

Much earlier in my life, well before my seminary days, I briefly entertained the idea of becoming a professional musician, a concert pianist playing the piano for an audience. And looking back at that now, I find the idea amusing not just because I don't have that level of skill, but also because I can't imagine myself lasting very long as a concert pianist before I would have a nervous breakdown. There's a big difference between playing for enjoyment alone, or with a small group of friends, and playing for a crowd of strangers who have paid money to hear a flawless performance.

We behave differently when someone is watching our every move. When we have a 'performance mentality,' we have to show the critics how good we are. Now, there's a flip side of the coin as well, as the old saying goes, "when the cat is away, the mice will play." If we aren't aware of the presence of the critic or the one of who can deal out the consequences, we might try to get away with things. I remember, as a child, sometimes my folks would be out for the afternoon or the evening, and I was home alone. I would certainly try to get away with things that I wasn't supposed to do when they were not home. Watching TV- I wasn't supposed to do that at home alone or getting into the sweets and things like that. I am not proud of that; I wish I had been virtuous enough to behave while they were gone the same way I behaved when they were home. Sometimes we try to get away with things and this isn't just for children either. There's a reason that buildings have surveillance cameras. We behave differently when someone is watching what we are doing.

In the Gospel today, we have the two different servants. The one who faithfully distributes the food at the proper time – the servant who is faithful to what his master has asked him to do. And the other servant who, while the master is delayed in returning, begins to beat the servants, and even drinking and get drunk because he senses

that the master won't be coming anytime soon. Or maybe I can get away with some things.

I wonder if this principle applies to our spiritual life. The two principles actually. The performance mentality on the one hand where we feel that we are on stage and God is the critic sitting in the back row, taking notes, demanding a flawless performance. So, we're scrambling, we're trying to do our best, trying to show God how good we are, and that we're good enough. Or the other extreme, not being aware that God is with us at all times and therefore, perhaps we're not as diligent in this struggle against sin. The lesson in today's Gospel is not that we should lean toward one or the other. Jesus does not encourage us to live in a life terrified of wrath of the Father; terrified that are not going to be good enough; terrified that we will be horribly punished if we choose badly or make some mistake. What father, among any of you, would delight in seeing his children terrified of making a mistake. No.

Of course, the Lord doesn't recommend the other extreme either. While the cat's away, the mice will play. In the spiritual life, so to speak, the cat is never away. But the Lord God is not a cat waiting to pounce on a mouse. The Lord God is not the divine critic waiting for His children to slip up. God is a loving Father, who looks upon us as children with a great desire that we would flourish as human beings and we that we can grow in charity, grow in holiness, grow in goodness, grow in virtue.

And so, what we want to strive for is not that we would always be on alert that God is watching and criticizing us. We should always be alert that God our Father is looking upon us and looking for us to make a response of love. That our thoughts and words and deeds could be good, not out of fear, or certainly not merely out of fear. But

that our thoughts and our deeds and our actions, our deeds and our words will be good as an expression of our love for our Father. Our true love for God, our desire to be glorify God; our desire to please the Lord in everything.

Perhaps today with this Gospel, we have an opportunity to reflect on the many areas of our spiritual life where we might, so to speak, try to get away with things because we are not aware of God's loving gaze upon us. How might our behavior change if we were more aware throughout the day of God's loving presence with us, God's loving gaze upon us. We might reflect on how it is that we even approach that question currently? Do we think of God as the Divine Critic, or as one who looks at us with a longing love.

The other conversation is that we have been entrusted with a stewardship that is ongoing, it is constant, steady.” *Much will be much will be required if the person entrusted with much and still more demanded of the person entrusted with the more*”. It's not just in certain times when we pray, when we are at Mass, when we're thinking about God, not just in those moments are we called to be good stewards, but at all times. May God give us the grace to be more of His eye upon us, not to stir up fear, but rather to awaken in us a deeper desire to live with the glory of God who loves us so much.