

Reflections on the Gospel

RISK TAKING FOR GOD

As we approach the end of the Church's liturgical year, the focus remains upon the second coming of the Lord. Once again, the Gospel provides a parable (the Talents) instructing us how to live in view of that expectation.

The master in the parable is pleased with the enterprising first two servants. Having realised substantial gains on the amounts entrusted to them, they are welcomed 'into the joy of their master'—that is, into the banquet of the Kingdom.

But the third servant, who simply hid his single talent in the ground, displeased his master because he didn't do what was expected, namely, trade with the money so that it would increase. He didn't even put the sum in the bank, where it would have at least accrued some interest. Paralysed by a fearful image that he has of his master (an image of God that the parable does not endorse but actually refutes), he sought security in giving back, in strict justice, the exact sum entrusted to him. This, however, was not what the master wanted. Hence the severe penalty.

The parable challenges believers not to rest content simply with not doing anything wrong so that God will not be able to find anything to punish. Such an attitude mistakes the nature of God and neglects what God really wants, which is an enterprising, even risk-taking, practice of the 'weightier matters of the law': 'justice, mercy and faith' (Matthew 23:23). The gifts God has entrusted to us, like our minds and limbs, need active exercise if they are not to atrophy and wither.

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