

Liturgy of the Word for Children

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Please Note: All scripture readings must be read from the Children's Lectionary

Opening Prayer:

Most generous God, we cannot count
the wonderful gifts you have poured into our lives.
Above all, you have given us your Son, Jesus,
who has shown us the way to our home with you.
Make us wise in using these gifts
so that they will be for the benefit of everyone.
Open our hearts to the world
so that we may spread the Good News about Jesus,
who lives with you, forever and ever. Amen.

First Reading: Proverbs 31:10, 12, 20, 26, 28, 31

A woman who is good is more precious than jewels. She does not hurt others; she does good all the days of her life. She works for the poor and helps those in need. She speaks with wisdom and is kind to everyone. Her husband and children call her blessed and tell her how wonderful she is. May she be rewarded for all that she does, and may everyone who knows her sing her praises.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

(This reading is to be used for personal study. It should not be used in liturgy.)

"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

Topsy-Turvy Talent Show: Gospel Reflection

Did you ever see a talent show? There might be a dancer, a singer, a comedian, a juggler, an acrobat, and a musician -- all on the same show. Each one does what he or she does best.

But suppose each performer decided to do something else? Suppose the singer tried to turn cartwheels and the dancer began juggling balls in the air? Can you imagine the juggler trying to dance or the comedian trying to sing? What a topsy-turvy talent show that would be!

In this week's gospel story, Jesus explains that God has given each of us special talents. It's up to us to find out what our talents are and to do all we can to make them better.

There is only one thing that God would not like! God does not want you to bury your talent and never use it. God wants you to be the very best YOU in all the world.

Buried Talents Never Grow: Gospel Reflection

Today's gospel message is a hard one. Often people use it as an excuse for making money their primary focus in life. But is that really what Jesus is saying?

Maybe, instead of focusing on money we should focus on gifts and talents -- those God-given gifts and talents that each and every one of us has. Maybe it is those gifts and talents that we are warned against burying, that we are to find ways of improving and increasing.

We tend to look up to people whose gifts and talents are newsworthy -- superstars on the athletic field or in the recording business, for example. There are also those whose talents lie more in helping than in performing -- medical missionaries or environmentalists, for example. Think for a moment about the many "unsung" heroes in the world -- people you know, maybe in your own family, or in your class or parish -- who give of themselves to the poor and the hungry. These are people who have taken the gifts and talents that God gave them, invested them wisely, and returned them to the Lord with interest. Jesus says to them, "Well done ... enter into the joy of your master."

THINK ABOUT IT!

God has given you many special gifts and talents. God wants you to build on those talents, to return them doubled or tripled. God does not want you to bury them.

Think about the talents God has given you. Each of us is gifted in different ways. Some have musical abilities -- singing or dancing or playing instruments, composing or arranging. Some have artistic abilities -- drawing or painting, writing or designing. Some are specially gifted with a gentle spirit, a listening ear, a quick wit, a strong faith....

What are your God-given gifts and talents? What are you doing with them?

Tree of Gifts and Talents: Class or Family Activity

1. For your tree, find a strong branch with several twigs. "Plant" your tree in a low, wide vase or bowl.

2. Discuss the special gifts and talents of each member of your class or family. Make a list of the people in the group, and note beside each name the gift or talent you believe best describes that person. (Some examples might be: Joe -- sense of humor; Denise -- truthful; Mr. Lopez -- good teacher; Mom -- comforting; Sean -- reliable; Jody -- great singer.)

3. Using a small jar lid or something similar as a model, draw a circle for each person on gaily-colored sheets of construction paper and cut them out.

4. On the front of each circle, write one person's name and on the back their gift or talent.

5. Now, using small pieces of gaily-colored curling ribbon, hang the circles on your Tree of Gifts and Talents.

You can use this tree as a centerpiece. As class or family prays together, remember to thank God for all the gifts and talents of all the people represented on your Tree of Gifts and Talents. Ask Jesus to help you use them to build the kingdom of God.

Our Special Gifts: Class or Family Activity

Here is a game you can play to help each member of the class or family to identify his or her special gifts and talents.

1. Give everyone a piece of paper and ask each one to write his or her name on top.
2. Shuffle the papers and pass them around so each member has someone else's name.
3. Each member is to write down the three nicest things about the person whose name is on top of his or her paper.
4. Now pass the papers back to the people to whom they belong. Each one can read the paper and discover his or her best gifts.
5. Now discuss what each of you will do about your special gifts.

Prayers of the Faithful: Allow a few moments for the children to offer prayers aloud for their special intentions. Ask them to end with "Let us pray to the Lord". All respond, "Lord, Hear our Prayer".

Apostle's Creed: You may end the Liturgy of the Word by reciting the Creed as a group if there is time.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Since it is difficult to harmonize our two readings, we will begin with the Gospel.

We are nearing the end of the liturgical year, and the Gospel, like last week's, directs our thoughts to the end of time. Last week the focus was vigilance. This week and next it is "rendering our account." God has given each of us talents, grace, a vocation in life. It is clear from the Gospel that we are meant to use those talents for the good of the reign of God. The importance of the parable is that our reward, "Come be happy with me," is not dependent on the size of our talents, but on our use of what we have been given.

The woman in the first reading is praised because she lived her vocation as wife and mother in a most charitable and noble way. Each of us is called to do that.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

What did you hear?

Center the discussion on the talents and gifts of the children and people they know. Broaden their understanding of "talents." In the Gospel it meant money. The message of the parable, however, is broader than that. What has God given us? What has God asked us to do? Some people are called to teach, others to cook, others to counsel people, others to preach. People are called to be mothers, sisters, fathers, priests, brothers, single people.

Children too have their gifts and talents. They are filled with God's grace. Center the discussion on the talents and gifts they have and what they can do at their age to use what God has given them.

Help them remember the words that we will hear when we use God's grace wisely.

"Come, be happy with me."

Next week's reading will make this even more understandable.

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Thought for the day

The Day of the Lord will hold terror for the wicked and unprepared, but rejoicing for those living in God's light.

Readings

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Matthew 25:14-30

Aim: To know the parable of the talents and its meaning.

Starter

I am the music man, I come from down your way. There are lots of instruments the music man can play, which are "played" by everyone in this song.

Teaching

Point out how talented the music man was in that song, able to play lots of different instruments. Today we are going to look at the gifts we have been given, and how God hopes we will enjoy them and make the most of them. Talk about the sort of gifts God gives us, such as being good at particular sports or skills, being thoughtful and kind, making people feel comfortable, helping them when they're ill, using money wisely, being able to work out answers to tricky problems, listening well, leading, or helping people make up after an argument. Some of us are given the happiness and security of a loving home, and others are given the gift of being cheerful even when life is difficult for us. All these things can be used to help the world.

Go around the group in circle time, with everyone saying, "I'm glad God made me good at..."

Jesus told a parable about being responsible about our gifts, and using them, rather than hiding them away and ignoring them. As they will see, God expects us to make good use of whatever we are given.

Give out a copy of this script on page 151 to four people, who can act it out.

Praying

Lord God,
thank you for giving us gifts and talents.
Help us to enjoy them and use them well
for the good of the world.

Activities

There are instructions on the activity sheet for mak-

ing some wrapping-paper, and the children will need plain colored paper and an assortment of cookie cutters to print with. There is also a word-search to reinforce the teaching of the parable, and a quiz to help them with the meaning of it.

Notes

Thirty-Third Sunday of the Year

Gifts from God

INTRODUCTION

When we love someone, we sometimes give them a gift, something special for them to use and enjoy. God has given talents to each one of us as a sign of his love; these are gifts from God.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles, then read this passage:

One day there will be no more darkness, no more night. No one will need lamps or the light from the sun. God will light up the darkness with glory, and they will see clearly forever.

(Revelation 22:5)

SORRY

Ask a child to choose a "sorry color." The corresponding Sorry Prayer can be read by him or her, or the group can say the prayer together.

GLORIA

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 3.

GOSPEL (MATTHEW 25:14-30)

(The talents described in Matthew's Gospel were large units of money used at that time. To avoid confusing the children, the Gospel adaptation refers to the talents given to us by God.)

One day Jesus said: "Once there were three men who had each been given a different number of talents. The first man had five; the second man, three; and the third, one. They were free to use these talents however they wished. The first man used his talents well and doubled them; the second man also worked hard and used what he had been given wisely; but the third man felt that he had little to offer, so he hid his talent away from everyone and did not use it.

"The time came to meet the one who had given each of them their talents, and they told him in turn how they had used them. He was very pleased with the first and second men, but not

with the third man, who had wasted what he had been given."

DISCUSSION

If we say that someone has a talent, we mean that they have a special gift or skill for doing something. In the story Jesus told, each man was given a number of talents.

Who gives us our talents? Any gifts or talents we have are given to us by God. What are some of the talents which God has given to each of you? Some examples are: swimming; making people laugh; singing; dancing; being thoughtful; playing a musical instrument; and reading.

In the story, two of the men used their talents well and made them grow and multiply. The other man kept his talent hidden from everyone and did not share it.

When someone gives us a present, they love to see us using it and getting pleasure from it. Our talents are gifts from God, given to us because he loves us. They are very precious and must not be wasted, but instead be put to good use.

At the end of time, God will ask us what we have done with the talents he gave us. Did we use them wisely, sharing them with others for the good of all; or did we hide them away selfishly, without allowing them to grow?

ACTIVITY

Cut out a variety of box shapes, enough for more than one each, and ask the children to color them so that they look like wrapped gift boxes. Or, gift wrap some mini-packets of candy, then give each child a label on which to write one of their own talents before attaching it to a box. These can be pinned to a board or carried up in a basket with the caption "Our gifts from God."

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly father, we thank you for the talents
which you have given to each of us.
Whatever our gifts may be,
teach us to use them wisely
and for the good of others.

Liturgy of the Word for Children

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

1. Who Is Best?: Class or Family Activity

Here is a matching game that only you can answer. In the left column, write the names of people who have the talents listed in the phrase on the right.

1. _____ IS A GREAT COOK.
2. _____ IS VERY GENTLE.
3. _____ IS GOOD AT FIXING THINGS.
4. _____ IS VERY NEAT.
5. _____ MAKES PEOPLE HAPPY.
6. _____ ALWAYS PLAYS FAIR.
7. _____ TELLS THE FUNNIEST JOKES.

2. Hidden Talents: Matching Game

Below is a list of just a few of the talents God gives people. Can you match them with something in the second list that shows how that talent can be used to help others?

Talent List:

TEACHING
MUSICAL
CARPENTRY
WRITING
HEALING
SENSE OF HUMOR
SCIENCE
MATH

Helping List:

1. Make sick people laugh
2. Tutor children who have trouble in school
3. Become a nurse or doctor
4. Discover new medicines
5. Keep track of church money
6. Make up plays about gospel stories
7. Join the church choir
8. Construct houses for poor people

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