

## Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Aug 30th 2013

Today's scripture readings are an interesting mix of instructions and the contrast of faith and worry.

In 1st Thessalonians, Paul exhorts his readers to follow the "instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus" and "refrain from immorality". The psalmist proclaims, "Rejoice in the Lord, you just".

In Matthew, Jesus tells the parable of the bridegroom and the ten virgins. Jesus warns, "stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour".

Parables of judgment always seem to make me nervous. I worry; am I measuring up? How do parables of judgment fit with grace?

I have up times in my relationship with God. And I have down times. Times where I feel like God is distant and I can't reach him. I've always wondered. If Christ returns during one of my down times, what happens? Will I be one of the virgins who didn't bring any oil for their lamps? Will my faith be sufficient?

It seems my faith (my oil) requires constant replenishing. I worry, will I have enough? Yet nowhere have I ever heard God say, I'm only going to give you this much faith, so you'd better hoard it. It seems the supply of faith available to us is inexhaustible. So why the fear? Faith is definitely a choice. It seems both incredibly powerful, but also fragile. Worry seems to often squeeze the faith and hope out of my life. Worry seems to rob us of our faith. When we worry, we lose our joy and it affects our ability to serve God. When we simply trust God and put God first in our lives, then we glorify him and our joy can return.

My granddaughter, Annie, is learning to walk. We sit on the kitchen floor and I aim her at her mom or dad and let go of her hands. She stumbles across the floor and launches herself into her mom or dad's arms. If they were not there to catch her she would definitely land face first on the floor. And yet she does it again and again and every time she looks back at me, grinning with such pride and joy. There isn't any thought in her head about, "what if they didn't catch me?" She simply trusts completely.

How I wish I had Annie's faith and trust. It is so easy to fall into the worry trap and lose our joy.

My prayer today is for those of us who stumble with our faith and trust. Instead of expecting the worst, we should be preparing for the best.

Daniel Patrick O'Reilly