

THIRTY THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (11/15-16/2008)

Proverbs 31/10-31, Psalm 128, 1 Thessalonians 5/1-6, Matthew 25/14-30

At first glance, I can't see much of a connection between the beautiful reading from *Proverbs*, and the Gospel story about the master and his servants in today's liturgy.

Actually, the passage from *Proverbs* that is read in the Mass is somewhat shortened and is much longer in the Bible.

It extols the virtues of the worthy wife and mother whose value is beyond reckoning.

(On Mothers' Day, this reading should be mandatory for all of us.)

The final words of the passage are most appropriate: "*Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her a reward for her labors, and let her works praise her at the city gates.*"

Most of the books of the Bible are written from a man's point of view, always of course under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Some commentators believe the so-called Wisdom literature (*Job, Psalm, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom and Sirach*), because it seems to have originated outside the Holy Land, has more feminine influence than other parts of the Bible.

Be that as it may, take time to read the whole passage in the Bible on your own.

On the other hand, the Gospel is all about working men and their master and making money.

The present state of the economy makes us all super-sensitive to issues such as work and money.

Jesus, however, is more interested in the light this parable throws on the Kingdom of God than he is on aggressive investments and interest bearing savings accounts.

A man entrust three employees with sums of money when he leaves on a business trip.

Perhaps he is testing their creativity with the money.

At any rate, two of the men act appropriately and make additional money for their master.

One is so frightened by the possibility of failure that he buries the money, and, when the master returns, he gives him back the original money coupled with an explanation as to why he didn't take chances with it.

The master is pleased at the first two men and very angry at the third man.

So where is the Kingdom in all this back and forth?

As we draw closer to the end of the liturgical year, the Church asks us to consider the end things in our own life.

We are to realize that life is short, and we are given only so many opportunities to do God's will.

In the parable, two men respond to the challenge, one does not.

Our question, in the light of the parable, must always be whether we are responding properly to the presence of God, the Kingdom, in our lives.

Do we see God's Word as a challenge here and now, or as an option we can entertain and then bury in the ground for some other time?

There are consequences, no matter which way we go.

I said at the outset that I wasn't getting the relationship between the first and third reading.

It may be as simple as the fact that the good woman of the passage seizes every opportunity to love her husband and children and neighbors. She is first in line for the Kingdom.