

Worth the Risk

November 15, 2020, 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Gospel of Matthew 25:14-30
Fr. Brad

When I first looked up the readings to prepare my homily I read the second reading first and what stood out most was the notion of not falling asleep but keeping awake and sober.

And I always initially default to thinking about the struggle of trying to stay awake when I'm tired and this 'staying sober', hmm, I like to have a glass of wine or a scotch truth be known, maybe not in the sense of overindulging but, nevertheless, somewhat regularly.

We all know that keeping awake literally is impossible as we need our sleep, and if we go by the notion of everything in moderation, and that Jesus and the apostles were known to take wine as an everyday part of the meals, we know it's meant in a different sense.

Then I thought, in what ways does St. Paul mean for followers of Christ to stay awake? And I thought about how easily distracted we are as human beings How do we stay awake and alert.

Then I thought of the value of continually pondering little life lessons ...sort of like the proverbs, little life lessons, hundreds of them for many of life's struggles, little gems of wisdom with which we can pray and meditate over.

Then I looked at the first reading and saw that it was indeed from Proverbs.

Staying awake in the spiritual sense has nothing to do with sleep deprivation but about nurturing relationship.

In today's gospel, Matthew is addressing people who are fascinated with or obsessed by the end times (the second coming), so much so, that they are sitting on their hands waiting rather than being involved in the world.

....thus, today, the teaching about the talents and using them.

Somehow people had come to think that second coming was just around the corner and it was not worth getting involved in the life in this world anymore. But that's not the way our God teaches us to live....whatever our *station* or *stage* of life.

Whether the second coming is later today or years and years into the future, it will come. It is not up to us to obsess about it or to spend a lot of time speculating on the timeline. That's not the kind of vigilance the Gospel refers to.

So maybe it is a fear of getting involved because we feel a certain futility in the temporal world or maybe it's this....because we are afraid to take a risk because we might fail or be hurt....Maybe that's part of the reason we may be tempted not to use the gifts we have been given.

But we need to know this....

Using our gifts for the sake of others - - is more than about making it in society; More than about whether we succeed or fail at a task or in reaching out effectively and gaining results, more than about what people will think of us if we do fail; it is about taking the risk simply because we care.

Reaching out to others and loving them is a risk because we risk being hurt or rejected. By taking on a new project, we risk failing.

But none of this should stop us.

There are countless ways of being an instrument of God's love in the world that do not require we be super intelligent, super productive, famous, world renowned, the picture of physical health, beautiful, rich.

It starts with loving and caring with whatever we have to offer and that makes all the difference. It's recognizing and allowing ourselves to experience God's mercy and care for us that we are able then to do the same.

What is asked is that we avail ourselves to those in need, and it starts by recognizing need where it exists and reaching out - - reaching out without regard for payback or reward. And whether or not we think they deserve it or not.

What we are ultimately able to do may not be earth shattering, but the Gospel message urges us to do something. There will be some that will produce 100 fold some tenfold some less. But God has invested in us not so that we can just sit on our hands - - that's not the kind of waiting for the second coming God is talking about.

Yes we are to be awake, waiting, and vigilant and we do that through our involvement in our relationships and engagement with life itself.

We're not called to be obsessed by the timing of it all....but to live each moment in the presence of God, and in accepting and adapting to the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

For many of our people, elder and otherwise, who are alone during this pandemic, involvement in life is through patience and long suffering and giving God praise for having gifted us with life itself regardless of our circumstance.

Whether we are pondering the proverbs in prayerful reflection or reaching out to another person out of concern, we are nurturing a caring heart and thereby, using our talents.

As tiring as this pandemic is, with the help of God may we persevere in caring and preserving in our gratitude for the gift of life.