

Talents, Servants, and Government Busybodies



a short satire

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and
Government
Busybodies**

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A master had three servants. He gave the first servant five talents, the second servant two talents, and the third servant one talent. Then the master went away for a time, leaving his servants to look after themselves and what they had been given.

And the first servant, who had been given five talents, worked hard, doubling his five talents to ten. And the second servant, who had been given two talents, worked hard as well, doubling her two talents to four. But the third servant did not work hard. He did not work at all. He buried his talent in the ground instead, where it lay wasted and unused.

When the master returned from his journey, he sought an account of how his servants had fared. The first servant reported he had taken the five talents he had been given and had earned five more. The second servant reported she had taken the two talents she had been given and had earned two more. The third servant reported he had buried his talent in the ground and had earned nothing.

And the master, knowing what behaviors he wanted to encourage and what behaviors he wanted to discourage, rewarded those servants who had doubled their talents, but the servant who had hidden his talent the master rewarded not. Instead, the master took the talent away from the unproductive servant and gave it to the servant who had earned five.

But then the government busybodies intruded into the story. From the servant who had gained two talents, the government busybodies taxed one talent. From the servant who had gained six talents (five earned and one awarded), the government busybodies taxed four. And then the government busybodies, congratulating themselves for their generosity, took the talents they had confiscated and redistributed them to the talentless servant, who promptly buried them in the ground, where they were lost forever.

And the reader comprehends the parable, looks at the world outside, and says: "We are so screwed."

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