



The Talents

Matthew 25:14-30

"Now where did he go?!" Safari Sam mumbled as he lifted up a branch and peered through his binoculars into the clearing.

"Whatcha' doin' Safari Sam?" Billy called out in his usual loud voice.

"Shhhh!" Safari Sam whispered. "You'll scare him away."

"Scare who?" said Billy as he and Louis peered through the branches to see what Safari Sam was looking at.

"I've lost my ostrich," Safari Sam whispered. "Loud noises scare him. We have to be very quiet."

"Yeah, about that," Louis whispered, "Ranger Reggie sent us to tell you he needs the ostrich for the show today. He said to hurry."

Safari Sam grunted under his breath. "I know. But Ozzie got away from me. I've got to catch him."

"I can help!" offered Billy. "When you see him, I'll run out and grab him."

"There's no way you could catch him," Safari Sam explained softly. "Ostriches are so huge that they can't fly, but they can run up to 40 miles per hour! We can't call him either because ostriches are cowards. If we yelled his name, he'd hide. In the wild, ostriches are afraid of lions and other large animals and they don't like to fight."

"I heard they bury their heads in the dirt," Billy exclaimed.

"Well, not quite," Safari Sam said as he focused his binoculars on a brownish lump rising from the ground. "Actually, they lay down with their heads on the ground to try to fool predators into believing they are a pile of dirt. Silly, isn't it? God has given them legs so powerful that they could kill a lion with a single kick, but instead they hide their strength and talent because they are big sissies. In fact, they..." Sam stopped mid-sentence. "Stay here and be quiet!" he ordered as he grabbed a lasso rope and tiptoed out into the clearing.

Sam moved silently until he stood behind the large brown lump. A tiny head and big beak on top of a long neck popped up and looked around. Suddenly, Ozzie jumped up and began to run. Safari Sam tossed his lasso around the giant bird's body and swiftly pulled him to the ground.

"Wow! Did you see that?!" Billy yelled.

"Safari Sam is really good with the lasso," Louis agreed, his eyes wide as he watched Safari Sam lead Ozzie back to where they were standing.

"You were awesome!" Billy exclaimed. "You just threw that rope up in the air and caught that racing ostrich on your first try!"

Safari Sam smiled and tied Ozzie's rope to a nearby tree. "Well, don't hide the talents God gave ya', I always say!" he replied.

"What do you mean?" Louis asked.

"Have you heard Jesus' parable about the talents?" Safari Sam asked. The boys shook their heads. "Well, get my Bible out of my pack and open it to Matthew 25." Billy found Matthew 25 and handed the Bible to Safari Sam. "This is a parable about a master who was going out of town. He called his servants and trusted each of them with some of his talents. He trusted them to use the talents to make more talents."

"Wait!" Billy interrupted. "How could the master give away his talents? Aren't you born with your own skills or you have to work hard and long to get new skills?"

"In Bible times, talents were coins which were worth a lot of money," said Safari Sam. "So, he gave the first servant five talents, the second servant two talents, and he gave the last servant one talent. Then, the master left."

"So, what did the servants do with the talents?" Louis asked.

"Well, the first man used the five talents to make five more talents!" Safari Sam explained. "The second fellow put his two talents to work and earned two more talents!" He paused and looked at the boys. "But, the last fellow was lazy, so he didn't do anything with his one talent. He just hid it in the dirt."

"What did the master do when he got back?" Billy asked.

"When the master came home, the first fellow came out and said, 'Master, you trusted me with five talents and I have earned five more!'" Safari Sam answered.

"Did that make the master happy?" Louis questioned.

"Let's see what the Bible says," Safari Sam said. "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

Louis grinned. "It sounds like the master was very happy! What about the second servant?"

"The second fellow came out and said, 'Master, you trusted me with two talents and I earned two more!' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

"Well, that's good news for those two servants, but what about the man that buried his talent? What did the master think about him?" Billy asked.

"The master was not happy," Safari Sam answered as he shook his head. "He told the last servant that he should have at least put the money in the bank so he could earn interest. The master took the talent away from that servant and threw him out. Then, the master gave the talent to the servant with the ten talents. That servant had been faithful to use what he had been given, so the master trusted him with more."

"I don't get it," said Billy. "What does the master's money have to do with hiding our skills?"

Safari Sam smiled as he untied Ozzie from the tree. "God wants us to be faithful to use all the gifts He has trusted us with." He stopped and gave the prancing ostrich a gentle pat on the side. "God doesn't want us to be like the ostrich and run away or hide. We are strong just like the ostrich, so we should use all of the strengths and gifts God gives us to build His kingdom! God trusts us to try our best. He will do the rest! He will do many great things through you when you are faithful with what He has entrusted to you!"

"Oh, ok!" Billy smiled. "Just like you used your lassoing skills to catch Ozzie so he can help Ranger Reggie teach the kids on his show about the Bible!"

"You got it!" Safari Sam replied.

"I'm good at baseball," Billy pondered. "I could ask God to show me how I can use baseball to build His kingdom!"

Louis had also been thinking about his skills. "I like to act," he said thoughtfully. "Maybe I could be in plays that tell stories about Jesus!"

"Now you're getting it, boys!" Safari Sam looked at his watch and began leading Ozzie down the path to camp. "We'd better get going. Ranger Reggie's show is about to begin and we need to make sure Ozzie is ready to go on stage!"