



FOR the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.¹⁵ And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.¹⁶ Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.¹⁷ And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.¹⁸ But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.²⁰ And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.²¹ His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.²² He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.²³ His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.²⁴ Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. (Matthew 25:14-25)

Our God is a God of wise and frugal economy. He provides all things necessary, but He does not lavish His people with opulence. True, there are Christians who are wealthy in treasures, but these are dependable stewards of that wealth in helping the poor and in supporting missionary enterprises.

Too often, we are not satisfied with the one, two or five talents the Lord has blessed us with; but there is much more to a talent than meets the worldly eye. This is not a devotion on the above parable per se; however, it provides a good introduction to our study of the talent God gives.

I had a friend in Iran named John Naser (Nasseroleslam, for short). He was commander of the International Airport at the city of Isfahan. When the Islamic revolution occurred, Colonel Naser defected by flying a US Army CH-47 (left behind by the US Military) to Turkey with his entire family.

I discovered that John was living in Enterprise, Alabama, quite by happenstance. We renewed our friendship though John claimed to be a devoted Muslim. He prided himself on being 'broad-minded' – able to discuss the Holy Bible as well as the Koran. We had many discussions in his place of business. We were dinner guests often in his home. His wife (Simin) was a charming and well-educated lady; and an excellent cook of fine pastries, I might add. Simin harbored an intense interest in the New Testament. During our visits in her home, she showered me with constant questions about the New Testament. She cared little for the Old Testament since she was unable to see how the Law related to free Grace.

I asked her once why she did not accept Christ. Here answer: "Oh, I could never do that. In Islam Allah cannot forgive a trespass unless the party trespassed against first forgives." Well, that led to a seemingly fruitless discussion on the topic. I acquired a complete Bible for her in Farsi which she read with admirable determination.

The Nasers' finally moved to Birmingham and opened a small French restaurant. I had to co-sign their note since they had not yet been granted a permanent residence permit. The lease was for five years and one-quarter million dollars. I sweated that little indiscretion on my part for the next five years, praying that they would make a go of it. They DID! At the end of the five year period, they opened a large and beautiful French restaurant in the Japanese Botanical Gardens in Birmingham. The building was of marble exterior with guest attending in tuxedo's with violin being played at the tables. The governor of the state and other dignitaries were in regular attendance.

The Nasers had three children – a son and daughter in high school – and a ten year old son (Benji) who suffered from Downs Syndrome. Benji was constantly making weird noises and unable to read or carry on intelligent conversation. The two older children attended church regularly every Sunday, but John refused to admit knowledge of the fact.

One day, Benji saw David Ring on TV and identified with him insisting on going to the revival at Landmark Church to see David Ring. Since the entire family was drawn together in love around Benji, the father relented and they attended the Ring Revival. They were, however, concerned Benji might act up with strange noises and disrupt the service, but this did not happen. He was as silent as a church mouse throughout.

After David Ring departed Birmingham for other engagements, Benji insisted on returning to Church every Sunday. This the family did and, in the process of time, the father and mother were converted to Christ. They even hosted a Bible study in their fancy French restaurant every Saturday morning.

One Sunday evening, my wife and I visited the Nasers in Birmingham for dinner. Before the meal, as John and I sat in the den, Benji came out of his room with the Bible. He stood near the center of the room and announced that today's sermon would be taken from the text of the Sower in Matthew 13, beginning at the 1st verse. I could not believe my ears since I had never heard Benji speak with such clarity and purpose. He began to read (which he cannot do) the text – "*A sower went forth to sow and as he sowed.....*" He then preached a very powerful sermon from the text. I glanced at John in amazement. He signaled for me to wait. When Benji finished the sermon, he quietly closed his Bible and returned to his room.

Dying of curiosity, I asked John how was such a thing possible? John responded, "We do not know, but every Sunday, when we return home from church, Benji recites the sermon text and sermon of the day verbatim. AMAZING!"

Benji has only one cardinal talent, but how amazing is his employment of that one talent! He was able to lead his parents to Christ by that ONE Talent. His brother, David, serves as Campus Pastor and Senior Vice President of Spiritual Development at Liberty University; I am told his sister served as medical missionary in Africa. An amazing family.

You will recall the poor widow of Luke 21 who cast in her only two mites. That was her sole possession, and she cast it all into the treasury of the Temple. Jesus observed as the wealthy cast in their golden coins of great value; but He was not impressed with those coins given out of great wealth. Those wealthy men and women would scarcely miss that sum; but the widow attracted our Lord's attention and affection. She gave her all – her ONE talent so to speak!

We all possess some God given talent – He leaves no one out! Some have a multitude of talents. But do we use the talent, or talents, that we have?

Talents are not all denominated in precious metals or government seals. There are talents of art, music, science, mathematics, engineering, and a thousand more. If we are gifted with the talent of music, for example, we need to invest that talent and not bury it in the ground. Talents invested increase phenomenally.

Several years back, I read of a banker who calculated the value of the widow's mite at that contemporary period and computed the present-day value at 4% interest compounded semi-annually. The result in increase was more than all the money in circulation in the world today. I have not worked that progression, but believe the result would definitely be a large amount.

The young lad with the five loaves of bread and two fishes likewise gave all that he had to satisfy the hunger of multitudes. His talent was in sharing, perhaps among many other talents. What talents do you have and are you investing them to comfort the elderly with beautiful music, the depressed with wonderful art of natural beauty in Creation, or your neighbor with your example of the Christian witness?