

## **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

As some of you know I am chaplain to Hampton & Richmond Borough FC. Over the years I have been involved with the club I have seen many players with various levels of talent.

Some of the players are young lads who have been released by professional clubs, when they have reached the end of the road with their academies. Most of these players are very talented, but for whatever reason they have failed to make the grade. Others are ex-pros at the other end of their playing careers. They feel they can no longer perform at the highest level, but want to use their experience and knowledge to help develop younger talent.

In between those two groups are players for whom the National League South is the limit of their natural abilities. Some of these lads were spotted playing in local leagues in the parks and playing fields. They are using their talents to the limit.

Everyone has a gift and ability to do something and we often marvel at those who have made it to the top, whether that is as artist, musician or a sports person. Natural talent is not enough. It must be coupled with hard work and dedication.

Usain Bolt, the now retired sprinter from Jamaica, won a total of 23 gold medals during his career. He was naturally very fast, but he did not just roll out of bed and turn up at the track to win all those medals. He trained for hours and hours for a race that was over in less than 10 seconds!! He certainly made the most of his God given talent.

Unfortunately, some waste their natural talent by not working hard enough to hone their skills. I can think of several lads, in the past, at H&RBFC who fit that bill. A talent that remains unused eventually becomes useless. It has recently been reported that many young children have lost their ability to read or write as these skills were not practiced enough during the initial lockdown, for example.

In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus tells a parable about a man who entrusted his property to his servants while he went away. Each were given some money to use while he was gone. We read that the level of the gift was determined by their ability. I guess he knew who would make the most of what he was given, based on his experience of the men.

When he returned two of the three had doubled their money, which greatly pleased their boss. Unfortunately, the third chap did nothing with his gift apart from hiding it in the ground. It was no good to man nor beast there. He tried to justify his actions, but his master was having none of it.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul lists a whole load of different gifts that are given to the church. These gifts include preaching and teaching as well as administration. This chapter also tells us how much we need each other and we all have a part to play. Not everyone preaches, some welcome, make phone calls and others make tea (when we are allowed again).

Whatever you do, don't bury your talent, but put it to use for God's Kingdom in Hampton and elsewhere.

Paul Barker

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