

Homily based on the readings from November 11, 2025 (Wisdom 2.23-3.9; Luke 17.7-10)

Today's Gospel reading is one that can easily be misinterpreted by a modern audience. Few of us, I think, have much experience interacting with servants – besides watching a few episodes of *Downton Abbey*. I am always hesitant to translate Jesus' teachings into a contemporary setting, but I think it might be helpful in this case. Imagine, for example, that you walk into a local restaurant. The cooks and waiters have probably been busy all day – preparing food, setting up tables, serving other guests. Nevertheless, most of us would be taken aback if the entire staff suddenly decides to go on a lunch break at the very moment we walk into the restaurant. While we should go out of our way to be respectful and generous, none of us would think twice about expecting somebody who works at such an establishment simply to do his job.

The lesson we are supposed to take from this example, either the original or the updated version, has nothing to do with our expectations of other people – but rather the standards we set for ourselves. Every one of us has been entrusted with a basic set of tasks and obligations: raising children, providing for our families, serving our community, preaching at Mass – whatever it may be. The point of today’s reading is that none of us should be congratulating ourselves – or expecting congratulations from others – simply for doing our job. Although it is always encouraging to hear words of gratitude, that can never be a condition for fulfilling our responsibilities.

If we distill the message of today’s reading into a single word, it would have to be *humility*. If that is not what immediately comes to mind, it is probably because society tends to put forward a false notion of this virtue. As C. S. Lewis once observed:

Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call “humble” nowadays: he will not be a sort of

greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody. ... He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.

As the saying goes, genuine humility is not thinking less of *ourselves*, but thinking of ourselves *less*.

In the final analysis, whatever God is asking us to do, we need to focus on the task at hand and not on ourselves. No matter what happens, *God* will take care of us. Our job is simply to discern what he expects us to do and to take care of it with as little commotion as possible. If we acknowledge our status, here and now, as *unprofitable servants*, then – when all the accounts are finally settled – we will ultimately be welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven as *good and faithful* servants, invited to share in our master's joy.