

33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
[Reading I: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31](#)  
[Responsorial Psalm: 128:1-2, 3, 4-5](#)  
[Reading II: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6](#)  
[Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:  
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/111923.cfm>



The first reading is taken from the final verses of the Book of Proverbs. There are two themes in the choice of this text. On the surface, it speaks about the worthy wife. She is a good example of using her talents for the good of others, paralleling the theme of the Gospel. She uses her time and talents for good and gives an example of faithfulness to God and her spouse.

On a second level, it continues the theme from last week, she is an example of wisdom being put into practice. What is highlighted about the wife is also highlighted about Lady Wisdom.

When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls.

Earlier wisdom has been described:

Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold.

For Wisdom is better than corals, and no treasures can compare with her.

The idea of a worthy wife is used to exemplify the value of wisdom and how close and intimate wisdom can be. (In our time, the parallel of a worthy husband could also be used.) As the worthy wife is trustworthy, always focused, available, and productive, so wisdom is as intimate as a spouse, trustworthy, available, always dependable, and offering profound insight.

The Gospel passage follows directly from the parable read last week and is from the eschatological discourse of Jesus. It continues to call us to be attentive to the long-term focus of life that is lived out in our day-to-day activities. It highlights two key elements: each person has been given gifts by God in proportion to each person's abilities, and that fear should not keep us from using our gifts.

The master is extremely rich and generous but also unscrupulous. A talent was the largest monetary denomination. It was worth about 15 years of wages. It was not something any of these servants earned. (Our English word talent is taken from this word, so we immediately connect to that, but the original audience did not.) It was given to them. Those who used their talents produced more and were rewarded. The one who hid his talent did so out of fear. Unlike God, the master had demands, even looking for interest. This was viewed as a serious sin. God has entrusted us with gifts to continue the mission of Jesus. We use these not for honor but for God.

Secondly, fear is part of our culture. There are significant fears of terrorism, illnesses, loss of people who are special, and death. Fear can motivate or immobilize us. It can motivate us to prepare for a storm or exercise caution when faced with illnesses. It can also freeze us, and we turn inward and do nothing. When scriptures use fear, it is done as a warning that thoughts or actions will lead to destruction. Most of the time, the scriptures call us not to fear. One of the most often repeated phrases in the bible is: Do not be afraid! Faith calls us into a trusting reliance on God's concern and care for us. When Jesus was in the boat with the disciples, and the storm came up, he said: "Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?"\* Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. Again, when Jesus is on his way to heal Jarius' daughter, people tell Jesus that the girl has died. Jesus responds that Fear is useless; what is needed is faith. This faith is not an intellectual belief about ideas but a trusting reliance upon God to be with you and see you through the experience.

Jesus called the disciples and each of us, to continue his mission of bringing forth the reign of God in our world. We are called to use the gifts that we have been given for the good of others. Gifts that are not used atrophy. Gifts that are used, even if one makes mistakes, develop, and benefit others. God works even through one's mistakes and helps a person to grow. It is not enough to analyze gifts, talk about gifts, or compare gifts. A disciple uses gifts in the love and service of God and for the good of those in their lives.

In the second reading, St Paul continues to respond to questions about the return of Jesus. Paul reminds them that since they are children of the light, they have nothing to fear. He reminds them that no one knows when Jesus will return so, they should be alert and ready every day for the Lord's coming. It is easy to be lulled into the routine of life, but disciples are to be attentive and alert to what is going on in life.

God comes to us in many ways each day. It can be in prayer time, in a conversation, in giving or receiving forgiveness, in assisting another person, in hearing a piece of music, the piercing message of a poem, or in recognizing the beauty of creation. It is important to recognize God each day so that we can be ready to welcome Jesus upon his return. The Ignatian practice of the examen invites one to look back over the day and become aware of God's presence in your life and how one was aware or unaware of God today.

**Themes:**

Stewards

Faithful use of God's gifts

Fear

Living the Mission of Jesus

**Reflection Questions**

What are some of the gifts that God has given you?

What are some of the fears that hold you back from living more fully and using your gifts?

What are some of the things that help you be aware of God's presence in your life today?

What do you think of when you hear, "end of the world"? Do you fear death or the end of the world?

**Suggestions for Prayer:**

For the Church: that we may be aware of the gifts of faith, time, and opportunity that God has entrusted to us, be good stewards of these gifts, and diligently utilize them in the service of God and our neighbor

For the grace of awareness: that God will rouse our inner selves, help us to be alert, and avoid the numbing effects of consumerism, escapism, and selfishness

For freedom from fear: that God will free us from paralyzing fear and help us to trust God's faithfulness and love as we live life each day

For all who are facing responsibilities that seem overwhelming: that God will give them courage, help them to see the small steps they need to take, and deepen their trust in God, who is always with them

For all spouses and engaged couples: that they may recognize the gift that they are to one another and continue to grow in their dedication and love for each other