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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

**The Sixth Sunday of Zemene Tsom (*The Season of Lent*)**

**Liturgical Readings:**

**2 Tim. 2:1 – 16; 1 Pet. 5: 1- 12; Acts 1: 6 -9**

**Psalm 39:8;**

**Mat. 25:14—31**

**The Anaphora of Saint Basil**

**“Who is the kind servant?” (Gebre Hare)**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Beloved brethren in Christ, on this blessed day which our holy father Saint Yared named “*Who is the kind servant?*” we are gathered to listen with trembling hearts to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, chapter twenty-five, verses fourteen to thirty-one. This parable is proclaimed not merely to inform our minds, but to judge our consciences, to awaken our souls, and to prepare us for the coming of the Lord in glory.

Our Lord speaks of a man who, before travelling to a far country, entrusted his servants with his goods. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to the third one, each according to his ability. Here we see first the generosity and wisdom of the Master. He does not withhold his riches, nor does he burden beyond measure. According to the teaching of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, these talents are the manifold gifts of God: faith, grace, knowledge, strength, time, spiritual authority, and every opportunity given for salvation and service. As Saint Paul reminds Timothy, “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus... endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:1–3). Grace is given freely, but it is entrusted, not wasted.

The first servant, who received five talents, went immediately and traded with them. He laboured diligently, without complaint, and gained five more. Likewise the second, with two talents, doubled what was given to him. These servants reveal the character of the kind servant, the *Gebre Hare*: faithful, watchful, courageous, and obedient. They did not measure themselves against one another, but against the will of their Master. In them we see the spirit of the apostles, who, after the ascension of our Lord—as we read in Acts 1:6–9—did not remain gazing into heaven, but went forth bearing witness, trusting the promise of the Holy Spirit. Their faith was active, their waiting fruitful.

The third servant, however, received one talent and went away, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. He neither lost it nor increased it. Outwardly, he appears careful; inwardly, he is faithless. His character is revealed not by what he did, but by what he feared. He saw his master as harsh, reaping where he did not sow, and gathering where he did not scatter seed. This servant represents not humility, but accusation; not obedience, but self-justification. In the Ethiopian Orthodox understanding, this servant symbolises those who receive the faith, are baptised, and are counted among the household of God, yet refuse the struggle of repentance, the labour of love, and the responsibility of ministry.

When the master returned, after a long time, he settled accounts with them. To the first two servants he spoke the same words, despite the difference in the number of talents: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will make you ruler over much. Enter into the joy of your lord.” This teaches us that God does not judge by quantity, but by faithfulness. As Saint Peter exhorts the shepherds of the Church, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly... not for dishonest gain, but eagerly” (1 Peter 5:1–2). Faithfulness in small obedience leads to greater communion in the Kingdom.

To the third servant, however, the master replied with righteous judgement: “You wicked and lazy servant.” His own words became his condemnation. He claimed to fear the master, yet his fear produced no reverence, no labour, no fruit. Even the minimum act—placing the talent with the bankers—he refused to do. Thus the talent was taken from him and given to the one who had ten, and he was cast into outer darkness. This is not cruelty, but justice. As our fathers teach, unused grace withers, and neglected faith becomes judgement.

The three servants, therefore, represent all who are entrusted with the gifts of God. They may be bishops, priests, deacons, monks, or lay faithful; rulers or subjects; learned or simple. The difference lies not in what is given, but in how it is used. This parable stands in harmony with our Lord’s teaching in Luke chapter twelve, where He speaks of servants waiting for their master’s return, with lamps burning and loins girded. “To whom much is given, from him much will be required.” Watchfulness, accountability, and readiness unite both teachings. The faithful servant is not idle while waiting, nor fearful in service, but hopeful and diligent.

Beloved, the question Saint Yared places before us today is not theoretical: *Who is the kind servant?* The answer is written not only in Scripture, but in our lives. The kind servant is the one who receives grace with thanksgiving, labours with humility, endures hardship with patience, and awaits the Lord with joy. He does not bury his faith in the soil of fear, nor does he excuse himself with false humility. He knows that the Master who ascended into heaven will surely return in glory, and that His judgement is righteous and His reward eternal.

May we be counted among those who hear the blessed words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” May the Lord grant us grace to multiply what we have received, for the glory of His Name and the salvation of our souls.

Glory to the Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and always, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Glory to the Almighty God!