

23rd December 2020

Talents

**“What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise man, I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give him, give me heart.”**

Christina Rossetti, In the break mid-winter

I was teaching bible stories to 7-year-olds in the local school and I'd come to "Parable of the Talents", the story of the master who gave his servants a range of monetary gifts expecting these would be well used while he was absent. One of the servants, frightened of his master, didn't take any risks and buried his money in the ground, ready to give it back when his master returned. And he got a right-royal rollicking for his lack of effort.

The "old" description of these gifts of money was "talents", a variable unit of weight or money in Jesus' day, and I intended to highlight the need for all of us to use the talents we're given and not let them go to waste – pretty predictable stuff, it has to be said. So, after I'd told the story, I wrote TALENTS in big letters on the blackboard. Several hands shot up. "Yes?" I asked a child in the front row. "And what do you know about talents?" Quick as a flash she replied, "I know that you've just spelt it wrong?"

What talent do I have? A better ability at spelling than I did then, I hope. What talent did the children have? An ability to correct the mistakes of a minister, it seems. And your talent this Christmas? Can you play your part, as Christina Rossetti suggested, and give the love from your heart as a talent which is available to us all?

*What can I offer? What can I give? What can I bring you today?
What can I do now? What do you need? What do you want me to say?
What can I help with? What's to be done? What are my skills to prepare?
What am I good at? What's any use? What are my offerings to share?*

*Bring me your tenderness, offer your touch, give me your comfort again,
Hold out your hopefulness, stay when I cry, be by my side through my pain,
Hold me and help me, for that's what I need; be a companion that's true.
You have the talent, you have the skill. All that I'm wanting is you.*

Adapted from "With and Open Eye" by Tom Gordon

A prayer for today

What can I give you? I am what I am, so I give what I am. Thank you for using that. Amen.

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