



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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Jump Start # 2360

Matthew 25:20 *"And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.'"*

Our thoughts come from the powerful parable of the talents. Jesus, in a trio of parables, shows that He is both going away and He is coming back. And, when He returns, there will be an accounting, a judgment will take place.

In the talent parable, three men are given coins called talents. The master leaves. He doesn't tell them what to do, but certain things were expected. This is understood by what the master says when he returns. He expected more than just holding on to what he gave them. He expected not only would they not lose what he gave them, but that there would be some profit. He was gone long enough for profit to happen. Two of the three servants got it. They understood. The master returned and they had doubled what he had given them. The one talent man did nothing. He buried the talent and there it remained. And, when he showed this to the master, he was sternly rebuked. What he was given was taken away from him. He was scolded and then he was tossed out of the master's presence. Doing nothing seems to be just as wrong as doing bad. God expects us to do something worthwhile with our lives.

Our verse today is the words of the five talent man. The two talent man will say nearly the same thing. What is remarkable about these words are to compare them to what the one talent man said. Here, the five talent and the two talent men describe the good that they have done in fourteen words. Not any bragging, boasting or patting themselves on the back.

When the one talent man tries to explain why he hasn't done anything, he uses forty-two words. He uses three times as many words in trying to explain, excuse and justify not doing what he should have done. I find this contrast remarkable.

Here are some thoughts:

(OVER)

First, when you are doing right, your actions speak. You don't have to tell others. They will see. They will know. The five and two talent men didn't tell us how they doubled the money. They didn't tell us how hard it was to do that. They didn't tell us if they had to change plans, run into some difficulties or work late at night to accomplish this. They didn't tell us if doubling was their target number or if that just happened. Were they shooting for more, but they just didn't have time? We don't know the answers to those questions. They were matter of fact and simply reported the final numbers.

We can forget this example. We like to hear ourselves brag. Preachers will sometimes do this. They will talk about the size of the church when they moved there and now, the current size is so much larger. Did they forget that it is God who gives the increase? Let your work, let your character, let your kindness be the voice that others see and hear.

Second, trying to explain failure takes a lot of words. We wonder if he had only worked that hard with the one talent, maybe he'd have something to show for it. Long, long explanations as to why one cannot attend services. Long, long explanations as to why one isn't holding up their responsibilities at home. It seems that the one talent man knew he was in trouble. His many words appear to be an attempt to make something wrong look right. After his forty-two words, the first thing the master says to him is, "You wicked, lazy slave." His words didn't impress the master. His reasoning bombed. His excuses failed. He was in trouble.

Some folks are long on talk and short on doing. Get some people together and when one starts complaining, the whole group can turn that way. Here are some things that bothers me, someone starts. And, off they go, listing all the things that upsets them, bothers them and worries them. The color of the paint, the number of deacons, the temperature of the building, the parking situation, the lighting, the preaching, the location, the children running, the hours that we meet-it seems that everything is wrong. One wonders why they even go there if they feel that way. But what so often is lacking is anyone volunteering to be part of a solution. It's easy to talk. It's easy to point your finger in the air and declare, "If I was the preacher, I'd be doing..." Or, "If I was one of the elders, this is how I'd do things." Yet, if anyone approached them about serving as a deacon or elder, they'd run right through a wall to get away from that. Talk is cheap, if it is not backed up by good actions.

Third, the one talent man really didn't know his master. He called him a "hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed." Not only is that insulting, but it attacks the character of the master. How can one reap where he did not sow? Implied is that someone else sowed and then the master took that harvest. Is the master a thief? Is he taking advantage of others? Is he making others do all the work and he is getting all the benefits? Remember, in these parables, we are seeing Jesus. Jesus is not hard. He's kind. He's generous. He's forgiving. He's helpful. Jesus didn't take from anyone. This one talent man didn't know his master. And since he didn't know his master, he didn't know what pleased his master. He didn't know what the master expected.

Is it possible for you and I to know facts about the Bible without really knowing God? Do we know what pleases God? Do we know what God expects? Or, like the one talent man, are we guessing? He's what we think God likes? Is it? We ought to know, if we really knew Him.

Fourth, it is important to see that the master never compared the servants to each other. He never told the two talent man, "I sure wish you did what the five talent man did." He doesn't do that. We do. We

have our favorite song leaders, favorite preachers and sometimes our favorite elders. We don't see a spirit of jealousy or arrogance between these servants. They did what they could. The master praised the two talent man as much as he did the five talent man. Comparing people using doesn't turn out well. It's like a pickup game of basketball. The two best are made captains. One by one, they choose who they want on the team. Generally, there is one guy left. His ego is shot. He feels terrible. He's the last one and no one really wants him. That feeling can be expressed in worship when we start comparing folks.

Finally, this passage reminds us so well that you and I can please the Lord. I think we forget that. We beat ourselves up because we aren't doing enough. We push and push ourselves, trying to do even more in an already filled day. We do this, because we think God will love us for that. We do that because we think God will be impressed and it will guarantee us a place in Heaven. God already loves you. You really can't do anything more to make Him love you more. He gave the greatest gift, Jesus. He gave that while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). There is nothing greater to give.

I talked to a couple the other day who are about to get married. We were talking about the wedding. She came with a laptop and a three-ring binder. She had all kinds of stuff. Why was she doing all of this? So, her boyfriend would marry her? He already asked her and given her a ring. She is doing that because he asked her. So, why do we worship, follow Christ and busy ourselves in the kingdom? So, God will love us? He already loves us. We do those things because He loves us.

You can put a smile on the face of God. You can please God. You can make God happy. You do this when you do what He says. Stop trying to be unique, original, different or one of a kind. That will get you in trouble. Simply follow what God says. In principle, the five talent and the two talent men did the same thing. And, they both pleased the master. No thought of one being a copy cat. No indication that they should have been different. They did what the master wanted and he was pleased.

Fourteen words or forty-two words. Pleasing the master or coming up with excuses. Well done or, you wicked, lazy slave. Which will it be for us?

Something to think about...

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)



