

“You've Got Talent – Now Use It”

<PRAISE MUISC>

Hard work and persistence; those are two phrases that could be used to describe the career of New England Patriots' two-time Super Bowl MVP quarterback, Tom Brady.

But did any of you realize that without a deep rooted dedication and passion for the game, he might not have ever had a football career? <Dramatic Pause>

He attended the University of Michigan and during his sophomore year he actually spent most of his time on the bench. Concerned about his lack of opportunity and at the point of preparing to transfer to another university, he talked with his coach. <Dramatic Pause>

His coach's advice: “Go out there and do everything you can to control what you can control and quit worrying about how many repetitions you get vs. the other quarterbacks. The skills they have and you don't. Worry only about those things that you do well”.

So did the advice make any difference? Let's just say that Brady was the starting quarterback for the next two seasons and led his team to bowl games both years. And of course we know what he's done in the NFL.

Thinking back though, the coach's advice does remind me of a principle that Jesus spoke about through the parable of the talents. Turn with me to Matthew 25 and together let's become more familiar with what Jesus is asking us to do with our talents.

Starting in verse 14:

14"For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15"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. 16"Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17"In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18"But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19"Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20"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.' 21"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 22"Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' 23"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 24"And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' 26"But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27"Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on

my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28"Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' 29"For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30"Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Imagine for a moment that you were there on that day when Jesus stood up and spoke that parable. Can you imagine how quiet it would have been after He was done? I bet you could have heard a pin drop. So many things must have been going through their minds. Don't you wonder what they were thinking? Based on their usual inability to fully grasp other parables' concepts, I imagine that most of them are thinking; who of us here would get the three talents? Who would get the two? And who among us would only have one? You see, I don't think they got it, I think they totally missed the point. And honestly, I don't know that we really understand it today either. <Dramatic Pause>

You see this parable has been preached for centuries and from almost every angle possible, but I am here today to tell you that this parable is not some sort of prophetic story describing our 21st century economic classification system of describing people's wealth and worth. You know, Rich, Middle-Class, and poor. It's not a 2-sided prosperity parable letting you know that Jesus is going to give a lot to some and little to others. And as much as some would like you to think, it's not a parable that suggests that based upon your decision you'll either be saved and go to heaven or spend your eternity in Hell. <Dramatic Pause> It's none of those things.

So if it's not one of those things what is it? What did Jesus want his 1st and 21st century disciples to take away from this parable? Let me break it down for you into three key take-a-ways:

First we need to realize that we're uniquely gifted by God himself. You see the fact that each servant receives a different number of talents within this parable has nothing to do with financial gains or who he trusts more than the others, it's a reminder to each of us that we each have unique gifts presented to us by God himself. This is explained more in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 where it says:

4Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. **5**And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. **6**There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. **7**But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. **8**For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; **9**to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, **10**and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. **11**But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

You see, there's no need to start comparing what each of us have or don't have. There's no need to compare yourself to your neighbor or anyone else for that matter because it just doesn't matter. We've each been given different gifts according to His Will and they are to be used in the way He chooses. Instead of wishing to have or wondering about the

gifts of others, Jesus calls us to use the gifts we are given to the best of our ability.

Continuing on in 1 Corinthians 12, He explains it this way, starting in verse 12:

12For even ^(W)as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, ^(X)so also is Christ. **13**For ^(Y)by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether ^(Z)Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to ^(AA)drink of one Spirit. **14**For ^(AB)the body is not one member, but many. **15**If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.

16And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. **17**If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? **18**But now God has ^(AC)placed the members, each one of them, in the body, ^(AD)just as He desired. **19**If they were all one member, where would the body be? **20**But now ^(AE)there are many members, but one body. **21**And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." **22**On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; **23**and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, **24**whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, **25**so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. **26**And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one

member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. **27**Now you are ^(AF)Christ's body, and ^(AG)individually members of it.

When we are able to let go of wondering what it would be like to do the work of someone else and instead focus in on the job that Christ has placed us in, we become part of the body of Christ. And the more we work as one in the body of Christ the more we realize just how gifted we really are. This brings me to point number 2: How has Jesus Called us to use these gifts?

Now that we all know that we all have very specific God given gifts and because of this there is no longer a need to ponder about what other peoples gifts are; how are we to use these gifts? The Bible urges us to come to the Lord in prayer in order to understand his will. In Proverbs 8:14, He promises us that when we come to Him in prayer and seek Godly counsel he will provide sound judgment. Also in, In Proverbs 12:15 He tells us:

15 The way of a fool seems right to him,
but a wise man listens to advice.

Using our strength without guidance He says is foolish and will bring failure, however if we are wise and seek the counsel of God we will find both the strength and the determination to do whatever God has called us to do.

Do you remember what God has called us to do. Turn with me over to Proverbs 11:30.
It says:

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who is **wise wins souls**.

Did you catch that, when we make wise Godly decisions we can win souls... That's the whole point isn't it. We want to win souls for Christ. Suddenly everything else shouldn't matter. It shouldn't matter where you work, How much you make, What neighborhood you live in, The number of kids you have, what kind of car you drive... None of that should matter because through this parable you start to understand that it's not about you. It's all about God and how we can use the gifts He has given to us to win souls for Him. But how do we stay the course, how do we ensure that we can hear those wonderful words spoken to both the first and second servants "Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your master. That brings me to our third point: The only way that we're going to have a chance to hear those wonderful words is to ensure that over the long haul we are faithful in doing exactly what the Lord has called us to do.

Does anyone remember the 2004 men's Olympic basketball team? It was like a Who's Who of men's professional basketball. Names like Carmello Anthony, Tim Duncan, LeBron James and Lamar Odom, it was like a dream team. Imagine having all of those stars on one team, you'd think they would be unstoppable, right? Unfortunately this all-star strategy backfired on them when they played against the most unlikely opponent, Puerto Rico. You see you can have all of the talent and giftedness in the world but if you're not all out there with the same united goal in sight, you've failed before you've even started and that's exactly what happened back in 2004 when the US lost to Puerto Rico 92-73. Each of these dream team stars individually focused more on making themselves look good instead of coming together as a team and focusing on winning the game. Because of their lack of shared vision, they were the first US Olympic basketball team to

lose a game since 1992 when NBA players were officially allowed to play. And it's not like the game was close, It was 92-73.

As followers of Christ we too have been placed on a dream team. Each of us received different gifts but we need to ensure that we don't fall into the same pit that the 2004 Olympic basketball team did. We need to remember at all time that our focus is not about what we can do for ourselves, but what WE can do for Him. We need to remember that God's plans are bigger than just us, we are part of His body and by listening, trusting and following through with the gifts, talents and abilities that He has provided us, He will be glorified and His Will will be done. And you know what that is right? I won't even attempt to say it any better than He himself said it in Matthew 28:19:

19"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

We are to use our talents and abilities to bring glory and honor to Him, the One who blessed us with them, not ourselves. All of us however, have many examples of times we've missed the mark, we get caught up in the hype of life and can quickly get derailed.

I challenge you today, it's never too late, get back into the game, readjust your focus and use your talents for Him. It's only by our dedication to accept and use our God given gifts, talents and abilities that we as the body of Christ can help Him to bring forth the fulfillment of His Kingdom.

<Praise Music/Meditation>

Wrap-up

Do you remember hearing about 26 year old Kyle MacDonald? He had a red paper clip and a dream: You see, he was attempting to trade a red paper clip for something a little better, then he planned to trade that for something better and so on until he reached his goal of having owning a home.. That's right he wanted to turn a paper clip into a house, without any money and he did it.

He advertised the paperclip on craigslist.com where he was able to swap it for a fish-shaped pen. Later that same day, He was able to trade the pen for a small ceramic doorknob. He traded the doorknob for a Coleman camping stove. Next, the stove was traded for a generator, the generator for an instant party package. The party package was traded for a snowmobile and after a bit of help from a morning news program on Canadian TV he was soon able to trade the snowmobile for an all expenses paid trip to a town in Canada called "Yahk." Having not yet fulfilled his dream, he then traded the trip for a delivery van which was later traded for a recording contract, which included studio time. He was then able to swap the recording contract for a year's accommodation in a house in Phoenix Arizona. Ah, what an accomplishment... but wait he said that he wanted to own a home not rent one. So he exchanged the accommodation in Arizona for a day with Alice Cooper. And the day with Alice Cooper he swapped for a snow globe of the band KISS! Strange I know, but just wait. The KISS snow globe was swapped for an acting part in a movie! Apparently the actor Corbin Berinson is an avid snow globe collector and was particularly interested in the KISS snow globe, so he swapped for it.

Finally, a local municipality in Saskatchewan Canada handed over the title deeds for a house for the movie role and with that he succeeded.

Wow..... I tell you this story in order to prove that, Kyle MacDonald seems to be an amazingly talented negotiator and salesman. But to what end? <Pause> But to what end? <Pause>

Yes it's hard for any of us to deny that Kyle was extremely talented, but I know for a fact that many of us today are as if not more talented than Kyle, but we've fallen into his same trap... We've made it about us, we've lost our target. Today we've read through Jesus' Parable of the Talents we've learned that we're all uniquely gifted for a very specific roles within the kingdom of God. We've learned that we need to leverage the gifts, talents and abilities we have been given for Him not us. We've learned that we are to turn a kingdom profit and live a life that is pleasing to our God.

Friends, the message contained in this parable ought to change the way you walk through life. If one man can turn a paper clip into a house just with some motivation and a little bit of sales technique, imagine what God could do through you <Point into crowd> or you <Point into crowd> or you <Point into crowd> or better yet what God could do through all of us when all of our gifts, talents and abilities are focused totally on Him.

Bottom Line:

You've Got Talent – Now Use It **For Him**