

# The Methodist Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020

## BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT

This short act of worship, based on the service which would have been held at Church today, has been prepared for you by Rev John Wiseman, to use at home. If you are well enough, why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

I have included some links to allow you to access versions of the hymns / songs / music via YouTube

### Let's begin by singing together: STF 74

(sung to the tune Glorious things of thee are spoken)

For the music of creation,  
for the song your Spirit sings,  
for your sound's divine expression,  
burst of joy in living things:  
God, our God, the world's composer,  
hear us, echoes of your voice --  
music is your art, your glory,  
let the human heart rejoice!

Psalms and symphonies exalt you,  
drum and trumpet, string and reed,  
simple melodies acclaim you,  
tunes that rise from deepest need,  
hymns of longing and belonging,  
carols from a cheerful throat,  
lilt of lullaby and lovesong  
catching heaven in a note.

All the voices of the ages  
in transcendent chorus meet,  
worship lifting up the senses,  
hands that praise, and dancing feet;  
over discord and division  
music speaks your joy and peace,  
harmony of earth and heaven,  
song of God that cannot cease.

Words © 1992 Hope Publishing Company,

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hor-BHxDns](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hor-BHxDns)

### Opening prayer: Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. <sup>2</sup>Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! <sup>3</sup>If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? <sup>4</sup>But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. <sup>5</sup>I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; <sup>6</sup>my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. <sup>7</sup>O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. <sup>8</sup>It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

### This morning's reading: Matthew 25:14-30

<sup>14</sup>"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup>to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup>The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup>In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup>But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

<sup>19</sup>After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' <sup>21</sup>His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge

of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

<sup>22</sup>And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.'

<sup>23</sup>His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

<sup>24</sup>Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed;

<sup>25</sup>so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' <sup>26</sup>But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?' <sup>27</sup>Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest.

<sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. <sup>30</sup>As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

**Let's sing again, new words to the familiar tune  
'O Jesus I have promised'.**

O God, we yearn for safety;  
We long to be secure.  
Yet faithful, loving service  
Is what you value more.  
You give us what is needed;  
You love, forgive and save.  
Then, sending us to serve you,  
You call us to be brave.

You give to some ten talents  
to others, two or three;  
To some you give one blessing  
To manage faithfully.  
For you, O Lord, are loving  
And don't demand success;  
You daily call your people  
To lives of faithfulness.

You give your church the gospel  
Good news for us to share.  
You give us great compassion  
For neighbours everywhere.  
You give us skills to serve you  
And loving work to do.  
We're blest to be a blessing,  
And called to risk for you.

O God, it seems much safer  
To live from day to day,  
Protecting what you lend us  
And hiding it away.  
Yet all these gifts can't flourish  
When hidden in the ground;  
When we are brave to share them  
Your blessings will abound.

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[www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHXR-6Se7xA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHXR-6Se7xA)

**Today's message**

The parable we have just heard this is another example of Jesus choosing the common and ordinary things of life as a teaching vehicle for his ushering in of God's new kingdom. In the Roman Empire the owning of slaves or servants was a common practice. Such slaves could earn wages and bonuses and acquire property hence they would have more incentive to look out for the master's property than slaves in many cultures do. Householders going on long journeys might entrust their estate to slaves to oversee since household slaves often held managerial roles.

Thus the servants understood very well not just what was required of them but also the opportunity such a situation provided to better their own situation. Slaves are expected to active stewards, managers, even entrepreneurs. They were expected to show responsibility towards whatever they had been entrusted. If they acted with purpose to make gains for their master they might be promoted and improve their own prospects in life if that seems possible whilst still regarded as a slave.

In the parable we read about a wealthy man gives three servants various "talents" before departing on a long journey. In many of our modern translation the word talent is simply translated to mean a certain amount of money but in its original

use a talent was not a coin but rather a weight. Therefore its value depended on what material one is talking about. Talents were weights of copper, gold or silver. The most common metal weight was silver. The monetary value of a five talent weight was equal to wages earned for fifteen years of service. This was a lot of money. Even one talent was not an insubstantial amount to be given being equivalent to 3 years wages.

The talents are given by their master (I think that's God by the way) not as a test but rather as a gift, just as each one of us has received God-given gifts, skill and wait for it...talents. We cannot "gift" ourselves and there is a humbling quality to Jesus' words, reminding us that whilst I may be gifted in one area and you might be gifted in five things, neither of us are responsible for "gifting" ourselves. However, the gifts we have received are to be developed. The gift is the potential and our development of this potential brings about fulfillment of the gift. The Master in the story calls his servants together to "entrust" his property to them, just as we are gifted and entrusted.

And it's interesting to note that there doesn't appear to be any comparison, bragging or resentment between the servant with five and the one with two. They do not get into psychological games about who had the most talent. There is no suggestion that "I am superior because God gave me five talents" or "I am half as good because God gave me only two talents." Both people realized that their master and owner had lent them resources and they were both to use these resources to benefit their master. And it's important to note that those resources have been given according to their ability. Not beyond it. But they do have a responsibility, a responsibility to nurture, develop and grow what they have been gifted.

And each of the slaves will be held accountable. This two of the slaves do, with both doubling what they had been given. But the slave who receives only one talent simply buries it, perhaps out of fear that he'll lose it or blow it or maybe even be accused of stealing it. So when the master returns, the servant gives it back to him just as it was given to him. It hasn't been used, hasn't been nurtured,

and hasn't been developed. He hasn't even invested the talent with bankers so it could have at least collected interest. Although in today's financial market not investing may have been the wisest move of all.

So just who is who is the useless servant? Well I suspect Jesus is once referring to the Pharisees and scribes who have been entrusted with a task by God, to declare God's truth and to guide people how to live it. Yet just like the slave who buried his one talent, they have looked upon it as a test rather than as an opportunity for growth and development. They have "built a fence around the law", paralyzing the truth that lied within it,

God gives us different gifts, different responsibilities but it is not how much a person receives but how they use it that is important. God never demands from an individual, a church a community talents that they do not have but God does demand that we use those talents to the full. We may not be equal in ability but we can all be equal in our response-ability to use that talent in the service of God and in the service of others.

The parable is about being obedient because the Church is not just called 'to be' but also to obey. Each one of us has been gifted, blessed with abilities, with skills, with 'talents' and we have an individual and corporate response-ability to use it and to appreciate the gifts of others. For everyone has talent, in fact many people are far more gifted than they realize.

Billy's mother was worried. Today was the day when the parts for the school pantomime were going to be announced. Billy loved to take part in these events but every year something always went wrong. Billy forgot his lines. Billy knocked over the scenery. Billy sang out of tune and out of time. How would she cope when Billy wasn't given a part whilst all his friends were? How would she explain to him?

That afternoon Billy's mum went to collect him at school, expecting to be met by a very disappointed little boy. Instead Billy ran towards her full of excitement, throwing his arms around her neck

“Mum” he said “I’m in the pantomime”

Billy's mum looked surprised

“What are you doing Billy” she asked “what part are you playing?”

Billy looked at her with a big smile on his face.

“Teacher says it’s a very important part. She wants me to sit with you in the audience and to lead all the cheering and clapping!”

Anne Robinson in her popular TV show might have described a person as “the weakest link”, implying that that person is not as valuable as the other members, not as gifted, not as talented. Maybe she would be well advised to remember the words St Paul wrote in his letter to the 1 Corinthians 1:27 “God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong”

Each of us has skills, talents, abilities, all of us fitting together like the pieces in a jigsaw. Just like little Billy with all his faults and weaknesses, we are all equally important in this plan. Each of us has a place, a role a purpose. Every single one of us here today is a vital member of the church, each as important as the next.

By burying our God given talent or encouraging others to bury theirs, we bury not just that gift but also the opportunity to be transformed into the people God knows we can be, wants us to be. By burying the one talent he was given that slave only succeeded in burying his true potential. He didn’t want to lose anything but in the process lost everything. Compare that again with the words of Paul, who writing to the churches in Galatia who considered it well worth his while to lose everything he previously had in order to find truth and direction in Jesus.

So let’s make a choice. A choice not to bury the love of God, not to bury the treasure offered by Jesus, not to bury the empowerment that is given by the Holy Spirit. Rather let us accept what we have been given, what we have been blessed with and what others have been given and use those gifts, those skills, those talents for the benefit of others and the glory of God.

## Prayers of Intercessions

Let us pray for the stories that have been splashed across the front pages of our news papers this week and also for the stories and situations that are no longer front page news.

Let us thank God for the gifts we have been blessed with.

Let us pray that as communities and as families of faith we are able to utilise the gifts of all

Let us pray that we are able to let others shine through their different abilities

We join together to say the words of the Lord’s prayer...Our Father.....

**Let’s conclude our worship by singing again**

### STF 513

Take this moment, sign and space;  
Take my friends around;  
Here among us make the place  
Where your love is found.

Take the time to call my name,  
Take the time to mend  
Who I am and what I’ve been,  
All I’ve failed to tend.

Take the tiredness of my days,  
Take my past regret,  
Letting your forgiveness touch  
All I can’t forget

Take the little child in me  
Scared of growing old;  
Help me here to find my worth  
Made in God’s own mould.

Take my talents, take my skills,  
Take what’s yet to be;  
Let my life be yours, and yet  
Let it still be me.

John Bell and Graham Maule @ WGRG 1989

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymXD\\_4R292Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymXD_4R292Q)

**A blessing...**

**For the gift of your Holy Spirit, empowering us to share our gifts and talents with all we meet during this week. Amen**