們。』」（路十九 14）這句話明明是對著那些反對耶穌的法利塞人講的。反之，瑪竇福音中沒有這類的话，祂的比喻是對著那些「等待主子第二次來臨」的人講的。再者，路加福音用的錢幣是「米納」，且第一個僕人得了十塊，第二個五塊，最後一個只得了一塊。瑪竇福音中那位主人分給僕人的是「塔冷通」，且第一個得了五塊、第二個兩塊、第三個僕人是一塊。

因此，我們也跟隨這派學者，把這兩個比喻分開來討論。比喻的內容大致如下：從前有一位計劃遠行的主人，把自己的僕人叫來，分給他們不同數量的「塔冷通」：一個得了五塊、一個二塊、第三個則只得了一塊，並且叫他們好好去投資生產。不久主人回家叫他們都來算帳，那得了五個塔冷通的又增了五個，主人十分高興，計劃委派他去管理更大的事。那得到兩塊的僕人也賺了兩塊，主人也同樣滿意：「好！善良忠心的僕人！你既在小事上忠信，我必委派你管理大事；進入你主人的福樂吧！」最後是那個只得了一個塔冷通的僕人，他也前來向主人報告，說他怕主人太刻薄，怕投資可能血本無歸，因此才把那個塔冷通埋在地裡，如今如數交個銀幣的忠信僕人：「因為凡是有的還要給他，叫他更富裕；凡是那沒有，連他有的也要由他手中奪去。至於這無用的僕人，你們把他丟在外面的黑暗中，在那裡必有哀號和切齒的悲泣。」（瑪廿五 14-30）首先讓我們來看看什麼是塔冷通？這是希臘 Talentum 的直譯，而 Talentum 正是耶穌時代巴勒斯坦所流行的一種幣制，一個塔冷通等於一個金幣，因此有些聖經本就索性把它譯成金幣或金鎊，香港出版的「牧靈聖經」則把它譯成「元寶」。無論是元寶或金幣，這些都是無關緊要的小事，它們只代表一個數字吧了。在這個比喻中，耶穌想告訴我們什麼呢？首先使我想起「多得多還、少得少還」的一個人生原則。比喻中那個得了五個金元寶的僕人。由於他勤勞耕耘又賺了五個，主人十分高興，決定派他去管理更大的事。那得了兩個元寶的，雖然只賺了兩個，主人也同樣高興：「好！善良忠信的僕人！你既在小事上忠信，我要交給你更大的責任，進來享受你主人的福樂吧！」主人對這個僕人所講的話，完全與第一個僕人相同，並不因他只賺了兩塊而有所不滿。大家都知道，我們每人的天賦本來就不同，有些人人生就比較聰明，記憶力也較強，無論觀察力、理解力、或綜合力都比別人強。對這些天資獨厚的人，我們也不必心生妒嫉，因為多得多還，他們得的多，將來老天算帳時，向他們要的也多。記得靈心小史中有這樣的一個小故事：小德蘭從小就夢想進天國，但她覺得自己將來升了天，見天堂上許多大聖人的地位都那樣高，而自己只是一個名不見經傳的小小靈魂，與他們比一比，自己將來是否會感到失望？她的姐姐聽了之後什麼也不說，只叫她到廚房裡拿兩隻杯子來，一隻是爸爸用的大杯，一隻則是她自己的小杯。杯子拿來後，她們倒滿了水，姐姐於是問她那隻杯子裝得更滿？小德蘭只好說兩隻同樣滿，於是姐姐對她說：「我們將來在天上也如此，只要心滿意足了就好了！」的確心滿意足了就好了。天父賞給我們的可能只有兩個金元寶，我們只要好好去利用，不必管人家得了多少，因為得的愈多，將來還的也愈多。這個比喻又使我想起那句「少做少錯不做不錯」的口頭禪。比喻中的那個笨僕，之所以受主人那樣嚴厲的遣責，正因為他認為不做不錯，就把那元寶埋在地下了！記得雷鳴遠神父曾說過一句名言：「做，就有辦法，不做，永遠不會有辦法！」所謂一步一腳印，一步能走，千萬步亦能走，正是在鼓勵我們，不必因天資遲鈍，辦事能力不強，因此就裹足不前什麼也不敢做。若那個僕人也肯努力，雖然結果只賺了一個小小的元寶，我想主人也一定同樣滿意；畢竟一還一，與十還十一樣，兩者都得了滿分，天主還能要求他什麼呢？因此不是得了多少重要，得了之後做了多少才是關鍵問題，成功與否在此，天父將來論功賞罰也在此！

摘自「教友生活週刊」