

We used the short versions of the second reading and the gospel today because both contained too many details to pay attention to. The short version of the gospel contains two parables in which the overall meaning is to be prepared because we don't know when we will be meeting Jesus. Are we prepared for that meeting?

The parable about the master and servants is fairly straight forward. Jesus is the master, we are the servants and if we are prepared to welcome he will invite us to join the heavenly banquet. The master who serves the servants can have a double meaning. Jesus serves us right now by giving us his body and blood in the Eucharist—are our souls prepared for that, meaning are we in a state of grace? When was the last time we went to Confession? The Church requires us to go at least once a year or whenever we are aware or think we might be in a state of mortal sin. After this life, provided we have been found ready to meet him, God himself will provide everything we need at the eternal and glorious banquet in heaven.

The second parable, the one with the thief in the night, is more intriguing. Who is the thief? Stealing is a sin, so it would make sense that the thief is Satan. According to this interpretation, we could be the masters of the house and the devil is trying to sneak in and steal our souls by leading us into sin. The devil does try to act in this way and he does like to attack us when we aren't expecting it. Good warning...but look at the context.

In both parables, someone arrives unexpectedly and the end of the passage identifies that person as the Son of Man which is the messianic title for Jesus. Contextually, the thief has to be Jesus. Satan has set himself up as the master of the world—there are many scriptural references to this. In his corrupted world view, everything in creation including ourselves belongs to him. Jesus is coming to “steal” back what is rightly his. It is entirely possible that this little parable isn't actually a parable at all and it isn't directed at us. It is a taunt directed at Satan. Why?

Jesus said: “If the master of the house [Satan] had known the hour when the thief [Jesus] was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.” The hour. This usually refers to Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection—technically this refers to the night of Holy Thursday through Easter Sunday. Informally, the hour begins with the Incarnation, the moment God became man at Jesus' conception in the womb of Mary. How is Jesus taunting Satan? This “parable” is basically saying, “Hey imposter master of the world. If you knew when the hour when I was coming to reclaim my brothers and sisters

you'd be prepared. Guess what? That hour has come and gone and you never saw it coming. Your pride and arrogance kept you from imagining that we would come at you like this. The idea that God would humble himself in this way was beyond your comprehension. It's too late to lock your doors because I am already in your house and I am already reclaiming what is mine. Satan, you lose!"

The final sentence of the gospel IS directed at us: You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come." Jesus is telling us, "I am coming to get you. In fact, I am already here. Gird your loins and light your lamps and get ready to move, I have come to set you free. Let's ride."

Jesus is already here. Are we prepared to meet him? Are we prepared to be set free?