



MORNING PRAYER DEVOTIONAL

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2020

Readings: Exodus 28:1-6, 15-21, 29-43; Matthew 25:1-20; Psalm 50

Of virgins and talents...

Presumption: An idea that is taken to be true, and becomes the basis for other ideas, though it is not known for certain.

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Talents, we hear a warning against presumption.

These parables are about the end of time and the final judgment. Having just taught that no one knows when this will be, when the Son of Man will return to judge the earth, Jesus now gives us several parables to illustrate His point.

In the parable of the Ten Virgins, we find presumption of others. After a substantial delay, the bridegroom arrives and the bridesmaids are called out to meet him. Five have brought enough oil for their lamps, but five have not. They presume upon their fellow bridesmaids to share with them, but they are denied and told to buy some more for themselves. The result? The five without missed the wedding feast, as "the door was shut" against them (verse 10).

In the Parable of the Talents, the one who hid his talent in the ground did so because he presumed upon his Master:

"Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed..." (verse 24). How ironic, that this Master, who was so generous in delegating his wealth to others for their management, and generous in His delegation of authority and honor to those who were faithful in their stewardship was "known" by the one who was given one talent to be a "hard man." This presumption proved to be a self-fulfilling prophecy: the Master indeed was hard, and the punishment was severe: "... Cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (verse 30).



What is the antidote to such presumption? Humility is a start. The Virgins did not plan for a possible delay, confident in their assessment of the situation and the bridegroom's prompt arrival. The servant who received one talent "knew" his Master to be harsh, but he misjudged him, only to be pitifully proven correct in the end. What else might be an antidote?

Holy Scripture itself is the best antidote. It tells us clearly of God's good grace toward us in Christ, as well as our desperate need for it. Herein is the Gospel: our sin and Christ's mercy, our need and Christ's provision, our inadequacy and Christ's grace.

- Fr. Marc

A Prayer for Daily Growth

(ACNA Book of Common Prayer, page 672)

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the pains and insults thou has borne for me, and all the benefits thou has given me. O most merciful Redeemer, Friend, and Brother: Grant that I may see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly, day by day. Amen -

Richard of Chichester