

“The reward is incredible!” (Luke 12:32-40)

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

If we had to describe what the Church in the West in general, or in Australia in particular looks like these days, we could probably say that – even if she is not in coma, she certainly has fallen asleep; we have dull Christianity and lethargic Christians.

Why would I say so? Because there are so many who claim that they are Christians, or at least identify themselves as Christians, almost 50% of our population, however there are far, far less of those who actually practice what they claim to believe and be.

The words of Jesus from today's Gospel reading address this exact issue, and they cut us to the heart. Jesus reminds us what He expects from us as His disciples and what will happen when He comes back in His divine glory. It is worth reviewing.

Jesus uses this analogy with what we would call, a regular Roman household. The analogy that would make perfect sense to His listeners. But we live in a very different world, and so we could use a different analogy. Something from our times.

How about a business owner and his employees? You probably know that it is not that easy to find a good boss, someone who cares for his people as a father care for his family. But this particular owner was unusual, quite a remarkable character.

He had found and recruited His employees from most diverse backgrounds, some of them real failures, some of them arrogant in their self-righteousness, others with really bad track records, yet others still suffering different afflictions and tribulations,

struggling to make it day in and day out. He wasn't looking for perfect people, he embraced and gave work to everyone in need, even to those who neither deserve it, nor appreciate it. He cared for his people with all his heart, as for His own family, no one was forgotten, no one was neglected, no one was treated unfairly.

Even more, as if such gracious attitude wasn't enough, he had promised that when he returns from this longer business trip, he will actually make each one of them shareholders in his company. They will become co-owners with him. The mighty business empire that was his, will become theirs as well. What about that?!

And then he left. No one knows exactly for how long. The only thing they know is his promise – that he will come back. For now, his employees are left sort of to carry on on their own. Think about it – what would the expectations of the owner be?

Isn't that quite obvious? That all his employees will continue to perform their duties diligently and faithfully, each according to their responsibilities, so that his company continues to prosper. That everyone will do their part.

But what happens if employees do not perform their duties? What if instead of being faithful and committed they come up with different lame excuses, like: 'O, he is away and we don't know when he will be back, let's relax, take it easy!

Why to put in our efforts, there are other things that we could do." Or, "don't you bother, we will be made shareholders anyway, besides, we have our rights", and so on, ignoring the fact that they are lazy and useless.

What happens if someone doesn't do their part? What happens to the company? Sooner or later the activity of the whole company gets paralysed, or at least seriously crippled. The example of the few bad "apples" then gradually has an impact on others. "Why should we continue to care and be faithful? Not fair!"

Job is not done. Mission is stalled. Those who want to remain faithful suddenly are overburdened, they need to fill in for everyone, to cover for those who don't care. Further, what happens with the company's image in a wider society? It is discredited. The good name is lost. Who would want to deal with them?

Now... what will happen when the owner comes back and finds how badly he has been let down and betrayed? What will he do? All smiles and handshakes: "No worries, mate, all is good." What do you think?

Telling this Jesus means His Church. He talks about us. We are His servants. Even more, we actually belong to Him. Jesus has rescued us from under the power of Satan, and has brought us into His Church. It was not done by paying **"with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."** (1Pe 1:18-19)

He did it for you. He poured Himself out fully, without holding back. What does Jesus expect from us as His people? Isn't that obvious? That we will be faithful to our promises, to our responsibilities. As He does His part, He expects us to do ours. Besides, what He expects from us – these are joyful responsibilities. Privileges!

Do you think that that is enough if we show up to our services from time to time? This is where our God gathers us to bless us, this is where He works for us! Is that what faithful servants do, show up from time to time to get some gifts from their employer and to imagine that that is enough. No, that is not enough! Not by any stretch!

Not if we want to follow Jesus, not if we want to bear His name, that is not what He expects from us. How about we make our God, Jesus Christ our first priority? Would that be too much asked? Haven't we heard this before?

"You shall love you God with all your heart and mind and soul and strengths." How do we do that? Where is our God today, where do we find Him? In His Church. The Church is the body of Christ. We can't love Jesus and ignore or despise His body.

How about we make Jesus' Church our main priority? How about we try to commit to the Church the same way as Jesus has committed Himself to us? How about we ask the same questions as we would ask when we love someone more than anything?

"How can I serve you? How can I please you? How can I bring you joy? How can I build you up? How can I make you better?" How about we wake up with these questions every morning and go to bed burning with this passion?

"How can I help to make the body of Christ, this little and funny bunch – where I have this incredible and totally undeserved privilege to belong – how can I help to make it the most beautiful, the most attractive, the most lovable community of God's people?

What can I do to make this place, this community so charming, so inviting that anyone who comes just wouldn't want to leave anymore? That everyone who gets a chance to spend some time with us would dream about becoming a part of this community?"

How can we do that? How can I help? How can you help? For this is what Jesus calls us to do. Not less. Don't deceive yourselves. Don't make excuses. Don't try to convince yourselves that that is too much. No... that may still be too little.

Jesus Christ left His divine glory, humbled Himself, suffered and gave up His life for you, what would be a fitting response to such immeasurable grace? Are we going to bargain with Jesus in our sluggishness? Or do we want to follow Jesus?

What may hold us back? It's not Jesus, it is not the Father, it is not the Holy Spirit. Not so much even our circumstances. If we poured our God given energy, creativity and gifts into His mission, if we lived for Jesus as He lives for us, asking the Holy Spirit to

guide us, imagine, what results we may be blessed to witness?! We may get what we ask for, we may experience the power and beauty of God's transforming presence in our midst and in our communities. This is not some hard and unpleasant toiling.

This is the most joyful mission adventure in the most amazing company! I can think of many jobs which are much more demanding. And when you think about our rewards, about what Jesus has promised to His faithful disciples. They are mind blowing.

You will dwell with Him in New Heavens and New Earth. You will see Him face-to-face. You will be co-heirs with Jesus when it comes to God's Kingdom. All of this is already promised to everyone who is baptized.

However, so many have fallen asleep, so many ignore and despise God's generous gifts and neglect their own responsibilities. What happens as a result? They fail their Lord, they don't keep their promises, they don't perform their duties.

They discredit the Bride of Christ, the Church, their lives are embarrassing testimonies to those inside and outside, and you know how infectious bad example is! Such Christians in name only with their indifference paralyse the mission of the Church.

What do they expect from their Lord, when He comes back? Do they fear what the risen and holy Lord Jesus Christ will say? Or perhaps, influenced by the world, they assume that they have their rights and Jesus will not dare to judge them.

Jesus Christ, the Holy One, the same to whom all authority is given in heaven and on earth, the same to whom the Father has given all judgment, He tells exactly what will happen, and that is scary: **"The master of such servants will come on a day when they do not expect him and at an hour they do not know, and will cut them in pieces and put them with the unfaithful."** (Luke 12:46)

It makes perfect sense. He, the Son of God, sacrificed His life, He suffered and died on the cross, so that He could save everyone. He called us by the Gospel, He sends His Spirit into our hearts, He invites everyone to His heavenly feast. He is ready to welcome everyone. Everyone! Without any conditions.

Whatever you are, whatever you have done, His forgiveness covers every sin, all your sins till the last one. He gives life to you, true life, eternal life. And He does it motivated by His grace and love, without any merit or worthiness of ours. He has done and does all of this and more. All of this is His generous gift to us.

If someone is arrogant enough to reject this incredible grace, then they have made their choice. They have chosen death over life, then have chosen eternal separation from God, instead of eternal blessedness in His presence.

As famous Christian writer C. S. Lewis put it: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, “your will be done,” and those to whom God says, in the end, “your will be done.” All that are in Hell, choose it. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it.”

Listen how Jesus describes wonderful joys of the faithful: **“Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes... and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!”**

Our God is giving God, generous God, serving God, prodigal in His grace. We can see it everywhere; how He abundantly provides for our daily needs, how He came to save us. In Jesus earthly ministry, how He took care of His disciples, even on the last night He washed their feet and fed them with His Holy Meal.

He still does it, every time when we come together to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, it is Him, who invites us and serves us. Sure, He does it through pastors who stand in His place, but it is Jesus who provides for us His life-giving Sacrament.

He fills us with His joy in the middle of this life’s sorrows. He fills us with His peace, in the midst of this world’s troubles. He comforts us with His presence as He dwells with us, and He allows us to experience a glimpse of the Kingdom to come, through love and support of our brothers and sisters around us.

And this is only a beginning, this is only a foretaste. When our Lord comes back in His glory, we will live with Him in eternal joy and blessedness. It is worth staying awake, it is worth being faithful servants, whatever the cost. For your reward will be incredible.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!

Amen.