



1) Opening prayer

Father of all that is good,
keep us faithful in serving you,
for to serve you is our lasting joy.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel reading - Luke 19,11-28

Jesus said the following parable, because he was near Jerusalem and they thought that the kingdom of God was going to show itself then and there.

Accordingly he said, 'A man of noble birth went to a distant country to be appointed king and then return. He summoned ten of his servants and gave them ten pounds, telling them, "Trade with these, until I get back."

But his compatriots detested him and sent a delegation to follow him with this message, "We do not want this man to be our king." 'Now it happened that on his return, having received his appointment as king, he sent for those servants to whom he had given the money, to find out what profit each had made by trading.

The first came in, "Sir," he said, "your one pound has brought in ten." He replied, "Well done, my good servant! Since you have proved yourself trustworthy in a very small thing, you shall have the government of ten cities."

Then came the second, "Sir," he said, "your one pound has made five." To this one also he said, "And you shall be in charge of five cities."

Next came the other, "Sir," he said, "here is your pound. I put it away safely wrapped up in a cloth because I was afraid of you; for you are an exacting man: you gather in what you have not laid out and reap what you have not sown." He said to him, "You wicked servant! Out of your own mouth I condemn you. So you knew that I was an exacting man, gathering in what I have not laid out and reaping what I have not sown? Then why did you not put my money in the bank? On my return I could have drawn it out with interest."

And he said to those standing by, "Take the pound from him and give it to the man who has ten pounds." And they said to him, "But, sir, he has ten pounds . . ." "I tell you, to

everyone who has will be given more; but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has.

"As for my enemies who did not want me for their king, bring them here and execute them in my presence." '

When he had said this he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

3) Reflection

- The Gospel today presents the parable of the talents, in which Jesus speaks of the gifts that persons receive from God. All persons have some qualities; they receive some gift or know something which they can teach to others. Nobody is only a pupil, nobody is only a professor. We all learn from one another.

- Luke 19, 11: The key to understand the story of the parable. To introduce the parable Luke says the following: "At that time Jesus went on to tell a parable because he was near Jerusalem and the disciples thought that the Kingdom of God was going to show itself then and there". In this initial information, Luke presents three reasons which led Jesus to tell this parable: (a) The acceptance which is to be given to the excluded, referring to the episode of Zacchaeus, the excluded one whom Jesus accepts. (b) The getting closer to the Passion, Death and Resurrection, because he said that Jesus was near Jerusalem where shortly he would be condemned to death (c) The imminent coming of the Kingdom of God, because the persons who accompanied Jesus thought that the Kingdom of God would come later.

- Luke 19, 12-14: The beginning of the parable. "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to be appointed king and then return. He summoned ten of his servants and gave them ten pounds telling them, 'Trade with these, until I get back'". Some scholars think that in this Parable Jesus is referring to Herod who seventy years before (40 AD), went to Rome to receive the title and power of King of Palestine. People did not like Herod and did not want him to become king, because the experience that they had of him was one of commander to repress the rebellions in Galilee against Rome and it was tragic and painful. This is why they said: "We do not want this man to be our king!" To this same Herod they would apply the last phrase of the Parable: "As for my enemies who did not want me for their king, bring them here and execute them in my presence". In fact, Herod killed many people.

- Luke 19, 15-19: The account given by the first employees who received one hundred silver coins. The story also informs that Herod, after having obtained the title of king, returned to Palestine to take over the power. In the Parable, the king called his servants to whom he had given one hundred silver coins to know how much they had gained. The first one came in and said: Sir, your talent has produced ten other talents. He replied, "Well done, my good servant! Since you have proved yourself trustworthy in a very small thing, you shall have the government of ten cities. Then came the second one, and said, 'Sir, your talent has brought five other talents. To this one also he said, 'And you shall be in charge of five cities'.

According to the story, Herod the Great and his son Herod Antipas, both knew how to deal with money and to promote the persons who helped them. In the parable, the king

gave ten cities to the servant who multiplied by ten the talent he had received and five cities to the one who multiplied it by five.

- Luke 19, 20-23: The rendering of account by the servant who gained nothing. The third servant arrived and said: 'Sir, here is your talent I put it away safely wrapped up in a cloth, because I was afraid of you, for you are an exacting man, you gather in what you have not laid out and reap what you have not sown. In this phrase we have a mistaken idea of God which is criticized by Jesus. The servant considers God a severe master. Before such a God, the human being is afraid and hides himself behind the exact and poor observance of the law. He thinks that acting in this way, he will not be punished by the severity of the legislator. In reality, such a person does not believe in God, but believes only in self, in his observance of the law. He closes himself up in self; he draws away from God and is not able to be concerned about others. He becomes incapable to grow as a free person. This false image of God isolates the human being, kills the community, extinguishes the joy and impoverishes life. The king answers: Out of your own mouth I condemn you, wicked servant!' You knew that I was an exacting man, gathering what I have not laid out and reaping what I have not sown? Then why did you not put my money in the bank? On my return I could have drawn it out with interest. The servant is not coherent with the image he had of God. If he imagined God so severe, at least he should have put the money in the bank. He is not condemned by God, but by the mistaken idea that he had conceived of God and which renders him more immature and more fearful than what he should have been. One of the things which has more influences in the life of the people is the idea that we have of God. Among the Jews of the line of the Pharisees, some imagined God as a severe judge who treated them according to the merit gained by the observance. That caused fear and prevented persons from growing. And above all, it prevented them from opening a space within themselves to accept the new experience of God which Jesus communicated.

- Luke 19, 24-27: Conclusion for all. "And he said to those standing by: Take the talent from him and give it to the man who has ten talents. And they answered: But, Sir, he already has ten!" I tell you, to everyone who has will be given more, but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has. As for my enemies who did not want me for their king, bring them here and execute them in my presence". The man orders to take away the one hundred coins and to give them to the one who has one thousand, because "To everyone who has will be given more, but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has". In this last phrase is found the key which clarifies the Parable. In the symbolism of the parable, the silver coin of the king are the goods of the Kingdom of God, that is, all that which makes the person grow and which reveals God's presence: love, service, sharing. Anyone who closes self in self out of fear to lose what he has, he will lose even the little that he has. Therefore, the person who does not think only of self, but gives himself/herself to others, will grow and will receive super abundantly, all that he/she has given and much more: "one hundred times more, a hundred fold" (Mk 10, 30). "Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, anyone who has the courage to lose it, will save it" (Lk 9, 24; 17, 33; Mt 10, 39; 16, 25; Mk 8, 35). The third servant is afraid and does nothing. He does not want to lose anything and because of this he gains

nothing. He loses even the little he had. The Kingdom is a risk. Anyone who does not run, runs a risks, he loses the Kingdom!

- Luke 19, 28: Return to the triple initial key. At the end, Luke closes this theme with the following information: "Having said these things Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem". This final information recalls the triple key given at the beginning: the acceptance to be given to the excluded, the closeness of the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus in Jerusalem and the idea of the imminent coming of the Kingdom. To those who thought that the Kingdom of God was about to arrive, the parable orders to change the way of looking, the vision. The Kingdom of God arrives, yes but through the death and the Resurrection of Jesus which will take place within a short time in Jerusalem. And the reason for the death and resurrection is the acceptance which Jesus gives to the excluded, for example to Zacchaeus and to so many others. He disturbs the great and they eliminated him condemning him to death, and death on the cross.

4) Personal questions

- In our community, do we try to know and to value and appreciate the gifts of every person? Sometimes, the gifts of others cause jealousy and competitiveness in others. How do we react?
- In our community, is there a space where persons can show or manifest their gifts?

5) Concluding prayer

Praise God in his holy place,
praise him in the heavenly vault of his power,
praise him for his mighty deeds,
praise him for all his greatness. (Ps 150,1-2)