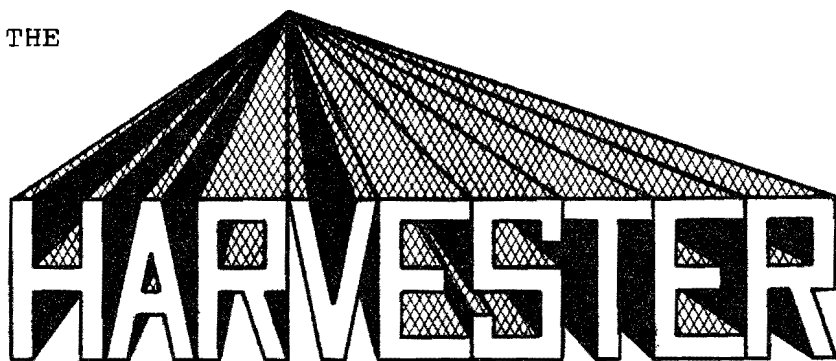


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"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

April 1986

No. 004

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

All of us should be familiar with the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30). However, like any other parable, it is a useless story unless we can derive some lesson from it and apply it to our lives. Perhaps this parable would be more meaningful and lasting if we could read a "modernized version" which will be adapted especially for us. With this intent in mind, let us consider the following "version":

For the kingdom of heaven, the church of Christ, is like a man going on a journey, who called his own servants, and delivered to them his goods. To one he gave a wonderful singing voice and the ability to lead any song in the songbook, to another: a good singing voice and the ability to lead some songs, and to another: a voice and the ability to lead one or

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two songs; to each according to his ability. Then the master went away. He who had received the wonderful voice and the ability to lead any song in the songbook went and sang, making melody in his heart to the Lord and lead songs when called upon in the church services. And likewise he who had received the good voice and the ability to lead some songs, also used his talent when the opportunity came. But he who had received a voice and the ability to lead one or two songs went and did not sing hardly at all and when asked to lead a song, would always say, "Well, I'm not a good song leader and I don't know if I can lead one." After a long time the lord of those servants returned and evaluated them. So the first man came, saying, "Lord, you delivered to me a wonderful voice and the ability to lead any song in the

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Is not the way to heavenly gain
Through earthly grief and loss?
Rest must be won by toil and pain, --
The crown repays the cross.

In tears and trials thou must sow,
To reap in joy and love;
We cannot find our home below,
And hope for one above.

As woods, when shaken by the breeze
Take deeper, firmer root;
As winter's frost but makes the trees
Abound in summer fruit;

So every Heaven-sent pang and throe
That Christian firmness tries,
But nerves us for our work below,
And forms us for the skies.

Henry F. Lyte

songbook: behold, I have increased my ability to sing and lead songs through continually using what talent you gave me." His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter into the joy of your lord." The second man also came and said, "Lord, you delivered to me a good voice and the ability to lead some songs: behold, I have also increased my ability to sing and lead songs." His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter into the joy of your lord." Then the third man came and said, "Lord, I knew you to be a hard man. And I was afraid, and went and hid my abilities because I could not sing or lead songs as well as the others. In effect, the talent you gave me is still yours." His lord answered and said to him, "You wicked and lazy servant! You knew I was a hard man. Therefore, you ought to have at least tried to sing and lead songs and not make excuses. Take the talent from him, and give it to the first man. For the man who uses well what he is given shall be given more, and he shall have plenty. But from the man who is unfaithful, even what little ability he has shall be taken from him. And throw the useless servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Another version could be written where the first man is given the ability to lead the most beautiful prayer ever heard, the second man: the ability to lead good prayers, and the third man: the ability to lead one or two prayers. While the others would use their abilities when the opportunity came, the third man would hide his. For example, when called on to lead the prayer in church, he would always call on someone else to do it or would decline the offer.

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, and all correspondence to:

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"Why?", asked the Lord. "Because I can not pray the best prayer in the world nor can I pray as good as the others." And with that flimsy excuse for not even trying, the man is punished. This version certainly hits home with some of us.

In the Lord's church we can also see evidences of three types of speakers. One is given a powerful voice who could stir hardened hearts while preaching the gospel. The second is given a loud voice who could adequately preach the Word. And the third has a voice who could read the scriptures. Once again, we see the first two increase their speaking capabilities through continually using what talent the Lord gave them. The third man, however, refuses to get behind the pulpit to proclaim God's "good news" and makes excuses. "I have never baptized anyone nor has anyone come up for prayers whenever I speak. That proves I shouldn't be preaching because I am not as good as the other speakers in our area." In the end his talent is taken away and given to another.

Finally, let us consider a version that deals with our giving. To every person, God has given a different income. To one he gave a fantastic job making \$50,000 a year, to another: a good job making \$20,000 a year, and to another: a rough job making \$10,000 a year. Of course, we expect the first two to contribute a good sum on the first day of the week as God

has prospered him. But how often do we see the third man in much of our own lives? He goes and spends his money first for entertainment on himself, then pays his bills, and finally gives the Lord his leftover change on Sunday morning. All he ever says is, "Lord, I could not afford to give as much as the others nor could I be a cheerful giver of my hard earned money. But I'm thankful I do have my job!" The Lord will definitely throw such a wicked and lazy servant into outer darkness.

As you can see, the Parable of the Talents can apply to anybody and to any subject. The message is clear: Do the best you can with what the Lord has given you. The worst thing a person can do is to sit around doing nothing! Thus, the Preacher gave this excellent advice: *"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."* (Eccl. 9:10) How do we now stand? With our hands in our pockets? Or doing the best we can? How do YOU answer?

RAY

FROM THE SCRIPTURES ...

ABOUT BRIBERY

And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous. (Exo. 23:8)

Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. (Deut. 27:25)

And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. (1 Sam. 8:3)

Fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. (Job 15:34)

Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. (Psa. 26:9,10)

He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live. (Prov. 15:27)

Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain. (Prov. 25:14)

To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress. (Prov. 28:21)

A gift destroyeth the heart. (Eccl. 7:7)

He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. (Isa. 33:15,16)

For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. (Amos 5:12)

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him. (Matt 26:14-16)

AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS

The Bible has a lot to say concerning the influence that Christians should have. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul was thankful of the example and influence these brethren had. "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in

much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing." (1 Thess. 1:6-8)

In His famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also stressed the importance of being a good influence on others. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works; and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:13-16) When God's people become a good influence, then our Heavenly Father will be glorified!

So how are we influencing others when it deals with attending the church services? Are we setting good examples? Parents know how children tend to imitate their every movement. Do we want our children to follow the very steps we are taking today? Skip services whenever we feel like it?

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." (1 Pet. 3:1,2) This passage suggests that the life and influence of a believing wife can possibly convert the man who has yet to obey the gospel. Such is the power of influence!

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Now, what would the husband think about the Lord's church if he saw his wife make no effort to attend the services? (And vice-versa.)

Sometimes we try very hard to get non-members to come to the worship services. But consider the example we are setting before them. We will be more influential in getting people to come to church when we start coming ourselves!

RAY

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
April 4-6 (F-Su)	Napolean Church Woodland, AL 7:00pm	Wilbur Bass Auburn, AL
April 7-11	West Point Church West Point, GA	James McDonald Woodbury, TN
April 7-13 (M-Su)	Oak Grove Church Eubank, KY 7:30pm (EST)	Sammy Dick Cave City, KY
April 10-13 (Th-Su)	Ashlock Church Ashlock, KY 7:00pm (local time)	V.W. Boland Gadsden, AL
April 21-25	Hastings, OK	Harry Cobb Conley, GA
May 9-11 (F-Su)	Sun Hill Road Birmingham, AL 7:30pm (6pm Sun.)	Sammy Dick Cave City, KY
June 2-8 (M-Su)	Rich Hill Church Casey Co., KY 7:00pm (EST)	Sammy Dick Cave City, KY
June 6-8	Freefield Church State Line, MS	James McDonald Woodbury, TN