
TALENTS

There was a man trudging along a road in the country. It was a cold morning, he had come a long way and he was tired. He was hungry and thought he would like some soup. He had nothing to make soup with and no money to buy any. Most people would have told an hard luck story, begged, borrowed or stolen, but this man had been taught to use his talents. So he began to take stock, saying "What have I in my house?" He had nothing except a tin bucket in one hand and a kit in the other. As he thus surmised he noticed a brook, and said "Ah there's some nice cool water, I'll fill the bucket. And there beside the stream is plenty of small wood, and I have some matches, so I'll make a fire and hang the pot over it, and start the soup anyway." No sooner said than done. Then from the kit he produced pepper and salt, and shaking some into the pot he sat down by the fire and started to stir the contents with a long spoon from the kit.

A man seeing the fire and being attracted to it because of the chill morning stopped his cart and came over, and warming his hands before the flame, passed the time of day and looking into the pot said, "What are you making there?" The other answered, "Why I'm making some soup." The newcomer laughed and said, "You can't make soup that way." "No", came the reply good-naturedly, "I thought soup couldn't be made any other way." The new arrival said, "That's right too. I didn't mean exactly that. I meant that you need soup bones and vegetables to make soup with." The soup-maker replied, "Yes, I knew that, but you see I had no soup bones and no vegetables to make the soup with, neither had I the money to buy them, so since I am one who believes in using his talents, I looked about to see what I had to start with. I had my bucket, then I saw the brook with the nice clear water, and filled the bucket. Then I saw the small wood, and I had the matches, so I made the fire, slung the bucket over it, got some pepper and salt from my kit, and—well here we are."

The man laughed and said, "That's a new one on me, and sounds all right. I've just returned from market and happen to have in my cart a lot of soup bones and I'll be glad to get at least sufficient to make a bucket of soup," and so he returned to his cart, and in a few moments the soup bones were in the pot.

The two sat down and chatted. Just then another man attracted by the fire, stopped his wagon and came over, and warming his hands, looked into the pot and said after wishing them the top o' the morning, "What are you doing there?" The man of talents said, "Why, we are making soup." The new arrival said, "You can't make soup without vegetables." "No", said the other, "I know that, but I had no vegetables nor soup bones either a moment ago, but having been trained to use my talents, I started the soup with what I had, namely the tin bucket, water from the stream, and some small wood for the fire, then this chap came along and supplied the bones, and that's as far as we have gotten." The last arrival said, "That's pretty good. Well, I'll supply the vegetables. I've just started on my way to market with a load of them, and enough to make a pail of soup will never be missed." So he trotted back to his wagon and in a moment reappeared with onions, beets, beans, carrots, potatoes, tomatoes, etc., and in another moment they were simmering in the pot.

As the soup-maker stirred, others came by, and seeing the fire, stopped and sat about and chatted until finally when the soup, a fine savoury mess, was ready, there were forty odd sitting about the fire and everyone had a large bowl of soup.

Now the whole point of this story is that as a result of the man using his talents, over forty were well and bountifully fed, including the talent man himself, whereas if he had been like the great majority of people in a similar situation, he would have begged, borrowed, told an hard luck story or maybe stolen, in order to get something to eat, and probably fared badly into the bargain, but as it was, he was not only able to have a full meal for himself but was able to feed many more.

Jesus told a story about this very business of using the talents, the point of which, simple though it is, is generally lost. It appears that an householder called his three servants and entrusting them

with certain talents, to one five, to another two, and to another one, required them to put those talents to use and in time he would return and demand an accounting. In due course he did so and the first said that he had doubled his and now where he had but five he had ten, to which the master replied, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." To the next who similarly reported that the two talents entrusted to him had been used and had been doubled, the master replied to him exactly as to the other with ten talents. Then came the one entrusted with one talent who said in effect that he knew his master to be an hard man, and so fearing he might lose the one talent he had wrapped it in a napkin and buried it in the ground for safe keeping, and now he had it to return to him. To this the master said, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents, for unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

And so it is.