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## Five Talents of Gold

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There is an awkward story about money in my mother's favorite book, the Book of Books (Matthew 25:14-30). The first time I read it, long ago, it struck me as too simplistic, even naïve. Moreover, its topic appeared totally inappropriate for serious reading which was, as believed by some, dictated to the writer's ear by God himself.

The story begins with three servants who had been entrusted with their master's riches before he left on a long journey. The master gave to one five pouches of gold coins. To the second servant he gave two, and the third one got one pouch.

When the master returned from the trip, he asked the servants, "What have you done with my money?" The first servant said that he invested it, and it doubled. The second servant said the same. The master then gave a generous reward to the both. The third, however, said that he, for fear of losing the treasure, dug a hole in the ground and buried it deep so that no one could take it. Hearing that, the master got angry and chastised him, "Why didn't you at least deposit it in the bank, so I could get interest and profit upon my return?" As the story goes, the master threw the servant into darkness of jail.

When I first read it, the story seemed to confuse me, not conveying the special message we usually expect to find in such a special book. As a matter of fact, I thought that it would be more suitable for a picture book where preschool kids are introduced to the principals of economy, a textbook for housewives who plan to learn the ropes of stock trading, or a manual for novice investors from North Korea. Deeply disappointed, I closed the book, and the story left my mind quickly.

Later, much later, I read it again. I read it through a new prism, through a spiritual lense I have obtained seeking answers about human faith, about our hope in the intangible and invisible. And, slowly I began to understand it. I came to discover that it is a story about love, not money. It is a story about love that personifies God, the God I want to see. I believe that God has created us to love by loving us unconditionally. He gives to us life and numerous gifts each day; He hugs us warmly and offers us limitless joy every moment

I saw and see God as the master in the biblical story about money. He is the main character in the tale. He is the One who gives to us the most precious thing that exists. He gives us love, a unique treasure - the only one which returns when given

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and which multiplies when shared. He gives love to each of us, to one a sack full of love, to another two sacks, to others five or even more ... but not to keep it egoistically for ourselves. Instead, as faithful stewards of this valuable gift, we are to share it generously so that it will multiply through giving it to those around us, unselfishly and unconditionally. By giving love, we are going to be loved. We are going to receive an abundance of love, much more than that, a full measure, stuffed up to the rim, so that it overflows ... In this way, the amount of the given and received love will grow and multiply indefinitely until it overcomes the world - until everything becomes One. Love or God, I do not mind which of the two. To me, they both are the same.

Translated by Vojkica Jancić-Tibold

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