



THE EXHORTER

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

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 2826

Matthew 25:15 *“And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.”*

The other day was really tough on me. No, there wasn't another death. No one hollered at me. The checks didn't bounce. I wasn't worn out from doing things. My self-esteem took a hit. It was tough on the insides for me. And, all of this was to my doings. A new friend invited me over. He showed me his house and how he had taken down walls, moved windows and redid the whole place. It was beautiful. He took me to his garage where a shell of a car sat. It was down to bare sheet metal. No hood. No engine. No tires. He was going to rebuild the car from the bare bones up. I went home thinking, I don't know how to do any of those things. I don't know construction. I couldn't begin to tell you about the mechanics of a car. I sat in the basement, with these thoughts rolling through my mind, wondering what I was good at and what I have accomplished in my life. As I was sinking deeper into the blues, my wife was upstairs playing her grand piano. She's good. She's really good. Had she stuck with it in college and with a few breaks, she may have made a professional orchestra. I like listening to her play. But on this night, it was just another log in the fire of my pity party. I can't play. I don't understand music. We will hear someone on TV sing, and my wife will say, “Do you hear that? She's not on pitch.” It sounded fine to me.

Can't remodel a house. Can't rebuild a car. Can't play music. Boy, that “Can't” song can really get a person down. It makes one feel worthless and useless. And, that takes us to our verse today, the parable of the talents. A talent was a type of currency, not ability. But, we use this passage to talk about our abilities. Each person in this parable was given a certain amount based upon his ability. So, the five talent man had the most ability. The two talent man, next. The one talent man had the least ability. He's like the last guy chosen in a game of pick up basketball. “You can have him,” which really means, “he's not very good.”

One has to wonder if the one talent man felt jealous of the five talent man. Did the one talent man feel low because he wasn't trusted with more? Was he thinking, “the master doesn't think much of me,” or, “I can't do anything.” There are some lessons to be learned here:

First, no comparison were made. The master never rebuked the two talent man for not doing as much as the five talent man did. You and I love to compare. We do that all the time. We compare how we look to the way others look. We compare lifestyles. “Look,” we say, “at the size of house that family lives in.”

(OVER)

Comparisons usually do not turn out well. Either, we look at someone who can't do what we do and that elevates our ego, or, we look at what we can't do and that makes us feel worthless. Comparing doesn't turn out well.

Second, the one talent man was blessed and used by the master. I don't see what the master was doing as a pity or a charity case. I don't think he felt obligated to have to give the one talent man something. He expected him to do what the others were doing, put the talent in the bank and have a positive return. And, what happens in life is that we see how blessed others are and we fail to see our own blessings. We take inventory of what we cannot do, but we fail to see what we can do. The Lord invites us into his kingdom and allows us to engage in the great work of saving souls. Teaching, encouraging, supporting are all things that we can do. Each person in that parable received talent, as each of us have. We are all blessed by the Lord.

Third, there is good that we all can do. The Lord uses the same words of honor for both the five talent man and the two talent man. This wasn't like the Olympics in which one received a gold medal, then silver and then bronze. We look at it that way, but that's not the way it is supposed to be. The five and two talent men were equal in the blessings of their master. The Lord's parable of the laborers in the vineyard shows that the man who worked at the eleventh hour received the same as the one who worked all day. The Lord is generous. The Lord makes us equal with the apostles even though we will never do what they did. But in this passage about the talents, the one talent man was rebuked because he did nothing. There is something we all can do. The Lord expects that. Even in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, the eleventh hour man worked one hour. He did not get paid for standing idle. He went to the fields and he worked. You might not be able to preach. Maybe teaching isn't your thing. You can cook, make food for someone. You can pull weeds, get down to the church building and make it look nice. You can drive, so offer to pick someone up and take them to services. There is something that you can do.

Now, back to my story. Emails started coming in. One from a preacher in another state who said that he loved a recent Jump Start that I wrote and shared it with the entire church. It was helpful he said. Then one came in from yet another state, asking if I would be willing to talk on their podcast. Then came one from a newspaper editor, wanting permission to use my Jump Starts in the local paper.

No, I can't play the piano. And, I can't rebuild a car. And, I can't remodel a house. But, I can write and I can preach. And, maybe you can't write and you can't preach, but there is something that you can do. Words on a page do not seem like much to rebuilding a car, but those words on a page may lift a weary soul, give someone hope and help someone find the Lord.

There is something that we all can do. Find what you are good at. Develop that. Learn more about that. Talk to others who do the same thing. Grow that talent and then use it.

And, what we can do is enjoy the way others use their talents. I can't play the piano, but I can sure enjoy having a home concert any time. I can praise the ability of others, enjoy the great work they are doing and be the best cheerleader in their corner. One can be jealous and envious, or one can enjoy the good work of others.

Every person in the Lord's parable was given a talent. And, you too, were given a talent. Find it. Use it. Lift your eyes heavenward. God has chosen you, blessed you and gifted you just the way you are. The master is away. But, he's coming back. What are you doing with what He gave you?

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

