

Day 31

Will You Rule Many Cities?

There once was a king who gave ten pieces of gold to one of his servants and told him to invest it. To another servant, he gave five pieces of gold, and to the last servant, one piece.

The king traveled to the farthest reaches of his kingdom to conduct his affairs, and was gone for many years. During this time, the first servant invested his gold into a business that earned him triple his original amount. The second servant was also successful and doubled his gold. The third servant, however, was so fearful of what the king might do to him should he lose the gold, he hid it in a cave until the king returned.

Happy was the king with the first servant for tripling the gold that was entrusted to him. Because of his success, the king appointed him minister of the largest province in the land. The king rejoiced as the second servant described

his success in doubling the value of his gold. For his efforts, the king appointed this servant to be minister of his knights.

When the third servant approached the throne to make his report, the king noticed he was trembling. “Why do you cower before your king? What has become of the piece of gold I have given you?”

The servant bowed his head and told the king he was afraid of punishment, should he fail to make a profit with his gold. The king, enraged by the servant’s displaced fear and foolishness, commanded his soldiers to throw the man in the dungeon as punishment.

I have heard and read many versions of this story. As I think it over, various insights and questions pop into my mind. What is the meaning of this story? Which servant do I identify with? What should I do to avoid reacting in fear, as did the third servant?

These questions may be answered in many ways, but the best answers come from real-life examples of people who use their talents and gifts to help others.

Angelina Jolie. American actress, humanitarian and philanthropist. I don't question the motives of Angelina at all. Neither do I care what people think about what she had been doing in Africa and Asia. It is proof enough for me that she cares for others, and has been funding humanitarian projects for many years. I am certain her deeds have impacted many who could not even give anything in return. Regardless of the details of her five-year reforestation project in Cambodia, there is no doubt the mere motive alone has already benefited future generations. It has raised people's consciousness for the good. The planting of a single tree by this well-known celebrity surely has encouraged others to do something for the environment. She has not only invested her time to this effort, but money as well, contributing \$1.3 million to the project so far. If I were the king in the story, I would give Angelina many more third-world countries to help revive their depleted forests. The United Nations did no mistake appointing her as an Ambassador of Goodwill to the world.

Joni Eareckson Tada is paralyzed from the neck down. She was injured at the age of seventeen in a freak accident while diving in Chesapeake Bay. While she was

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

Essays & Stories for Meditation

By Utanes

Copyright © 2008

The Overflow Publishing & Consultancy

www.overflowcentral.com

devastated by this, she did not stop living an active life. She later founded Joni and Friends, a Christian organization that ministered to the disabled community. She is so effective that she was appointed to the National Council on Disability for three and a half years by no less than the President of the United States. Her advocacies led to the conversion of the “Americans with Disability Act” into law. Lately, she has been appointed to the Disability Advisory Committee of the US State Department to advise Dr. Condoleezza Rice on policy and programs regarding disabled persons in the US. If I were the king, I would appoint Joni as an ambassador to China, India, the United States, or Indonesia — to help transform the lives of the disabled as well as people constantly in contact with them.

Those of us who have been blessed with talents, though we may not be rich, should use those gifts to help others. Those who have the ability to motivate others should set aside their ulterior motives and use their talents to help others do good. And to those who think they don't have any talent at all, I say you are mistaken. You do have gifts, but you must be willing to open your mind and discover what they are. Perhaps some of the examples in

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

this book will inspire you to help improve other people's lives as well as your own.

STUDY GUIDE

Will You Rule Many Cities?

1. Describe the character of the king in the story.
2. What is the significance of each servant's attitude toward the king's given task?
3. Could you relate to any of the servants, to similar experiences you have? Reflect or discuss on this for a while. Take time to extract the juice from your personal experiences.
4. Why is Angelina Jolie different? What lessons could you derive from Angelina's philanthropy?
5. What can you say about Joni Eareckson Tada's story?
6. Would you care to come out with certain personal resolutions similar to Angelina's or Joni's? If so, what would it be and why? If not, why not?
7. What valuable lessons could you learn from this essay?