

2002 Liturgical Year A

This is only a partial year of lesson – Started when  
Jack Vessels went down the college campus in Mississippi.

It has been said that the New Testament lies in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament. The Old Testament Reading and the New Testament readings for the liturgical calendar help us understand the meaning of this statement. The letters and books of the New Testament other than the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) help to guide us in our applications of the messages found in the Gospels.

This is the start on Lessons At A Glance  
Jack Vessels moved to Mississippi from  
St. Ignatius House but continued Email

# Scripture for September 15, 2002

## Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Reading [Sir 27:30--28:9](#)

Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight. The vengeful will suffer the LORD's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail. Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven. Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the LORD? Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself, can he seek pardon for his own sins? If one who is but flesh cherishes wrath, who will forgive his sins? Remember your last days, set enmity aside; remember death and decay, and cease from sin! Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor; remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.

### Responsorial Psalm [Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12](#)

**The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.** Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all my being, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction, he crowns you with kindness and compassion. He will not always chide, nor does he keep his wrath forever. Not according to our sins does he deal with us, nor does he requite us according to our crimes. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our transgressions from us.

### Reading II [Rom 14:7-9](#)

Brothers and sisters: None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this is why Christ died and came to life, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

### Gospel [Mt 18:21-35](#)

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized one of his fellow servants and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."

Comments From the banks of the Mighty Mississippi - Father Vessels

During the day: When wronged, take another look. What provoked it? What, in his mind, justifies the other? Where lies the truth? Is he so wrong, & you so right? If roles reversed, would your reaction be any different? Be fair in your assessment of the other's behavior, quick to tolerance, generous in pardon. If indeed he erred, let correction be objective & impersonal. Remember, God judges you both.

ABOUT PRAYER: In prayer we're more concerned about our own sinfulness than we are about the burden borne due to the sins of others. Indeed, thru prayer we discover the solidarity of sin: we're all in this together, no one much better or worse than anybody else. Acknowledging in prayer our own human frailty, we commune with the very persons who wrong us. The Christian at prayer is Christ at prayer, come to correct our sinfulness & assume with us its consequences. So too, with him, we beg the Father for strength to shoulder together our common broken heritage. Only thus can the universal code of love Christ inaugurates renew it..

## September 22, 2002 Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Reading Old Testament: [Is 55:6-9](#)

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call him while he is near. Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked his thoughts; let him turn to the LORD for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.

### Reading II: New Testament: [Phil 1:20c-24, 27a](#)

Brothers and sisters: Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, for that is far better. Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit. Only, conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ.

### Gospel: [Mt 20:1-16a](#)

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o'clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.' So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o'clock, and did likewise. Going out about five o'clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They answered, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard.' When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.' When those who had started about five o'clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.' He said to one of them in reply, 'My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?' Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Comments From the banks of the Mighty Mississip - Father Vessels

During the day: Don't bargain with God. He's in debt to no one. He's the only Absolute - everything & everyone else is relative, gratuitous. He is, & we are his; he owes us nothing. He uses us? Fine; we're grateful. He ignores us? He's got his reasons. Frustrating? Sure is! Grounds for complaint? None. Attitude? He knows his business; move on, do the best you can. Hard as it is to trust him, believe in his fairness. It'll finally turn to love.

ABOUT PRAYER: Pray as though everything depended on you; act as though everything depended on God. Pray his word to discern his plan; ponder it, then choose it, whatever your own inclination to the contrary. Having chosen it in prayer, let it happen. He knows how to work his will & does, using you to the extent you let him. No need to get stressed out; use prayer to relax & get out of the way. You'll be amazed how well he succeeds, even in your failures.

**September 29, 2002 Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Reading Old Testament:** [Ez 18:25-28](#)

Thus says the LORD: You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!" Hear now, house of Israel: Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair? When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die. But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed, he does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life; since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

**Reading New Testament:** [Phil 2:1-11](#) or [2:1-5](#)

Brothers and sisters: If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vain glory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others. Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus.

**Gospel** [Mt 21:28-32](#)

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: "What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' He said in reply, 'I will not, ' but afterwards changed his mind and went. The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir, ' but did not go. Which of the two did his father's will?" They answered, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him."

**Comments From the banks of the Mighty Mississip - Father Vessels**

During the day: Don't make promises you don't intend to keep. Be cautious in your commitments; be honest, both about competence & time available. Better to exceed the expected than to disappoint the presumed. confidence is based on responsibility, & responsibility is rooted in character. None of us have enough, but all of us can plug into Christ's, & grow.

ABOUT PRAYER: The prayer of petition is the gateway to hope; the prayer of thanksgiving, the gateway to love; the prayer of repentance, gateway to mercy; the prayer of oblation, to intimacy with God; the prayer of trust, to faith - the life outside of time. Prayer is our true self.

## October 6, 2002 Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Reading Old Testament:** [Is 5:1-7](#) Let me now sing of my friend, my friend's song concerning his vineyard. My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside; he spaded it, cleared it of stones, and planted the choicest vines; within it he built a watchtower, and hewed out a wine press. Then he looked for the crop of grapes, but what it yielded was wild grapes. Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard: What more was there to do for my vineyard that I had not done? Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? Now, I will let you know what I mean to do with my vineyard: take away its hedge, give it to grazing, break through its wall, let it be trampled! Yes, I will make it a ruin: it shall not be pruned or hoed, but overgrown with thorns and briars; I will command the clouds not to send rain upon it. The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his cherished plant; he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed! for justice, but hark, the outcry!

**Reading New Testament:** [Phil 4:6-9](#)

Brothers and sisters: Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

**Gospel:** [Mt 21:33-43](#)

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: "Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes? Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

During the day: Yield a rich harvest. Others have sown the good seed, tended it, devoted good labor to it. Education, talents, health, formation, faith – they all zero in now on the people & task at hand. Measure your effort to produce fruit by the purity of your intention; let the values that motivate you ring true. Don't prostitute your unique human instrumentality for any purpose but God's. Make the sowers proud!

ABOUT PRAYER: Tough decisions should be taken to prayer, the pros & cons of alternatives submitted humbly to the judgment of Another. Don't doubt his ability to communicate with you, nor question his reasons for limited clarity – our own growth in wisdom comes through the ups & down of experience. Let your discerning prayer be an authentic 'Thy will be done,' then note the degree of interior peace which accompanies the consideration of each alternative - God's nod that you're on the right track.

## October 13, 2002 Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Reading Old Testament: [Is 25:6-10a](#)

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines. On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever. The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from every face; the reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth; for the LORD has spoken. On that day it will be said: "Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us! This is the LORD for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!" For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

### Reading New Testament: [Phil 4:12-14, 19-20](#)

Brothers and sisters: I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I can do all things in him who strengthens me. Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress. My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father, glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Gospel:** [Mt 22:1-14](#) or [22:1-10](#) Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast."' Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.' The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests, he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. The king said to him, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.' Many are invited, but few are chosen."

Comments From the banks of the Mighty Mississipp - Father Vessels

During the day - Be alert to God's invitations. He expects you to accept them; don't, at your own risk. They are both challenges & opportunities, quite often in disguise. He needs to get the job of redemption done & counts on your cooperation. His plan is workable, but he owes no one an explanation of its details. The minutiae - a smile here, a little more patience there, an extra ounce of kindness occasionally - are, ultimately, the key to its success. Don't renege.

ABOUT PRAYER - The regularity of prayer is the ingredient that assures spiritual maturity. The ups & downs of experience - brief or prolonged - taken to daily prayer provide a rich variety of affective responses to God. Balancing gratitude with regret, dependence with trust, generosity with courage, etc., sharpens the spirit's ability to discern the harmony of God's action in one's life - a beautiful melody indeed!

**October 20, 2002**  
**Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Reading Old Testament:** [Is 45:1, 4-6](#)

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, Cyrus, whose right hand I grasp, subduing nations before him, and making kings run in his service, opening doors before him and leaving the gates unbarred: For the sake of Jacob, my servant, of Israel, my chosen one, I have called you by your name, giving you a title, though you knew me not. I am the LORD and there is no other, there is no God besides me. It is I who arm you, though you know me not, so that toward the rising and the setting of the sun people may know that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, there is no other.

**Reading New Testament:** [1 Thes 1:1-5b](#)

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father, knowing, brothers and sisters loved by God, how you were chosen. For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction.

**Gospel:** [Mt 22:15-21](#)

The Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap Jesus in speech. They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then they handed him the Roman coin. He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" They replied, "Caesar's." At that he said to them, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi – Father Jack Vessels

During the day - Render to God what's his: YOU! Made by him, everything you are, have & do belongs to him, problems included. Made in his image--free--make all decisions wisely. The problem's his, not yours. Resolve it, concerned primarily with his interests, not your own - he'll take care of yours. Stay tuned to him & your (his) success is locked-in; even failure serve his purpose.

ABOUT PRAYER - Prayer is rendering; entering into; integrating. Possessing while possessed, assuming as assumed, consumed & consuming. Prayer is purgative, it reduces resistance; prayer is illuminative, it deepens insights; prayer is unitive, it transforms being. Net result: contemplative in action.

It has been said that the New Testament lies in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament. The Old Testament Reading and the New Testament readings for the liturgical calendar help us understand the meaning of this statement. The letters and books of the New Testament other than the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) help to guide us in our applications of the messages found in the Gospels.

## October 27, 2002 Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Reading Old Testament: [Ex 22:20-26](#)

Thus says the LORD: "You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry. My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you with the sword; then your own wives will be widows, and your children orphans. "If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people, you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him. If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you shall return it to him before sunset; for this cloak of his is the only covering he has for his body. What else has he to sleep in? If he cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate."

### Reading New Testament: [1 Thes 1:5c-10](#)

Brothers and sisters: You know what sort of people we were among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit, so that you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth not only in Macedonia and in Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves openly declare about us what sort of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.

### Gospel: [Mt 22:34-40](#)

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the , your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi – Father Jack Vessels

During the day – Love God in your neighbor, as you love God in yourself – with reverence, praising, & in service. Use your head; be prudent. Use your heart; be respectful. Use your soul; lift service to another up from the merely human to the divine. Know that God considers it done to him, channeling his holiness to both served & server. Be renewed by the effort.

ABOUT PRAYER – Action is experience, prayer transcends experience, Through experience we mature; prayer expresses what we're becoming. Action 'does'; prayer 'is'. Action is fleeting; prayer is eternal. In prayerful action we are aware of becoming what we will ever be. There's no going back; we may slip into chaos, & remain there if unrepentant. But recognizing the slip for what it is & undoing it makes it just one more experience of holiness. God be praised.

## November 3, 2002 Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **Reading Old Testament:** [Mal 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10](#)

A great King am I, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations. And now, O priests, this commandment is for you: If you do not listen, if you do not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, says the LORD of hosts, I will send a curse upon you and of your blessing I will make a curse. You have turned aside from the way, and have caused many to falter by your instruction; you have made void the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts. I, therefore, have made you contemptible and base before all the people, since you do not keep my ways, but show partiality in your decisions. Have we not all the one father? Has not the one God created us? Why then do we break faith with one another, violating the covenant of our fathers?

### **Reading New Testament:** [1 Thes 2:7b-9, 13](#)

Brothers and sisters: We were gentle among you, as a nursing mother cares for her children. With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well, so dearly beloved had you become to us. You recall, brothers and sisters, our toil and drudgery. Working night and day in order not to burden any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. And for this reason we too give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe.

### **Gospel:** [Mt 23:1-12](#)

Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.' As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi – Father Jack Vessels

Note: Father Jack is currently on travel through Spain. We should have some great comments from Father Jack when he returns. These will be passed on when we get them.

## November 10, 2002 Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Reading Old Testament: [Wis 6:12-16](#)

Resplendent and unfading is wisdom, and she is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her. She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of their desire; whoever watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed, for he shall find her sitting by his gate. For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence, and whoever for her sake keeps vigil shall quickly be free from care; because she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her, and graciously appears to them in the ways, and meets them with all solicitude.

### Reading New Testament: [1 Thes 4:13-18](#) or [4:13-14](#)

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words.

### Gospel: [Mt 25:1-13](#)

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.' Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi – Father Jack Vessels

During the day: Expect Christ, & presume he'll show up in disguise. Take a good look at everyone who comes into your awareness: see anything familiar? Anything that reminds you of him? Even if you don't, take no chances: treat the person as you would him, knowing that's what he expects; he'll take it as done to himself, & you'll know he's pleased. Don't, & you'll be the poorer for it.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer enables us to share the rich sentiments of Christ the Bridegroom. He's infatuated with us, & in prayer we fall more deeply in love with him; he yearns to possess us, & through prayer we consummate the union, possessing him in turn. Prayer assures us we grow in him as he in us, the fruit of our maturing love communicating life to others. He's not a jealous lover; quite the contrary, he wants us to love everyone! Indeed, it's the universal character of our love that most perfectly satisfies the divine desire to wed humanity. How foolish to refuse!

## November 17, 2002 Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Reading Old Testament: [Prv 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31](#)

When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize. She brings him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She obtains wool and flax and works with loving hands. She puts her hands to the distaff, and her fingers ply the spindle. She reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy. Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her a reward for her labors, and let her works praise her at the city gates.

### Reading New Testament: [1 Thes 5:1-6](#)

Concerning times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night. When people are saying, "Peace and security," then sudden disaster comes upon them, like labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, for that day to overtake you like a thief. For all of you are children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober.

### Gospel: [Mt 25:14-30 or 25:14-15, 19-21](#)

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one -- to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.' His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'"

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi – Father Jack Vessels

During the day: Be yourself. Don't try to rival others. You're the only one of YOU He's got! Use the talents he gave you to please him. You know your limitations; so does he. You also know when you can be & do better; make the effort. Don't measure the effort by anything but self-knowledge. Get rid of the negative self-image; he builds his kingdom out of what you are & do - what you aren't doesn't exist.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer is floating heavenwards on the 'Well done, good & faithful servant,' we hear at the end of each day. Sure, there are times we suggest he take a second look! We do, prayerfully, each evening, as we reflect on how he's used us to accomplish his work, noting also the ways our efforts could have been more generous. In a final prayer we mingle sentiments of joy & gratitude, humility & sorrow, determination & trust. Then peaceful dreams, hopefully, continue the meditation.

## November 24, 2002 The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King

### Reading Old Testament: [Ez 34:11-12, 15-17](#)

Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will look after and tend my sheep. As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep. I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy and dark. I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest, says the Lord GOD. The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy, shepherding them rightly. As for you, my sheep, says the Lord GOD, I will judge between one sheep and another, between rams and goats.

### Reading New Testament: [1 Cor 15:20-26, 28](#)

Brothers and sisters: Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through man, the resurrection of the dead came also through man. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ; then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has destroyed every sovereignty and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

### Gospel: [Mt 25:31-46](#)

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

From the Banks of the Mighty Mississippi – Father Jack Vessels

During the day: Don't play with matches - you might get burned. Be ever alert to the two passions in your heart: one for others, the other for yourself. Both are fire by communication: one thru immersion in the Good Spirit, the other thru the deception of not-so-good spirits. Aflame with the love of God, serve your own needs best by serving the needs of others. The fires of misdirected pride & ambition, envy & jealousy, resentment & hatred burn forever if not recognized for what they are & doused with the living water of love for Christ.

ABOUT PRAYER: Prayer makes us vulnerable to the truths of the Spirit. Helpless, in prayer we surrender to the attraction of goodness. Prayer then flows effortlessly & at times unknowingly into action, & embraces the Christ waiting in the heart of the other. Joyfully he reveals himself; so back we go to prayer for the consuming affection of mutual gratitude.