

33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday (A)

19<sup>th</sup> November 2017

'Don't do nothing!'

Prov 31: *a perfect wife, who can find her?*

Ps 127: ...

1Thess 5: *It is not as if you live in the dark ... for that day to overtake you*

Mt 25: 14–30: *well done, good and faithful servant, enter into happiness*

Let's focus on what it was about that third servant in the parable that led to his demise, led to his being thrown into the outer darkness, and not welcomed "into his Master's happiness." Because it's probably that element of the parable that seems most distressing. Why no mercy, why no welcome? What had he done that was so wrong that he ends up excluded from heaven?

Well, clearly he does *nothing*. He does nothing with what he has received. He doesn't even do the minimum. He doesn't try to do something and fail in the attempt. No — he does nothing, and then at the end simply thrusts the Master's money back at him. The Master had been very generous and trusting, allotting a huge amount of money to each of his servants (one 'talent' was around £35kg of gold or silver). The first two make use of the Master's gift, and are rewarded with an elevation greater than they can have imagined — something more precious than a monetary

reward; they are told, "Come and share in your Master's happiness." They are elevated to the status of sons, or heirs. But the third is having none of it; he doesn't wish to acknowledge the Master's patronage, nor want to be bothered with the Master's business. He turns his back on the Master's gift, and has no wish to have anything to do with that which was so generously given him. Is it any wonder, then, that at the end the Master grants him his wish and releases him from his company? It's what he sought.

The parable has a very clear meaning. "A share in your Master's happiness" is a beautiful expression for heaven, isn't it? The first two, by co-operating with God's good gifts, each according to their ability, are welcomed, without discrimination, as sons into the kingdom of heaven. The third, as he desired by his clear actions, was cast out from that heavenly happiness. What did he do wrong? Well, he did nothing, i.e. he wanted nothing to do with God. And that was very wrong. It was a blind selfishness that refused to see the reality of the situation. He was turning his back deliberately on the one who was his lifeline.

It has been said that “all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.” Our faith in Christ is the antithesis of this. Our Lord is constantly urging us to do good, not to do nothing! We cannot drift idly into heaven — surely that is the most basic message of this parable. We cannot imagine that ignoring God’s creative presence, refusing to acknowledge His perfect gifts to us, shunning the duties we have to love God & neighbour, are ever going to get us in to heaven. He wants us, above all things, to “come and share in His happiness,” but we won’t get there by drifting lazily through life and not applying ourselves to the demands of the Gospel. Don’t do nothing! It’s a sure road to hell.

God’s most basic gift to us is the gift of faith, and we are meant to be promoting this. Just as the man with 5 talents made 5 more, and the man with 2 talents made 2 more, so we should be actively seeking to bring new people to faith in Christ. This is the purpose of the Church’s life, a Catholic’s life, to build up the community of those who are ready and waiting to “share in the Master’s happiness.”

So, as a simple expression of this, I ask you to *invite others* to the Mission evenings coming up in a little over a week’s time. *Take an extra Mission flyer.* You’ve probably had one through your door, but now take an extra one with the Newsletter, or from me as you leave Mass. Take 5 ... take 2 ... take 1 extra ... but don’t hide them or bury them! Invite someone, bring someone, accompany someone: a good friend; a curious family member; a parishioner, perhaps, who used to come to Mass and has stopped. The Mission is being run by John Pridmore, a powerful speaker and a great witness to the overwhelming power of God’s love to heal and to turn lives around. He is living testimony to the fact that God wishes us not to evade Him, but to co-operate fully with His gift to us of human life. So, please, don’t bury the Mission flyer in the ground, or let it get buried on your kitchen table! Use it for good, use it to extend an invitation to our parish Mission, and who knows what God will do with that? Whatever you do, don’t do nothing! — do something to extend the chances of others’ sharing in the Father’s happiness!