# Lesson 25 Matthew Chapter 25Eschatological Parables

Life in Christ: When did you feel closest to Our Lord this week?

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

1. A. Chapter and verse numbers were not added to the Bible until the 14th Century. Sometimes chapters are divided in the middle of a subject as is the case with Chapter 25. We are still on the subject of being prepared for the Parousia and the Last Judgment. In this parable we see a mixture of parable and allegory. The first word of this parable is important because it connects the parable with the preceding discussion. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus has been speaking the Kingdom of Heaven being “at hand.” What does the first word tell you about the Kingdom of Heaven in this context?

Matthew 25:1-13

1 Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

3 The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them,

4 but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.

5 Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

6 At midnight, there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

7 Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.

8 The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’

9 But the wise ones replied, ‘No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.’

10 While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked.

11 Afterwards the other virgins came and said, ‘Lord, Lord, open the door for us!’

12 But he said in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.’

13 Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

B Identify the characters:

* Kingdom of Heaven? • Bridegroom?
* Foolish virgins? • Wise virgins?

C What is the point of the parable?

D One of the reasons for belaboring the difference between a parable and an allegory, although, in this case there are elements of both, is that a parable has a single message or point which we identified in part C If we try to apply the parable too broadly we can come to erroneous conclusions. What would Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount and throughout His ministry tell us the reactions of the wise virgins should be in vs 9, but would miss the point of the parable?

Parable of the Talents.

1. A. God has entrusted us with many gifts. The greatest is the gift of faith described in part by Catechism 153. What is this parable telling us that we must do with our gift of faith?

Matthew 25:14-

14 “It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them.

15 To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one—to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately

16 the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five.

17 Likewise, the one who received two made another two.

18 But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master’s money.

19 After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them.

20 The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.’

21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’

22 [Then] the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.’

23 His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’

24 Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter;

25 so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.’

26 His master said to him in reply, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter?

27 Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return?

28 Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten.

29 For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

30 And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.’

Catechism 153

Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him.

B In Matthew 13, Jesus gave us the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. Taken with the Parable of the Talents, how much faith is required to share the “Master’s joy” or move a mountain? See Matthew 17:20.

Matthew 13:32-33

32 It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the ‘birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.’”

33 He spoke to them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened.”

Matthew 17:20

20 He said to them, "Because of your little faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

C Consider the usual human talents such as art or music. Consider what do one has to do with those talents to bring them to their full potential and bring joy to others. How does this help explain the harsh criticism of the man with the single talent?

Judgment of the Nations

1. The Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Judgment of the Nations are highly complementary. The first focuses on virtus fidei, the virtue of faith which is the gift from God (Catechism 153) that provides the “capacity to believe” (Pope John Paul II). The second focuses on actus fidei, the term used by the Church for the explicit, personal act of faith that transforms one who can believe into one who is a believer. In the parable, you can see the source of the Corporal Works of Mercy.

Pope John Paul II emphasizes the “personal attachment to Jesus Christ.” In the Parable of the Judgment of the Nations, Our Lord associates those actions which we perform in His Name to any who are in need to that personal attachment to Himself. These two parables directly address the roles of faith and works to salvation. Taken together, how do these parables relate the roles of faith and works in salvation addressed by St. James?

Matthew 25:31-40

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne,

32 and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

33 He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me,

36 naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’

37 Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

38When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?

39 When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’

40 And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’

Catechism 153

153…Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him.

Catechesi Tradendae, 19, Pope John Paul II

Baptized Christians who were still without any explicit personal attachment to Jesus Christ; they only have the capacity to believe placed in them by the Holy Spirit.

James 2:21-22

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?

22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works.

1. The second half of the Parable of the Judgment of the Nations shows us that charity is not optional. Neglect of the needs of our neighbor is what the Church calls “sins of omission.” In what ways are “sins of omission” as fully consequential as our active sins without repenting and accepting God’s mercy? See Catechism 1033.

Matthew 25:41-46

41 Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,

43 stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’

44 Then they will answer and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’

45 He will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’

46 And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Catechism 1033

1033 We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: "He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren. To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."