

When I was a little kid and I wanted something, I would just nag my mother to death until I could have it. My mom, as I suspect other mothers do, takes a number of tactics to handle such nagging.

One tactic was try to have a reasonable conversation by explaining that she was not made of money and I couldn't have everything I wanted. The second was to lose her patience and snap back. And the third was just to ignore me altogether and continue working on something else.

In our gospel today, on the surface level, it seems like Jesus takes the third course of action by ignoring Peter's question: "*Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?*" He goes on to something else by speaking of the faithful steward who remains faithful to his master.

If you begin to analyze what Jesus says, He actually does a beautiful job of answering Peter's question. In fact, He not only answers Peter's question, but goes beyond it. He does so by making key distinctions.

The first is between those who are faithful to the end and those who neglect their responsibilities and serve themselves. The former will be blessed, while the latter will be punished severely and put with the unfaithful.

The second is between those who know God's will, yet do not do it and those who are ignorant of God's will. Notice that is not just knowledge God's will which is most critical, but remaining faithful to God's will.

Essentially, Jesus tells Peter that the parable is not just meant for him and His companions, but for everyone. He then goes beyond what Peter asked by revealing that there are degrees in both heaven and hell. In other words, these eternal states of life are not flat, but hierarchical. There is a hierarchy based on knowledge of God's will and faithfulness.

Those who have a deep knowledge of God's will and remain faithful to Him until the end, will receive great rewards. Those ignorant of God's will and yet remain faithful to the best of their ability, will receive less reward.

Conversely, those who knew God's will but neglected their great responsibilities will be beaten severely – a greater punishment. And finally, those ignorant of God's shall be beaten lightly – a lesser punishment.

What does this mean for us today? It means a couple of things. First, not only are we called to know God's will, but also remain faithful to the end. In short, with great responsibility comes potentially a great reward, but also the potential of great punishment. May we ask the Lord for the grace not only to more deeply know His will, but also to remain faithful to Him until the end.