

“LIVE in His Kingdom”

These are tough times. We are all becoming weary from the pandemic that hangs over our lives. We’ve been waiting since March for things to go back to “normal” – and now, eight months later – it seems like we’re not living, we’re just surviving.

Everything has been put on hold. Time is being wasted. Elderly people have told me that this isn’t how they want to live with the time they have left. It’s as if – everything has been buried in the ground.

To us, living in these days – Jesus comes and speaks His Word into our ears – telling us what “the kingdom of heaven is like. The Kingdom of Heaven – that’s where the King reigns – and with the coming of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, the King now reigns here on earth. Heaven reigns on earth.

The parable that Jesus speaks to us – reveals what God’s heavenly reign on earth is like – “it is like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.” The man going away on a journey is Jesus Himself. He foretells His ascension into heaven – and, as we see in the parable – He will come back again.

Having ascended into heaven, Jesus does not want you to put everything on hold until He comes again – He wants you to LIVE! He has entrusted His property, His talents – to you! Don’t bury what He has left to you – use it! For in so doing – heaven reigns on earth.

In other words, the man who goes on a journey continues to be at work. Jesus, who before His ascension promised – I will be with you always – is present and active, ruling and reigning over all things.

So, what Has the ascended Jesus left with us? What is “His property” – these talents left with His servants? What are the treasures of the kingdom of heaven? The greatest treasure of the kingdom is LIFE itself – a life that has no end – the life that we were created to live, as it was in the beginning, a “very good” life.

And how does one receive this treasure? Through the forgiveness of sins – for where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is this LIFE and salvation.

Jesus has entrusted this treasure to you – and for you – so that you may LIVE. That is why, before He ascends, He leaves you with the following: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.”

Baptism and teaching have been entrusted to us. They are the very means by which Jesus forgives all our sins – giving us the treasures of His kingdom. Don’t bury them – use them – for by such means, Jesus Himself is at work.

To His servants, His pastors, He says – “Preach you the Word’ – and promises – “He who hears you, hears me.” “Receive the Holy Spirit,” He says, “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Through the preaching of His Word – the man who has gone on a journey preaches to you. Through His Absolution – Jesus is here on earth – reigning over your sin, setting you free from captivity, to LIVE.

“Take eat, this is my body ... take drink, this is my blood” – given and shed for you – so that you may LIVE. With my blood, I redeem you from all your sin – so that you may be my own, and live under me in my kingdom. In this Supper, I’m giving you the greatest treasure of the kingdom of heaven – LIFE without end – my very own life, risen from the dead, living and reigning to all eternity.

The Master has left His property with you so that you may use them and live! He has given you to live a life of boldness and courage – not one of fear. He has given you to live victoriously – not defeated. He has given you to live a life of mercy – forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

In all this, the man who is going on a journey – and will return one day – continues to be present and active – working through His property, His talents, His means of grace – for the benefit of those who live under Him in His kingdom.

Like the five wise virgins we heard about last week – so the servant who received five talents, and the one who received two talents – knew how to live. They didn't push the pause button, putting everything on hold, burying the talents – they put them to work – for that is what it is like, in “the kingdom of heaven.”

You, dearly beloved, have been entrusted with other talents from our Lord as well. In Holy Baptism He has given you His property – the fruits of the Spirit – “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

Don't bury such things – use them – because they are sorely needed in these days. And the Holy Spirit is at work through such fruits – the kingdom of heaven, reigning on earth.

One servant was given 5 talents, another 2, and another 1 talent. St. Paul writes in Romans (12:6-8): “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”

The gifts which our Lord has entrusted to you are not to be buried – but used. He has given these gifts to you – so that now, through you – God Himself is at work, in this world, for the benefit of your neighbor.

Dearly beloved, today Jesus calls you to be FAITHful in your use of His possessions, His gifts – that is, using them in such a way that flows from faith.

Having received the greatest treasure of everlasting life, you are free to spend your life now on others – to be patient with them, to teach them, to be generous with them – to live in peace with them.

Having been released from the captivity and damnation of your sins, you have a whole new life to live. A life of giving thanks and praise to God – rejoicing to LIVE now as His beloved child – and when He returns from His journey, to “enter into the joy of your master” – to live in “the kingdom of heaven” forever. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.