



My Beloved Ones,

In this Sunday's Gospel, our Lord's Parable of the Ten Talents offers us an important reflection on the heavy responsibility known as stewardship. A man going on a journey entrusted his property to his servants. *"To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money"* (Matthew 25:15-18). When the Master returned, he greeted the work of the first two servants with that joyful verse: *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master"* (Matthew 25:23).

However, the third servant was less positive: *"Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth'"* (Matthew 25:24-30).

Of course interpret the meaning of the parable as Christ giving us different gifts, and when He returns to sit in Judgement, we will be asked what we did with His talents. However, there is another interesting detail in the parable. When we imagine these talents, we might think of our own modern coins; but the talents Jesus speaks of could weigh up to 75 pounds! When the wicked servant buried his talent in the ground, it is not as though he covered a penny in dirt—imagine how much work he had to work to bury something that large. It surely took more physical work than his wiser coworkers. Why did he go to all the trouble? He knew the value of the talent and thought he could hide such a heavy responsibility from his Master. Of course, in the last days when the Master returns, nothing can remain hidden.

Though we must try to be the wise servants, we are given the figure of the lazy servant to examine ourselves. Is there something more that we could be doing each day to assist our families and our communities? However large the weight of these gifts might feel, it is not too late to use them in a positive spirit. May we use the coming beginning of the *Triodion* to continue this process, now, and all the days of our lives.

+ALEXIOS

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