

# “Sharing Talents”

Matthew 25:14-30

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Anthony de Mello wrote, “One time a miser hid his gold at the foot of a tree in his garden. Every week he would dig it up and look at it for hours. One day a thief dug up the gold and made off with it. When the miser next came to gaze upon his treasure, all he found was an empty hole. The man began to howl with grief, so his neighbors came running to find out what the trouble was. When they found out, one of them asked, “Did you use any of the gold?” “No,” said the miser. “I only looked at it every week.” “Well then,” said the neighbor, “for all the good the gold did you, you might just as well come every week and gaze upon the hole.”

Hoarding is a sin that leads to worry, anxiety, fear, and misery. Those who are unable to give live in hell. They are captives, so scared at losing what they have that they don’t enjoy their talents.

Giving is a blessing that leads to joy. Those who give experience a snippet of heaven on earth. Givers are set free, they are grateful for what they have and discover delights in sharing, in seeing how their giving blooms and multiples. Jesus said, **Matthew 25:14-30 (MSG)** “**It’s also like a man going off on an extended trip. He called his servants together and delegated responsibilities. To one he gave five thousand dollars, to another two thousand, to a third one thousand, depending on their abilities. Then he left. Right off, the first servant went to work and doubled his master’s investment. The second did the same. But the man with the single thousand dug a hole and carefully buried his master’s money. After a long absence, the master of those three servants came back and settled up with them. The one given five thousand dollars showed him how he had doubled his investment. His master commended him: ‘Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.’ The servant with the two thousand showed how he also had doubled his master’s investment. His master commended him: ‘Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.’ ‘The servant given one thousand said, ‘Master, I know you have high standards and hate careless ways, that you demand the best and make no allowances for error. I was afraid I might disappoint you, so I found a good hiding place and secured your money. Here it is, safe and sound down to the last cent.’ The master was furious. ‘That’s a terrible way to live! It’s criminal to live cautiously like that! If you knew I was after the best, why did you do less than the least? The least you could have done would have been to invest the sum with the bankers, where at least I would have gotten a little interest. ‘Take the thousand and give it to the one who risked the most. And get rid of this “play-it-safe” who won’t go out on a limb. Throw him out into utter darkness.’”**

To understand what God might be saying to you in a parable it helps to see if aspects of God resonate with any of the characters and what aspects of you resonate with each character. I perceive aspects of God in two similar characters, the two servants who multiplied the gift they received. God is always working in our lives to multiple our love, talents, and blessings. Regardless of our ability, receptiveness or effort, regardless of the circumstances, God is always creating love, joy, hope, peace, and a transformed abundant life.

Some people project their biases upon God, creating the distorted view that God is like the master. God is nothing at all like the master in this parable. God is not limited in giving. God gives abundantly to everyone. God does not go off, leaving us alone. God is always with us. God does not limit blessings to those who are faithful. God showers blessings, grace, forgiveness, and renewal on everyone. Every day is a fresh start. God is not a harsh judge, angry, demanding, who takes away from certain people, throwing certain people into utter darkness. God is grace, who is working to redeem everyone and everything bringing all of the cosmos into the light.

Jesus told this parable after he left the temple where he was warning everyone of these sorts of distorted views that were inaccurately being proclaimed as God’s character and plan for the world by the religious leaders. Some still have these distorted views today. Limiting God to “either or” instead of pondering that God is big enough for “both and”. Limiting God’s love for a specific group of people who live a certain way, instead of marveling in God’s love that cares for all. Categorizing types of sin, dividing people, rather than envisioning God’s love as magnificent enough to bring all people together in harmony. Thinking that one’s health, status, and wealth has a direct correlation to one’s faithfulness. Jesus directly corrected this view when he explained

that a person's health had no connection to their sinfulness. Thinking that one has to earn God's love rather than rejoicing in the gift of God's boundless grace. God is not at all like the master in our parable.

God is not like the fearful, play it safe servant. God risks it all, even God's only son, to welcome us back into God's eternal family. God risks it all loving each person lavishly hoping that all of us will in time accept God's love.

Spend some time today pondering how at times there is a part of you represented by each character in this parable.

Is God inviting you to be more like the first two servants bold in lovingly sharing instead of living in fear? Is God urging us to let go of our desire to hold onto blessings, to let go of our tendency to bury blessings, to let go of our urge to savor blessings by ourselves?

Talents and treasures that we bury and keep secret are never really claimed, never spent, never shared therefore never fully utilized, appreciated, savored or enjoyed. Would it be accurate to say that a buried talent can only be appreciated in a minuscule way because we limit it by lock it away in safe keeping?

Pastor Anna Carter Florence writes. "I'm guessing your setting, like mine, is literally strewn with buried talents and buried treasure. I bet you can hardly take a night time stroll without bumping into someone with a shovel. Go back next morning and you will see a neat little mound of earth, marking the spot where yet another anxiety-driven soul has decided that it would be a really great idea to take what is most precious to her and bury it deep, lest she be called upon to offer it around. After all, if you bury it, no one else will ever know that you even have it! Get the idea?"

Yes. It is really stupid. The human instinct to hoard runs deep. Give into it and it will literally suffocate the instinct to share. Everything around you begins to look like uninsurable goods. What if you gave away your extra coat? You might need it—and then you would not have it. What if you shared your bread recipe? Everyone else could make it, too—and you would not be special. What if you gave away your heart? She might break it—and then where would you be?"

Hoarding and burying your talents might make a little sense if you took God out of the world. If there were no God, then everything would be finite, limited, and scarce. However, God is in our lives. If you advocate for fair treatment of all people regardless of color, ability, health, age or sexual orientation, whether citizen or immigrant, then God will likely empower you to change the world like God called Moses to free slaves and lead them into the freedom of the Promised Land. Give away your life by answering God, "Here I am your servant," and God may bring hope to the world through you. Give away your time to God in grateful worship, and God may use your life to show others how to enjoy the heaven of gratitude. Give away your lunch, 5 loaves and two fishes, and God may feed 5,000 people. Write a few letters about God's good news, and God may use your words to transform the lives of billions. Giving away love makes everyone's lives grandeur for eternity for love endures forever. God sustains and resurrects every instance of love for all in heaven to enjoy for eternity.

Share your talents and you will experience a little more of heaven on earth. Bury your talents and you will be miserable, confining yourself to your own self-induced hell. God is grace, who is always loving to free us from hell and welcome us to heaven. Whenever one buries their talents, God is eager to forgive. God gives us endless opportunities, to have a do over, to start fresh again, to decide again if we will share or hoard, if we will celebrate or be in misery.

Your list of talents is all that is good in your life. Your talents could be art, your smile, teaching, wealth, encouragement, cooking, compassion, writing, prayer, hospitality, music, caring, a house, athleticism, auto repair, material goods, a hobby, laughter, an idea, money, etc. Talents are also joy, peace, and grace. Everyone has the talent of love. Everyone has at least one special unique talent that no one else has ever had or will ever have that the rest of the cosmos needs to be complete, to see the full glory of God.

This parable invites us to ponder what kind of future we are creating with God in our daily choices. We can choose to play it safe and save. We can choose to live in fear. Or we can choose to share, to give with faith trusting that more of God's kingdom will be experienced through our giving. The more we love, the more love God gives us to share.

Sometimes when we give we think of the benefits to those whom will receive our gifts. This is good; however, this parable seems to focus on the affect giving has on the giver, joy verses weeping, confidence verse fear, celebration verse being paranoid. As we are gracious, that is freely giving expecting nothing in return, we

grow in our ability to accept grace and savor grace making our life more abundant, whole and complete. Love casts out fear, regrets, and hesitancy enabling one to love more extravagantly.

This parable encourages bold risk-taking. You don't double a large sum of money without a lot of work, overcoming scary moments, persevering through losses and failures, and robust giving of everything you have. Your investment may yield back different talents, for instance money given may yield back joy, teaching may yield back an invention or idea that changes the world. Your giving may not produce results in your lifetime. Moses never actually made it into the Promised Land. Mary was shunned and watched her son die on the cross for serving God. The leper suffered a great deal before he danced with gratitude. The Apostle Paul died in prison.

The parable invites us to give extravagantly, to give in huge ways that come with great risks. Discipleship does not promise a safe harbor. On the contrary, discipleship calls us to weigh anchor, to venture beyond the known and safe, to explore and find new facets of love, joy, and living in harmony with everyone. Michelangelo said, "The great danger is not that our aim is to high and we miss it, but that our aim is to low and we reach it." Synthesis declares, "God's undeniable call demands that we take the risks that must accompany growth. Rather than just living safely, we are to risk acting in ways that reflect the creativity and commitment of our Creator." Our supreme example is Jesus. Jesus gave everything. Jesus emptied himself. Jesus stepped out of heaven into human flesh. Jesus died on the cross. Jesus risked everything for the hoped return of our love. Jesus believes you are worth dying for. True love gives freely and joyfully. Let us take a moment of silence to ponder God's invitation to us. Amen