

They were told to make use of the master's money. They weren't told how to use it or what kind of return the master expected on his funds, only that they should use it. The first two servants make good use of the money entrusted to them. They are able to double their master's money. When he returns they can give back a fine return. The third servant chose not to use the money. Instead he takes it and buries it. One could argue that his might have been the safer move. What if he had taken the money, invested it poorly and lost it all? What would the master have done to him in that situation? This servant believes he is doing the best that he can do.

In the parable Jesus praises the first two servants but severely punishes the last one. As in a lot of Jesus' parables this story hits us. This seems unfair. The man was only trying to be careful. Why does he get off so badly?

Remember, as in other parables this is a story that requires one to look closely. The story has a number of possible meanings. The first one is the obvious one. We should make use of the talents God gives us. I think that most of us realize this. Usually as teenagers we are told to try different things so that we will know what we are good at and what we might like. Then, we choose a career based on our interests and talents. The jobs that we hold usually hone these skills and we become better at what we do.

The second possibility in this parable is that it's again a story about being ready for the coming of the Lord no matter when that occurs. The three servants have no idea when the master is going to return. They just know that at some point they will have to give an account of what they have done. So, they figure that with whatever time is given they will do the best they can. The man

who buries the money doesn't anticipate that his master could be gone awhile. Maybe he doesn't even realize that he could make more of the money than he does.

That leads me to the third interpretation. Often we don't know what the Lord will ask of us. We can try to anticipate the needs of our family or the parish. But, we might be asked to do things that seem impossible. I have known people who ended up working in a soup kitchen who were afraid of working alongside of the poor. Others couldn't imagine enough courage to minister to those in a nursing home or hospital find that when they said yes to God they could do it. You may not believe this, but I didn't think that I could be a priest because I was afraid of getting in front of people to speak. I dreaded having to do that when it was required in school. Yet, with practice and with being able to do it by leading music I found that I had courage. I realize today that God can multiply gifts if we cooperate.

Vatican II said that each of us is called by our baptism to service in the Church and the world. Most of us are getting better at serving inside the Church. Most of us have learned that we can read or sing or minister at the altar. What is still left to be done is working in the world. Many people are afraid to share their faith or to stand up for that which is right in the world. We think that we are forcing our religion on others or that we won't be liked if we seem "too religious." That is the area that still needs our further work. Let us ask the Spirit to help each of us to learn what our gifts are and then to use them to bring forth the Kingdom. It is crucial that everyone take up the challenge. It doesn't matter whether you have been given many talents or few, what is important is using whatever God has given you for His work. Amen.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Proverbs 31:10-31

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Matthew 25:14-30

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賢淑的妻子就是善用天主恩寵的婦女

內 容： 31:10-31 是一首讚美詩，從男性的角度，描繪了一位理想賢淑的妻子應有的美德和才藝。

上下文： 31:10-31 是全本箴言的結尾，回應了起初對智慧的描述。在起初智慧被擬人化為女性，呼喚男仕找尋她（1:20-33;8:1-36;9:1-6）。在結束時是一個真實的（雖然理想化了）妻子，是年青人所尋之妻的模範。這個賢淑的妻子，可以說是第一至九章所描述的智慧化身。智慧豐富的施與，透過這勤勞的妻子帶進家裡。

釋 義：「賢淑的婦女，那裡能找到呢？」（10）不是說無人能找到，而是表示她所有的美德超越一切的女子，這樣的女子實在罕有。

*「她的丈夫衷心信賴她，絕不至有所缺乏。她一生使丈夫幸福，不令他煩惱」（11-12）由於她精明能幹，她的丈夫可以對她完全信賴，把一切家務交給她管理。無論在生活的各個層面她總能勝任，一切都井井有條，一無所缺。她為丈夫帶來的只有幸福，她的辛勞不斷為丈夫帶來財富。

*「她手執紡錘，手指旋轉紗錠」（19）在工業革命以前，婦女一般要在空閒時間紡紗織布和縫衣，勤於女紅在當時是一項重要的女性美德。13 和 19 兩節表示這位妻子是不單十分能幹，而且也是一位非常勤奮勞苦的女子。

*「慷慨賙濟貧窮的人」（20）照顧窮人是智慧文學的重要美德，她慷慨表示她實行了智慧。

*「美色只是虛幻，艷麗無非泡影！」（30）妻子的價值在她持家有道，敬畏上主。美色和艷麗不足恃是因為它們會逝去，建基於此的快樂、希望，也會隨之消逝。美色和艷麗並非罪惡，只是不足以作為迎娶一個女子的理由。年青年人應尋找敬畏上主的女子作為妻子。

*「願大眾在城門口表揚她的行為」（31）城門口是人們聚集討論城中事務的地方，也是長老聚會之處。這句的意思是讓全城的所有人，都知道她的善行，她值得在公眾中有良好的聲譽和高地位。

訊 息： 聖經中的智慧不單是學習規矩與誡命，也是社會化的，涉及人與人之間的關係，故此智慧與人的日常生活息息相關。這賢妻是智慧的化身，她在日常的家庭生活中，善用了天主的恩賜，使家人得到幸福。同樣一個明智的人也會在他的生活中，善用天主賜予的恩寵，造福他人。

摘自「荒漠燃荊」