Homily – 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, 2017

A lot of harsh judging going on these past three Sundays
• First, there was the women wedding attendants
  Who didn’t bring enough oil for their lamps;
• Then the person who was given a talent, but who buried it out of fear;
• Finally, there are those who failed to recognize presence of the king
  in his needy sisters and brothers.
• The first group gets left out in the cold, the door is locked on them.
• The person who buried the talent loses even the one talent
  and gets thrown out in the darkness
  where there is weeping and grinding of teeth.
• Finally, the last group we just heard about today gets the harshest sentence.
  They go off to eternal punishment.

All of this sounds very harsh and judgmental.
It leaves you at the very least wondering whether or not there’s a hope
you can:
  be counted among the wedding attendants
  who were stocked with plenty of oil;
  be counted as someone to whom the master says,
    "well done good and faithful servant;
  be counted among those who at least did something
  to meet the needs of the king/poorest disciples.

After Mass last weekend, someone came up to me and said: (I'm paraphrasing)
"I've heard a lot of sermons about that story of the talents
Not one of them helped me make any sense of that story
and neither did yours."

It didn't seem this person was being nasty ... just being honest.
It made me to do some soul searching this week.

Here is some of what I've thought and prayed about:

1. Jesus parables are always intended to unsettle us, challenge us and
   send us away scratching our heads.

2. Jesus comes at all this from the perspective of a homeless Jew
   from a back-water no-place called Nazareth.
   He invites us middle class citizens
   of the richest country the world has ever known
   to see the world from a very different perspective.

3. It's clear that Jesus' great passion was to draw in those at life's margins.
   He tells story after story where those who don't join him in that passion
will be the ones who will eventually be marginalized themselves.
— end up in the darkness, outside.
We can never become complacent about having done enough.

4. The God of Jesus has a passion for our FREE WILL.
   Jesus INVITES, does not force.
   It is possible for us to freely choose to participate in evil.
   That is part of the implication of our being made "little less than gods".

5. Jesus is God's absolute assurance that God's love for us is without condition.
   The only condition seems to be our unwillingness to really believe that, really
   live that belief.

6. Fitting all that together takes a lot of prayer, HUMILITY, openness
   I’ll take responsibility for not doing such a good job and
   trying to touch on the meaning of the story about the talents.
   But some of reason the meaning of the story has not been unlocked
   is that it may be the Holy Spirit's way of tugging at us to dig a little deeper.

Our journey with Matthew ends today.
Next week, we take up Mark's version of the Good News.