

RECOGNIZING TRUE TALENT

More avenues to discover talent are open than ever before. From popular programs like *America's Got Talent* and *The Voice*, popularity can easily be found. Anyone can make a video and post it on platforms such as TikTok or YouTube. Influencers realize so much talent and the hunger to uncover it is insatiable. More access has led to more discoveries. But talent is not just one dimensional; self-help and inspiration can be found on the internet. Everywhere talent is being revealed. In the world of sports, talent scouts are sent to evaluate performance and computers seem to be able to analyze a swing, a throw, a pattern. Instead of talent being uncovered or discovered it seems it is constantly being revealed. It is a microscope that many feel to be like living in a pressure cooker. Our young people not only face peer pressure, but they also face the reality that anything and everything they do or say can be shared with millions of people in a simple post. With all of this comes incredible responsibility. It invites us to the truth of talent.

In the parable, there is a division of talents. Some are great at the task and others are not. The one who does nothing with the talent is paralyzed by fear. The fear has so much power that he buries what is given to him. He cannot seem to find any confidence to see clearly. He understands the pressure, he knows the boss to be very demanding, yet he cannot find a pathway. It is here where I want to start a reflection on the Gospel. In the action of burying, what do we bury?

Many times what we choose to bury may be steeped in pain. Sometimes what we bury comes from powerful words spoken to us. Sometimes we bury the truth. Sometimes we bury wishes and dreams, missed opportunities. We need to be honest about what we have buried. The person in the Gospel buried something given to him. At times we might feel closest to this part of the parable.

At other times we might be filled with the joy of taking what is given and making it into something more. The landowner who has servants rewards them. They are not only doers, but it seems that they understood his vision. At times we find ourselves readily able to see a pathway, aware of our blessings and we trust so deeply.

Another person in the parable is the man himself who hands out the talents. He was going on a journey. How well do we share? How well do we offer others true worth by handing off things to them that are precious to us? On the other side of the coin, how do we treat others when we feel they are not invested? How do we treat those who we feel have wasted their talents? Do we throw them out?

The Gospel offers many entrance points into this parable and we must do the choosing as to how we will enter. What remains true is parables are many-layered and at different times in our lives we will ponder and enter the same story from varying entrance points. May God lead you to the one you are to enter this time. The good news is that God recognizes and sustains the talents and gifts He has given us.



Father John Ouper