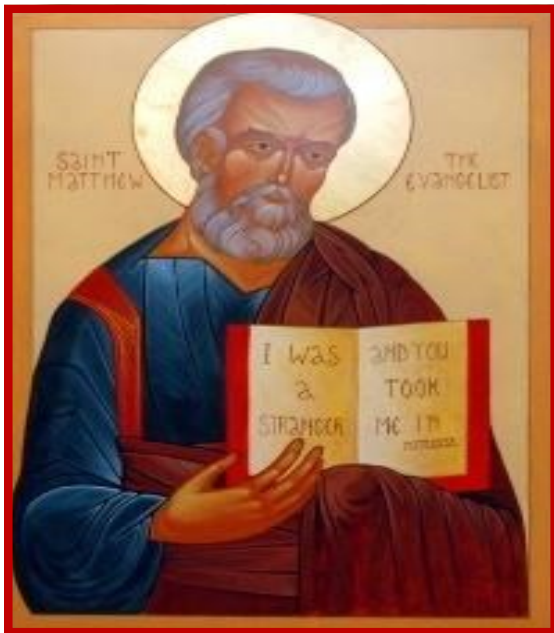


will impiously and blasphemously throw the blame of their damnation upon Him. And thus they, in hell, being driven to madness by the severity and eternal duration of their torments, will continually blaspheme God, and Christ, and the Saints, as though they were the authors of their sufferings, directly or indirectly.

Verses 26, 27- *His lord answered and said unto him, &c.* This likewise is an emblem, and only signifies how we ought by all means to increase the grace of God. Observe that they are called *money-changers*, who make gain by exchange, and by lending and borrowing. This gain is lawful in the way of exchange and merchandise. It is unlawful in the way of lending upon interest, and is the sin of usury. Wherefore the Lord in this place does not speak so much according to the abstract right of the matter, as parabolically, partly because of the common practice of nations (for usury was allowed in many nations, especially among the Jews, who think that God permitted them to exact it from the Gentiles, in Deut. xxiii. 19), partly as a deduction from the words of the slothful servant, who attributed to his master the avarice of extorting money, by fair means or foul, from himself or others. This passage may, however, be accommodated to what is signified by the parable in the following manner—that God requires of us interest, as it were, for His gifts and graces, but that He will render us far greater interest of glory in Heaven. Hence the saying, “If thou wilt lend, lend unto God.” Also it is said in Prov. (xix. 17), “He that hath mercy upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and what he layeth out it shall be paid him again.”



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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Matthew 25: 1-27

Douay Rheims Version

The parable of the ten virgins and of the talents. The description of the last judgment.

1. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride.
2. And five of them were foolish and five wise.
3. But the five foolish, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them.
4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps.
5. And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept.
6. And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh. Go ye forth to meet him.
7. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

His kingdom, but in greater or less degrees according to the labour and merit of each.

Our Salmeron is of opinion that it is here intimated, and tacitly promised, that the Saints in Heaven shall be set by God to preside over the places in which they laboured while on earth, so that in those places they may heal diseases and work miracles, because they have deserved this by their labours. That thus S. James works miracles at Compostella and in Spain; S. Dionysius at Paris and in Gaul; S. Ambrose at Milan; S. Boniface in Germany.

Verses 22, 23- *He also that had received two talents, &c.* The Arab. has, *And these are the five talents which I have gained, as though the servant showed them, and offered them to his master.* The same thing is said as in vers. 20 and 21, save that there were five talents, here there are two. For, as S. Jerome says, "The Lord does not regard so much the greatness of the gain, as the good-will and the desire. And it is possible that he who receives two talents, by trading diligently with them, may merit more than he who receives five, and uses them in a lukewarm manner."

Thus S. Nicolas Tolentinus passed his life in constant prayer and the practice of austerities. He used to fast on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays on bread and water, in honour of the Blessed Virgin, and used to punish himself by means of an iron chain. Six months before his death he heard daily at vespers angelic songs, which invited him to the marriage feast of the Lamb in Heaven. Just before his death he was filled with a marvellous joy. Being asked the reason, he said, "My Lord Jesus Christ, leaning upon His mother and our father Augustine, is saying to me, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord." Presently joining and lifting up his hands, and raising his eyes to the Cross, he said, "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." And thus with joyful countenance he resigned his soul to God, A.D. 1306, on the 10th of September.

Verses 24, 25- *Then he which had received the one talent, &c.* There is an emblem here which only pertains to the embellishment of the parable. For this, says Frank Lucas, is the way in which lazy servants excuse their idleness, throwing it upon the severity of their masters. As if they said, "You are not willing to lose, but always want to gain. And if gain is not brought you, you take away the property of your poor servants for any reason, or none."

It is to be observed that the reprobate in the Day of Judgment, when they behold the Saints thus rewarded by Christ and themselves sentenced to Gehenna, will, out of despair and madness, inveigh against Christ the Judge, and will shamelessly reproach Him for His too great severity, and

Verse 17- *And likewise he that had received two, &c.* This man also, by diligently and correspondingly using his talent, that is, co-operating with grace, doubled it.

Verse 18- *But he that had received one . . . hid his lord's money; Arab. buried his lord's silver.* To bury a talent is, through negligence and sloth, not to use or exercise the grace bestowed upon one. Here observe, that this burying of his talent is ascribed to him who only received one talent. This is not because others, who have received more, do not often do the same, but in order that we may understand that if he, who had only misused his one talent, was thus severely punished by his master, far sharper will be the Lord's censure and punishment of those who have misused more and greater talents. Wherefore Paul says, "We exhort you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. vi. 11). And again, "His grace in me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all" (1 Cor. xv. 10); and, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel."

Let those who do not use genius, learning, prudence, or other gifts of God, for their own or others' benefits, on account of sloth, or fear of sinning, or for any similar reason, note this. For of them will Christ demand an exact account of these gifts in the Day of Judgment. Observe also, that those who have received few talents, often, through sloth, leave them idle, and, as it were, bury them; whilst those who have received more are stimulated by them, and either use them rightly and meritoriously, or else abuse them to vanity. And these last are punished not so much for letting their talents lie idle, as for misusing them! Thus we commonly see that those who have great powers of intellect, if they do not employ them for good purposes, do so for bad.

Verse 19- *After a long time, &c.* This reckoning Christ makes with every one severally at death, and the particular judgment. He will make it publicly in the general Judgment.

Verse 20- *And he that had received five talents came near, &c.* Hear how pathetically S. Gregory depicts this scene: "In that great examination the whole multitude of the elect and the reprobate will be led forth, and it will be shown what each hath done. Then Peter will take his stand, with Judæa converted at his side. There Paul, with, I might almost say, a converted world. There will be Andrew with Achaia, John with Asia, Thomas with India, which they will bring into the presence of the Judge. There will appear all the rams of the Lord's flock, with the souls which were given them for their hire. When, therefore, so many shepherds with their flocks shall come before the eyes of the Eternal Pastor, what shall we, miserable ones, be able to say, if we return before the Lord empty, we who have the name of pastors, but have no sheep, which we have fed, to present?"

Verse 21- *His lord said unto him, Well done, &c.* Luke has (xix. 19), *Be thou over five cities.* The parable is taken from the idea of a king, who is accustomed to reward his faithful servants by setting them over many cities. It signifies also that the Saints, who use diligently the grace that God gives them, will be sharers in the glory and joy of

8. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.

9. The wise answered, saying: Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves.

10. Now whilst they went to buy the bridegroom came: and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage. And the door was shut.

11. But at last came also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us.

12. But he answering said: Amen I say to you, I know you not.

13. Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.

14. For even as a man going into a far country called his servants and delivered to them his goods;

15. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to every one according to his proper ability: and immediately he took his journey.

16. And he that had received the five talents went his way and traded with the same and gained other five.

17. And in like manner he that had received the two gained other two.

18. But he that had received the one, going his way, digged into the earth and hid his lord's money.

19. But after a long time the lord of those servants came and reckoned with them.

20. And he that had received the five talents coming, brought other five talents, saying: Lord, thou didst deliver to me five talents. Behold I have gained other five over and above.

21. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22. And he also that had received the two talents came and said: Lord, thou deliveredst two talents to me. Behold I have gained other two.

23. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24. But he that had received the one talent, came and said: Lord, I know that thou art a hard man; thou reapest where thou hast not sown and gatherest where thou hast not strewed.

25. And being afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth. Behold here thou hast that which is thine.

26. And his lord answering, said to him: Wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not and gather where I have not strewed.

27. Thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers: and at my coming I should have received my own with usury.

28. Take ye away therefore the talent from him and give it him that hath ten talents.

29. For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound: but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away.

30. And the unprofitable servant, cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
31. And when the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty.
32. And all nations shall be gathered together before him: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats:
33. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.
34. Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
35. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in:
36. Naked, and you covered me: sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me.
37. Then shall the just answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry and fed thee: thirsty and gave thee drink?
38. Or when did we see thee a stranger and took thee in? Or naked and covered thee?
39. Or when did we see thee sick or in prison and came to thee?
40. And the king answering shall say to them: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.
41. Then he shall say to them also that shall be on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.
42. For I was hungry and you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty and you gave me not to drink.
43. I was a stranger and you took me not in: naked and you covered me not: sick and in prison and you did not visit me.
44. Then they also shall answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to thee?
45. Then he shall answer them, saying: Amen: I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me.
46. And these shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into life everlasting.

Verse 1- *Then . . . which went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride* (Vulg.). *And the bride* is not found in the Greek, nor in S. Chrysostom. It is the reading of the Latin and the Syriac versions, and of Origen, Hilary, and S. Augustine (*Epist.* 120).

Then: when Christ shall return unexpectedly to judgment.

The Kingdom of heaven: that is, the Church militant, which shall then be about to triumph. The meaning is, At that time shall it be with members of the Church as if ten virgins were preparing themselves for a marriage feast. For although the damned, as being already in hell, are no longer members of the Church, yet because they were members of it in this life, they are brought to hear the sentence of the judge. There is

Wherefore it does not follow from these words of Christ that “the gifts of God are conferred upon every man, according to the measure of his merit,” according to the charge which Calvin calumniously brings against the Catholics. For it is one thing to be by nature capable of receiving the gifts of God; it is another thing to merit those gifts. It is one thing to be able to possess charity; it is another thing to possess it. This is Prosper’s teaching (*lib. 2, de Vocatione Gentium, c. 2*).

And straightway took his journey. Luke adds, that Christ, before He went away, after dividing the pounds, or talents, amongst His servants, said, *Make merchandise until I come.* He meant, “Increase these My talents by labouring diligently all your life long, and bring Me what you have gained when I return to judgment.” By and by he adds, *But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.* The *citizens* of Christ are the Jews, who rejected Him, who would not acknowledge Him as their King and Messiah, who said, “*We have no king but Cæsar,*” as they cried before Pilate when they asked that Christ might be crucified. And again, after His resurrection, they persecuted the Apostles and Christians who preached and spread the kingdom of Christ. Wherefore concerning the righteous chastisement which came upon the Jews, Luke subjoins that Christ said, “*But those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign, bring them hither, and slay them before me.*” Christ did this when He slew the Jews by the hands of Titus. He will do it yet more in the Day of Judgment, when He will punish them with death eternal.

Verse 16- *Then he . . . five talents, &c.* To gain talents is to increase the gifts of God by using and increasing them, especially by means of good works, and helping our neighbour to increase and multiply the grace of God in ourselves and others. This parable intimates that every one ought to co-operate with the grace of God with all his might. For example, he who has, as it were, five degrees of charity, ought to exercise charity in a corresponding degree of intensity. By this means he will gain from God five degrees more. Again, by exercising charity thus increased as ten degrees, in acts of corresponding intensity, he may gain other ten decrees, and possess, as it were, twenty degrees. And so on, marvellously doubling, and multiplying the gain of his talents, that is to say, the degrees of his charity. Let it be, therefore, that a man by his charity should gain few or none to Christ by preaching, yet will he have the same merit and reward of his charity and preaching as if he had converted multitudes. The conversion of others is not often in our power, but the merit of doing so is always in our power.

Moraliter: S. Gregory says (*Hom. 9, in Evang.*), “This passage of the Gospel admonishes us anxiously to beware lest we, who seem to have received somewhat more than others in this world, should, for that reason, be judged more severely by the Maker of the world. For in proportion as gifts are increased, so is the account to be rendered of the gifts.”

God,-as the gift of tongues, miracles, the apostolate, zeal for souls, power in preaching. Timothy received, as it were, two,-knowledge of the Scriptures, and the bishopric of Ephesus. But Onesimus one, that is to say, zeal to minister to Paul in prison at Rome. By means of this he merited many others, as the bishopric of Colosse, the conversion of many, and martyrdom.

You will ask, in what manner does God distribute these His gifts according to every one's ability (Gr. *δύναμιν*), *power, strength*? I answer, this is partly an *emblem* pertaining only to the adornment of the parable. For so among men, prudent masters are wont to entrust their goods to servants in such a manner that they trust more to him who possesses greater prudence and industry, less to him who has less. For it is certain, in opposition to the Pelagians, that primary grace is not given according to natural powers and merits, yea, that there is no natural disposition to grace.

But, in part, this pertains to the meaning of the parable. For favours and stations given *gratis*, such as magistracies, the episcopate, priesthood, &c., God often confers in accordance with natural powers, and does not raise any one to such a condition unless he be either suited to it by nature, or unless He Himself makes him fit. Men do the same when they choose any one for a shepherd, a bishop, a prelate. Indeed, when God determines to bestow any permanent gift whatsoever upon any one, He first gives him the capacity, or natural or supernatural proportional disposition or merit, by means of which he becomes suitable for the bestowment of this gift, or may make himself fitted for it. Thus God gave to Moses a zeal on behalf of his nation, that He might thereby dispose him to deliver them out of Egypt. So also He gave S. Paul a zeal for the Mosaic law, that He might make use of him when he was purified for the propagation of the Law of Christ. So He instilled into SS. Mary Magdalene and Peter an immense contrition for sin, that He might, through it, dispose them to an immense sanctity. So it is with those whom God chooses and destines to virginity, the religious life, martyrdom, mission work in India. He first infuses into them a vehement desire, by which they fit and prepare themselves for what they have to do.

Lastly, S. Thomas (1 *p. quæst.* 62, *art.* 6) teaches that God has distributed to the angels His gifts of grace and glory, according to their natural gifts. Those who are more lofty by nature are also higher in grace and glory, And he adds, that God deals in like fashion with men. For he says, "This also happens among men, that in proportion to the fervour of their conversion to God, greater grace and glory are given them." Often, indeed, God acts in a way the reverse of this, and gives greater gifts of grace to persons of weak intellect-to the ignorant and despised-than He does to the learned, the witty, and the honourable. Thus He did to S. Francis, S. Catherine of Sienna, S. Simeon Stylites, and many others. After a like fashion God distributes His gifts of grace, freely given, in accordance with His own hidden counsels. For many are set in high station who are by no means worthy of it; many are the Priests who are unfit for the Priesthood. And yet, in no persons whatsoever are nature and natural endowments a merit, or a disposition to grace.

no mention of unbelievers here, because, as S. John says, "He that believeth not is judged already."

Observe, that formerly, as now, youths were assigned to the bridegroom, to do him honour, and virgins to the bride; and these last were often ten in number. Moreover, they were accustomed to celebrate weddings at night. Then the bridegroom came about evening to the house of the bride. There he was honourably and joyfully received in the house of the parents of the bride. From thence he conducted his bride to his own house, or, if it proved too small, to the larger mansion of the nuptial feast: and there he kept his wedding. Both the youths and the virgins, carrying torches, most frequently made of white thorn, and five in number, went out to meet the bride and bridegroom, to do them honour. So Plutarch testifies (*in Problem.*). The Jews do not seem, anciently, to have made use of wax-lights or torches, but of oil lamps. This is why there is constant mention in Scripture of lamps and lanterns, never of candles. Even in the candlestick in the Temple there were lamps with oil, not candles made of wax or fat.

As to the particular application of the parable, Christ is *the Bridegroom*, the Church *the Bride*, whose espousals take place in this life, but the eternal *Marriage* shall be in the future glory of the Resurrection. The *virgins* are all believers or all Christians. They are called *virgins* because they are sound in the faith.

S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, S. Augustine, and S. Gregory understood by virgins only those and all who are literally so. But this is too narrow and restricted an interpretation. Rightly, nevertheless, does the Church in the *Divine Office* apply the words to *Virgins*, because they bear a literal application to them above others. So Jansen, Maldonatus, and others. So B. Anatolia, betrothed to Aurelian, beheld an angel, who cried aloud to her, "O virginity, which shall not be overcome of death! O virginity, who art not occupied in the works of darkness, but art ever in the light! Virginity is the royal purple, which whoso putteth on, is more glorious than others. Virginity is a precious jewel. Virginity is the immense treasure of the King. For it thieves are lying in wait. Do thou watch, and guard it carefully. Forasmuch as thou knowest thou hast more, so much the more keep it, lest thou lose it." So Ado *in Martyrolog.*, Dec. 21.

Ten virgins are spoken of, because the number ten is the symbol of totality. "They took their nuptial lamps, kindled," says Origen; "but for so great a journey to go out to meet the Bridegroom, they took no oil to keep them alight." "For when they complain," says S. Jerome, "that their lamps were going out, they show that they were partly alight."

Moreover, in Scripture, *lappidim, lamps*, mean torches, such as are used at weddings and for other purposes. These nuptial torches are wont to be carried at night before a bridegroom and bride, because they will stand

against the wind, when lamps would be immediately extinguished. Those, however, spoken of in the parable where *lamps*, properly so called, because mention is made of *oil*. They belonged to *virgins*, as torches to men. Thus Virgil says in the 4th Eclogue,

“Cut, O Mopsas, new torches: it is your wedding day.”

And Pliny says, “The thorn, most auspicious for wedding torches, is an accompaniment of the same rites, because the shepherds, who carried off the Sabine maids, made use of them for that purpose” (*lib.* 16, c. 18).

Verse 2- *Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent* (Vulg.). *Foolish*, because they acted foolishly and imprudently; for when they went out to meet the Bridegroom with burning lamps, they neglected to take the necessary oil for keeping the lamps alight.

But the prudent, &c. In the first place, SS. Jerome and Hilary by the *virgins* understand all mankind; by *the foolish*, Jews and heretics; by *the prudent*, Christians.

2d On the contrary, S. Chrysostom and others already cited consider that virgins only are to be understood; of whom *the prudent* are they who, with virginity, have the oil of charity; *the foolish*, they who are without it.

3d Lyra says, “The *prudent virgins* are Contemplatives and Religious, who have the oil of charity and a right disposition. *The foolish* are those who lack the oil, and who hunt for the vain praise and glory of men.”

4th and last. *The virgins* are all believers. The *prudent* are those who have faith together with works of mercy, charity, and other virtues: *the foolish*, who have faith alone without good works. So Origen, Hilary, *Auctor Imperfecti*.

Thus their lamps are dying out, yea, as the Syriac hath it, *they have been extinguished*; according to the words of S. James, “Faith without works is dead.” The *lamp*, therefore, is the faithful mind, or faith itself. The *oil* is good works, without which faith is dead, and, as it were, extinct; but with them, alive and burning. The light, or flame of the lamps, is charity. For this is fed by zeal for good works, just as the flame of a lamp is fed with oil. The *vessel* is conscience, or the believing soul. And this is the reason why we place a lighted candle in the hands of dying persons, denoting, or at least praying, that they may have faith with works, that like brides with burning lamps, they may worthily meet Christ the Lord, as it were their *Bridegroom*.

Verse 5- *But while the Bridegroom tarried*, &c.; Gr. *ἄρρονοντος*. Whilst Christ the Bridegroom delays to come, is the opportunity for repentance and good works, which He grants to every one in this life. Therefore does He delay the time of death and judgment. *To slumber* is to die. *To sleep* is to be dead. The meaning is, Whilst Christ defers the Day of Judgment, meanwhile the faithful begin to die one after another, and at length all are dead. Thus S. Hilary, “The delay of the Bridegroom is the time of

ascended into Heaven, being about to be absent a long time from earth and His Church. So Origen, Jerome, Bede. Others think that Christ’s going far off (*peregre*) means His transference of the preaching of the gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles by means of the Apostles, and His founding the kingdom of His Church amongst them. And this applies well to the relation of the parable by S. Luke, where it is introduced with reference to Zacchæus, a publican, and, as it were, a Gentile, to whose house Christ, leaving the Jews, brought salvation. But in such a case the whole parable of the servants and the talents would have to be restricted to the Jews. For the Master is here said to have distributed His talents before He went His long journey,—that is to say, to the Gentiles. Wherefore the former explanation is of wider scope, and so more true. By *the servants* all the faithful are to be understood, whether Jews or Gentiles. *Talents* are goods, either because the *Master*, like merchants and chapmen, had all His goods in money—in talents of gold and silver; or else because revenues and estates are called *talents*, which were valued, some at one talent, some at two, some at five talents. In like manner, in Latin, whatever is bought or valued for money is called money.

Verse 15- *And to one he gave*, &c. Instead of talents, Luke has *mnas*, or *minas*. *Mna* in Hebrew signifies *numbered* or *defined*, with reference to value, or weight of gold or silver. The root is *mana*, *he numbered*. It is the word used in Daniel v. 25, *mene*. The Hebrew *mna* was equal to about 2½ pounds. A Hebrew talent was equivalent to sixty Hebrew *mnas*.

By *talents* understand all the gifts of God, without which we can do nothing. These gifts are, I say—1st Of grace, both making grateful, such as faith, hope, charity, virginity, and all the other virtues, as well as those of grace given *gratis*—such as the power of working miracles, the Apostolate, the Priesthood, the gift of tongues, prophecy, &c. 2d Natural gifts, such as a keen intellect, a sound judgment, a sound constitution, prudence, industry, learning, eloquence. 3d External goods and gifts, as honours, riches, rank, &c. So S. Chrysostom. For all these things God distributes unequally, according to His good pleasure. And with this end in view, that each should use them for God’s glory, and the good of himself and others. For so He will increase them, both by Himself (for all habits grow by use and exercise) and also in merit and reward. For to that man there will be added crowns and coronets celestial, as of virginity, martyrdom. Moreover, there is no man who hath not received one, ay, several of these gifts of God, though one hath more, another less. For, as S. Gregory saith (*Hom.* 5, *in Evang.*), “There is no man who can say with truth, ‘I have not received a single talent. There is nothing of which I must give an account.’ For to every poor man even this shall be reckoned as a talent, that he hath received but a very little.” For to many it is a greater gift of God, and more conducive to their salvation, that they have poverty rather than wealth, sickness and not health, a humble station instead of an exalted one. Let us take as instances S. Paul, S. Timothy, S. Onesimus. S. Paul received, as it were, five talents or gifts from

Because ye, in your day, would not acknowledge Me as your Lord and your God, neither will I, in this My day, acknowledge you as My faithful sons and servants. Ye have served the devil in pleasure, now serve him in hell." Hear S. Chrysostom: "When He shall say, 'I know you not,' nothing is left but hell and intolerable torment. Yea, verily that word is more dreadful than hell." For whom God knows not, Heaven knows not, the Angels and the Blessed know not; but the devil knows him, death knows him, hell knows him. Consider that Christ, in the Day of Judgment, will show so terrible a countenance to the reprobate that (*Apoc. vi. 16, 17*) they will say "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

Verse 13- *Watch ye therefore*, &c. These words give the scope or aim and application of the parable, namely, that its object is to stimulate all the faithful to watchfulness and zeal for good works, by means of which they may prepare themselves for the day of death and judgment, which is at once imminent and uncertain. As S. Gregory says, "Forasmuch as ye know not the day of judgment, prepare the light of good works. For He who has guaranteed pardon to the penitent has not promised to-morrow to the sinner" (*Hom. 12, in Evang.*).

Wisely says R. Achabia (*in Pirke Avoth*), "Consider three things that thou mayest not sin. First, from whence thou comest. Second, whither thou goest. Third, to whom thou shalt render an account of thy life. From whence comest thou? From fetid matter. Whither goest thou? To the place of ashes and worms. To whom shalt thou render an account? To the King of kings, the Holy and the Blessed." Still more wisely says S. Augustine, "God has promised thee that in the day thou art converted, He will forget thy past sins; but He has never promised thee a to-morrow. God hath wisely made the day of death uncertain. Let every man, for his profit, think upon his last day. It is of the mercy of God that man knoweth not when he shall die. The last day lies hid, that all days may be watched." Mark well this last sentence of S. Augustine.

Verse 14- *For as a man going into a far country*, &c. (*Vulg.*). Supply from what precedes, *So shall be the coming of the Son of Man to judgment*. The word *for* denotes the scope of the parable. By it Christ would prove what He said in the verse before, *Watch ye therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour*.

The object of the parable is to show how exact an account Christ will require from the slothful in the Day of Judgment; and how great will be the reward which He will give to the diligent, who have carefully used His gifts to the glory of God. The parable is similar to that which Luke records (*xix. 11*), but with some differences. For they were spoken by Christ at different times, and with different objects. The parable in Luke was spoken before Palm Sunday; but this in S. Matthew after it, on the Tuesday before Good Friday. Hence S. Chrysostom, Euthymius, Jansen, and others think they are different parables, or rather, the same parable told in different ways. For instead of *talents*, Luke has *minæ*.

Now the man here spoken of is Christ. For Christ went a long journey when He

repentance. The sleep of them that wait is the rest of believers. And in the time of repentance is the temporal death of all men."

Verse 6- *And at midnight*, &c. The Arabic is, "*It was midnight, and a voice cried out*. This was the voice of the companions of the Bridegroom, who went before him, as he was bringing his bride from her house, and drawing nigh his own. This cry denotes the archangel's trumpet, which awakes the dead, of which I have spoken in the previous chapter.

It was to this S. Laurence Justinian, the first patriarch of Venice, was alluding, when he said in dying, "Up till now, children, all has been jest: now it is earnest indeed. The Bridegroom is at hand; we must go to meet Him." Then lifting up his eyes to Heaven, he said, "I come to Thee, O good Jesu. This day have I ever had before mine eyes. Thou, Lord, knowest." Then, with joyful countenance, he rendered up his pure soul to God, going to meet Christ in Heaven.

From this which is here said, that this cry is made *at midnight*, SS. Chrysostom, Jerome, and Euthymius think it probable that the second Advent of Christ will take place at midnight, and come upon men sleeping and unawares. S. Jerome says that this was an Apostolic tradition, and that this was the reason why formerly at Easter the people were not allowed to depart out of Church before midnight; because, as in the olden time, Christ came into Egypt at midnight to destroy the first-born, and deliver the Hebrews; so it was believed that Christ would come at the same time to judge all men. But this is a doubtful matter. For others, with equal, or even greater probability, think that Christ will come in the morning. For He is the Father of light, and He will execute His judgment openly in the light before the whole world, so that there shall be no place of darkness in which to take refuge. What is meant therefore by *midnight* is, that Christ the Judge shall come when men are not thinking of it, when they are, as it were, sleeping.

Verse 7- *Then all those virgins*, &c. At the sound of the Archangel's trumpet, all Christians shall rise, and shall be anxious with what mind and conscience they shall go to the Judge. As *Auctor Imperfecti* says, "They shall examine their faith, they shall consider their works, they shall interrogate their conscience." "For," as S. Augustine says (*Serm. 23, de Verbis Dom.*), "they began to trim their lamps, means nothing else but to prepare to render an account of their works to God." But S. Hilary says, "The taking up the lamps is the return of the soul to the body; the light is a bright conscience of good works, which is, as it were, contained in the vessel of the body."

S. Montanus and his fellow-martyrs, disciples of S. Cyprian, received in a vision a warning from God of their martyrdom by means of lamps. "One of them, whose name was Reno, saw them, in his sleep, led out one by one.

As they came forth, lamps were given to each. And no one came forth without a lamp going before him. And when we had come forth with our lamps, he awoke, and related to us the dream. Then were we glad, trusting that we should walk with Christ, who is a lantern to our feet, and the Word of God. Immediately afterwards we were dragged before the procurator." (See their *Acta* in Surias, Feb. 4.)

Verse 8- *But the foolish, &c.* This belongs to the *emblema* of the parable. For, with reference to what is signified by it, the reprobate in the Day of Judgment will not ask for the oil of good works from the elect; for they will know that they will neither give nor be able to give it to them. For then shall every one be judged by the works which he hath done in this life before death. This *emblema*, then, is introduced to express that the repentance of the reprobate will be too late, when, after death, they behold the dreadful judgment of God hanging over them. Too late will they grieve that they in this life neglected goodness. Too late will they wish that they had loved virtue. But it will be in vain. They will not be able to procure either the works or the help of the elect. For there will be neither time for working, nor the help and prayers of the Saints. Yea, in that terrible judgment, there will be no one who will appear to have any confidence in himself, or in good works.

Our lamps are gone out. In truth they were extinguished, because they had died in a state of mortal sin. Yet they say, *are going our (extinguuntur)*, because in this life their souls seemed, through their common profession of the true faith, and through participation of the Sacraments, to be alive. But then, that is, in death and judgment, when all those things are vanishing away, they will see that they are extinct. S. Augustine says (*Serm. 23, de Verb. Domini*), "Before those virgins slept, it is not said that their lamps were being extinguished. Wherefore, then, were they alight? It was because they did not lack the praise of men. But in the presence of the Bridegroom, that is, Christ the Judge, they will be extinguished, because Christ will illuminate the hidden things of darkness, and then shall every one have praise of God (1 *Cor.* iv. 5), not of men." For to the slothful and reprobate will be confusion.

The words *are gone out* signify that charity, which is the flame of the lamps, that is, of souls, is nourished by good works, as by oil. When, therefore, they are withdrawn, it is extinguished. This is because many virtuous works are commanded by God, such as are all those which are commanded in the Decalogue. If, therefore, any one does not fulfil what God has commanded, he loses the grace and love of God. For charity, without the exercise of good works, fades and languishes. And then, when any temptation attacks him, a man easily glides into mortal sin, by which charity is extinguished. Dost thou wish then to secure the grace of God, yea, to grow in the friendship and love of God? Be thou very earnest in all good works. For by these charity is constantly nourished and strengthened. It grows and increases.

Verse 9- *The wise answered, &c.* The Arabic is, *we have not enough.* S. Augustine says of these words of the prudent virgins, "This is not the answer of persons giving advice, but of those who decide. For they were not wise of themselves, but the wisdom in them was that of which it is written (*Prov.* i. 24), 'Because I called, and ye refused . . . I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh,

when that whereof ye were afraid cometh upon you.'" And as S. Jerome says upon this passage, "In the Day of Judgment no one's virtues will be able to give any assistance to other men's faults." And the *Interlinear Gloss* adds, "The wise say this not from covetousness, but from fear. For in that day the testimony of each shall scarcely suffice for himself, much less for himself and his neighbour also." S. Gregory adds, "The sellers of oil are flatterers. For they who, when any favour has been received, offer with their vain praises the brightness of glory, sell, as it were, oil. This is the oil of which the Psalmist says, 'Let not the oil of the sinner make fat my head'" (Vulg.).

Verse 10- *But whilst they were going . . . with him to the marriage.* Syr. *to the house of the choir*, because at weddings there were choirs of singers and dancers. This, too, is a figure of speech, signifying that in this life is the time for repentance and good works. And this time is ended by death. "For," says S. Augustine, "after judgment there is no place open for prayers or merits." And Origen says, "They who, when they ought to have learned what was profitable, neglected to do so, at the close of life, when they wish to learn, are seized by death." He adds that they who sell are Teachers; buying is receiving: the price is perseverance. Moreover, because marriage joy is, among men, the chief of all, the celestial happiness of the elect is here likened to it. Wherefore S. Hilary says, "Marriage is the putting on of immortality, when the soul is united to the Word of God as her Bridegroom."

Hear what S. Adelinus relates of S. Opportuna, the Abbess. "When S. Opportuna was very sick, there came to her SS. Cecilia and Lucy. 'Hail, Cecilia and Lucy, my sisters,' she cried; 'what does the Virgin Mary, the Queen of all, bid her handmaid do?' 'She is awaiting,' they answer, 'your presence in Heaven, that you may be united to her Son. Therefore you must be decked with a crown of glory, and meet, with burning lamp, the Bridegroom and the Bride.' When, therefore, she beheld the Virgin coming to her, and, as it were, embracing her, she gave up her spirit into her hands, to be beatified with everlasting glory."

Verse 11- *But, last of all, come the other virgins, &c.* (Vulg.). "But what does it profit," says S. Jerome, "to invoke with your voice Him whom you deny by your works?" It means, then, that the reprobate will, at that time, be struck with the utmost anxiety and terror, and turn themselves in every direction, now with prayers imploring mercy of the Judge, now deploring the negligence of their life past, now giving up hope of salvation. As *Auctor Imperfecti* says, "There will be no profit in the confession, forced by necessity, of him who never once voluntarily confessed." Read the pathetic wailings of the reprobate, graphically depicted by the wise man (*Wisdom* v. 1, &c.).

Verse 12- *But He answered, &c.* "I do not acknowledge you as mine.