

In this morning's Gospel we heard about a rich man who was going away. He called three of his servants and gave each of them some money.

They were to take this money and buy and sell things in order to make more money for him. A talent is not a unit of money; it is a weight. The weight of 6000 denarii came to one talent, so the five talents would be worth about 30,000 denarii.

This was an immense sum. A denarius was the wages of the day labor for one day's work. So the second with servant given to talents for total 12,000 denarii. Again one, 6000 denarii. It was their job to provide their master the fruit of their labor as to how they had invested the money while he was away.

Often when we hear the gospel with think about our personal talents such as teaching, singing, or playing a musical instrument. Is interesting that our modern English word talent came from this usage of the word talent in today's gospel.

The master of these servants knew them well. So he gave to them according to their ability, which is why he gave one servant 5 talents, another 2 and the last only 1 talent.

The servants to whom he gave five talents and the one to whom he gave two talents did not wait around wondering what should they do with this money. They both knew that were expected to use it to make more money for their master. They went immediately and traded with the money.

They used the money that their master had entrusted to them to produce and double it. Unfortunately for the man who was given one talent he was lazy and only went and buried the money not using it to make more for his master.

When the master returned in the two who were successful with investing the money showed the results of their trading to the master he said to them "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master."

But for the man who was lazy and did not invest the money, not even in a bank, he said to him "So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth."

What are we to take away from hearing this gospel? Each one of us are given gifts from God. Every man has been gifted by God with various talents, different charismata and various skills. These talents one must understand as gifts from God, who entrusted them to us and that we will give an account to God as to how we used them.

St. John Chrysostom, interpreting this parable explains, that with the term "talent" our Lord Jesus Christ means the abilities and skills of each and every one of us to practice every good deed with

responsibility. So, if we hold an official public position, or we have a special place in society, or if we have been blessed with wealth, or we are gifted with capability of knowledge and teaching, or with whatever other spiritual gift, All the “talents” are God-given.

In the Parable the master gave the talents to his servants and immediately departed to a country far away. God gives us His Talents, the various gifts, He does not stand over us as a tyrant to force us to use them in a specific way. Instead, He leaves us to use our talents freely as we wish. If we do not use them properly, then although He continues to respect our free will, He shows mercy and patience till the moment when He will return to demand an account from us.

The talents are given to us in order to be used with responsibility, as we will give an account. Time goes by and we will give our account. This account is necessary and Christ assured us many times that it will take place (see Matth. 18:23-24; Luke 19:11-26).

St. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit", (1 Cor. 12:4). It is the Holy Spirit from Whom every gift is given with certain abilities and understanding. The faithful one is called to undertake the responsibility of gifts which are bestowed on him:

*"And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord, and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone" (vs. 4-6).*

In addition to the "varieties of gifts" of faith, there are the "varieties of service" by which the faithful one serves his fellow man with love and almsgiving.

The one who receives the gifts of "service" considers himself a steward of the Lord. He devotes all his abilities with love in the service of God's commandments.

The "varieties" of "service" in everyday life include: medicine, hospital care, nursing, social work, care for the elderly, teaching, missionary work, honest government and in general all services which deal in helping others when done in the name of the "same Lord".

The "varieties of working" are the results of the energies and the actions of the "varieties of service". They are the wonderful results which come either in the everyday life of the people or in the spiritual world, when done in the name of the "same God".

The varieties of gifts of service and of working, "...are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (v. 11).

"To each (person) is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (v. 17). Each person is given the energy, and grace to work for the common interest of the people.

The successful achievements of this "service" and "working" should be attributed to one and the same power - the Holy Spirit - Who bestows them.

These "varieties", although separate, contribute to the same goal - the helping one another - and depend upon the same authority, the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the God.

The "varieties of gifts" are many:

*"To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophesy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (vs. 8-11).*

The gift of the "utterance of wisdom" means the deeper understanding of the Will of God and mysteries of salvation;

the "utterance of knowledge" means the good sense of knowledge;

"faith" means the supernatural achievements through the Spirit;

"healing" means the ability to heal various sicknesses;

"working of miracles" means supernatural achievements;

"prophesy" means the miracle in the form of preaching;

"ability to distinguish between spirits" means being able to distinguish between good and evil spirits by which various spiritual expressions exist;

"various kinds of tongues" means the gift of speaking in many dialects of which the meaning is known only to him who speaks them, not even an interpreter;

"interpretation of tongues" means the ability to interpret the language of the speaker of "tongues" to the people who do not understand what is being said.

But, if the talents are ours, then why should God demand an account from us?

The skills might be ours, but we have them from God. Our skills are either naturally, or they have been given by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, consequently, they are from God.

For this reason, our Lord in the Parable says, that the lord gave his belonging to his servants. We must see the gifts which we have as belongings of God for they have been given to us by God.

Thus, we should use them as divine gifts and use them and increase them to a perfect level, according to God's instructions.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself recognized this obligation for Himself, as He considered as His duty to preach the Kingdom of God to all the cities and country side. We are told that as He grew “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, as well as in favor with God and men.”

The responsibility for our deeds and use of our talents and skills is for all of us. Our Lord assured us that each of us will give an account according to his works (Rom. 14:12).

This understanding that one day we will give an account should guide us throughout our lives.

Our skills, small or big, should be used with great responsibility. It is not enough to do something, but we should struggle to increase the talents.

Woe, to that person who had received a talent and he hid it!

Let us accept with humbleness and gratitude the various talents and gifts of the Holy Spirit and let us struggle to multiply them for the glory of our True God, the Holy Trinity. Amen.