

MANAGING *the* TALENTS GOD *has* GIVEN

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus gives two parables that make use of the term "talent". At that time, a single talent was known as a unit of wealth equal to what a "unskilled" laborer would be paid over the course of about 20 years. Therefore, ten talents would equal 200 years' pay, and a thousand talents would take 20,000 years to earn!

Today, the word "talent" has a much different meaning. Still, there is an important similarity: whether a monetary gift or a gift of skill, the talents we have been given are very valuable. **1 Peter 4:10** says "*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace*". Before we get into the parables, think about the varied gifts that God has graciously given to you, including skills and abilities (your talents). How might your talents be applied to serve others?

In the first parable [see **Matthew 18:23-35**], we see a lesson regarding something that is owed. In its context, it is clearly a parable about forgiveness. If a talent = 20 years' worth of "unskilled" labor, a thousand of them would be worth about \$600 million (about twice the contract offered to Polish soccer star Robert Lewandowski from Al-Hilal). That's some very valuable talent! If you had a debt that large, would you be able to pay it off?

Now read **Matthew 25:14-30**. Unlike the previous parable (which was about a debt that was owed), this parable in its context is about gifts entrusted to us (v. 14). Whose property does this parable describe?

Ten talents would be the equivalent of \$6 million (what today's top-tier corporate executive might bring home every year). Is it unfair that some have been given more "talent(s)" than others?

Only 2 types of people are illustrated by the three servants. Servants #1 and #2 only differ in the size of the gift entrusted to them. Both apply their gift the same way, and both receive the same praise. Servant #3 does something entirely different. Describe the difference. How does this impact our perspective on the very successful among us?

Now consider your talents that you identified previously, and read what St. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31**. What is the source of your talents? How might your personal gifts be applied in the Church?

Why do you suppose God used such wealth to illustrate His message in these parables?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, You suffered in the flesh for our sakes and now You call us to a new life that You have given us. As stewards of this new life, help us to employ everything we have, including all Your varied gifts, even our very lives, to benefit the Church and our neighbor, that they may also come alive in You. In Your name we pray; Amen.