# Homily for Sunday, November 15, 2026




Like last Sunday's gospel reading, we have another of Jesus' parables. Parables rarely make sense when you first hear them. They have to be puzzled and turned over in the mind in order for us to get their true meaning and what they are inviting us to. If we don't puzzle them, we usually draw all the wrong conclusions. For example, Jesus is all about sharing. But in last Sunday's gospel, the bridesmaids who had oil in their lamps did not share with those who had none. Jesus is all about lifting up the lowly, the underdog, yet today's gospel ends with the rich getting richer while the poor get poorer. Obviously, there has to be something deeper going on with these parables. Jesus is the Master Teacher and he's trying to change the consciousness of us, his students.

The first thing we need to understand about this parable of the talents is that it's *not* a competition. If it was a competition among the three slaves, each would have been given the same, perhaps five talents each, and the master would have awarded a prize to the one who did the most with his five talents. That's not the case. Each of the three has been given talents according to his ability, and so are we. The competition, if there is a competition, is not among the three; the competition is within themselves. What will each of them do with what has been given to them?

The fact that it is not a competition with my neighbour, is very liberating. I don't have to be the pope, the bishop, the prime minister. I don't have to worry about how others take responsibility for their talents. I just have to be faithful to what God to asking of me. For in the end, the gift that each of us has received is for the building up of God's Kingdom; it's not a personal trophy to be polished and admired. Simply put, the vocation, the call of each of us is to witness to God's love in the world. That witnessing rarely happens on a world stage but in a myriad of small loving gestures each day.

In a couple of short weeks we will begin that season of waiting and longing called Advent. Jesus has promised that he will return in glory to establish a new heaven and a new earth. We live, all year round, in the time between Jesus' ascension and his return in glory. It's not a *passive* waiting listening to the false prophets on the internet who have it all figured out. It's an *active* waiting. How do we actively wait? By getting in touch with the one or two gifts that God has given each of us and sharing them generously.

The third slave in the parable, the one who hid his talent, is not in touch with what his master has given him. He's in touch with something else, something that paralyzes him---fear. In justifying why he buried his talent, he told the master, ***"I was afraid, so I went and buried your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."*** When we fear, we recoil from life. In fearful people life stops being a mutual flow. The spiritual life is meant to be a flow. What flows into you, wants to flow out of you. We like the part of life flowing into us, but we're not too crazy about letting it flow out. Yet, Jesus says, ***"What you have freely received, freely give."*** That is the way the world of Spirit works. You only have, in the world of Spirit, what you give away. In the world of flesh, in the world of physical laws, when a person gives something away, they no longer have it. But according to the spiritual laws, when you give from a place of Spirit within you—which is always a place of abundance—there is more of it. There is more for both the one who receives Spirit and the one who gives it. It doesn't increase incrementally but exponentially. In other words, it doubles with each giving. That's why five talents becomes 10, and two talents becomes four. Whatever you hold, in the world of Spirit, stagnates, dries up and amounts to nothing. The world of Spirit is an all-or-nothing world. That's why the guy who hoarded his one talent ends up with nothing.

I think this is the same spiritual dynamic going on in the story of Jesus feeding the multitude with the five loaves of bread and the two fish. The Apostles' response when seeing the huge, hungry crowd was to hoard the loaves and fish for themselves. They were living completely in the world of flesh, a world where you hold onto things for fear of losing them. The world of flesh is a world of scarcity. Jesus comes to this dilemma from a totally different angle. He comes at it from the world of Spirit, which is not a world of scarcity but of abundance. Jesus won't bury the few fish and loaves in the ground hoping the hungry crowd will just go away and fend for themselves. Instead, he gives the loaves and fish freely and they multiply exponentially. Two becomes four, four becomes eight, eight becomes 16, and so on. It's all or nothing. Either we all eat, or none of us eats. Jesus prefers that we all eat. Early in the gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus, a Pharisees, ***"What is flesh is flesh; what is Spirit is Spirit."*** The world of flesh is limited; that's why we hold onto it for dear life. The world of Spirit, on the other hand, is a world of abundance. How do you release abundance into the world? By giving it away. It is God's nature to give. As children of God, we ought to imitate God and allow life to flow through us as well.

A quick word on that first reading from the Book of Proverbs. It describes a normal, ordinary woman, a capable wife. She does normal things like providing for her

family and husband. There's nothing flashy about her. With the few, hard-earned dollars she has, she buys a vineyard and grows grapes. It seems to be a side-job for her. We are told her merchandise is profitable. Two lines later we are told that this same woman opens her hands to the poor and reaches out her hand to the needy. Interesting. She is making a profit from her vineyard, yet at the same time, she is caring for the poor. What comes into her hands, freely leaves her hands. She walks through life with open hands. That's a risk-taker. She doesn't go broke unable to provide for her family. She sees life as a mutual flow. What she has freely received, she freely gives. She knows that she is a daughter of God, one who belongs to the world of abundance.

She is praised at the city gates, much like the first two servants in the parable are praised. They allowed the generosity of the Master to flow through them. They imitated, you might say, the generosity of the Master. As a result, they shared in the joy of their Master. It is God's great joy to give us everything we need and then some. It's is God's greater joy when we do the same for others.

*Fr. Phil*