

Story 1282 (1989 Tape 13)

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The Honest Carpenter and the Dishonest Merchant

Once in the old days there was a merchant who lost his purse while walking about in a crowded marketplace. A carpenter found this purse and took it home. There he opened the wallet and discovered that it contained a great amount of money. Without counting it, he decided to hide the money until he could find its owner.

next day was Sunday. At the local church¹ the priest made an announcement after he had delivered his sermon. He said tha a purse containing 800 gold pieces had been lost in the marketplace and that the owner would give a reward of 100 gold pieces to anyone who found it and returned it to him. The carpenter had not gone to church that day, but his wife was there and heard that announcement

That evening at dinner, the carpenter's wife said, "The priest told us today that a merchant had lost a purse containing 800 pieces of gold. He said that the merchant would give 100 pieces of gold to anyone who returned the purse to

¹Although more than 95% of Turkish people are Moslem, there were in earlier times hundreds of churches throughout the entire country in the Greek and Armenian communities. After the

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How wonderful it would be if we could find the purse and that reward."

When the carpenter heard this, he said, "Woman, go upstairs to our bedroom. There in the hole in the wall next to the table you will find a leather pouch. Take it from the hole and bring it to me." When the purse was brought downstairs, they counted the money in it and discovered that there were 800 pieces of gold in it--exactly the amount that the priest indicated.

The carpenter went to the priest and asked, "Is it true that there will be a reward of 100 gold pieces given to the person who returns the lost purse of the merchant?"

"Yes, of course it is true," answered the priest.

"Very well, then. Send a message to the merchant telling him to come here, for I have found his purse

Greatly pleased to receive this news, the merchant came at once to the priest's house. After carefully counting the money, he handed the carpenter five gold coins. "Let me present with these five gold coins, for you have apparently taken of the purse already the 100-coin reward that I promised

displacement of both those minority groups, only a few churches remained, although complete religious freedom has always existed in Turkey.

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for the recovery of my purse."

The carpenter grew red with fury. "How can you dare to say such a thing to me? I did not take a single coin from that purse I found, for I am an honest man!"

But the merchant persisted in his claim that there had been 900 gold pieces in the purse when he lost it. The carpenter maintained that this was a false statement and that there had been only 800 gold pieces. To settle the dispute they went to court

The judge asked the merchant, "Do you swear that there were 900 gold pieces in your purse?"

"Yes, sir, I can swear upon that fact

Turning to the carpenter, the judge asked, "Can you swear to the fact that there were no more than 800 gold pieces in the purse that you found?"

Yes, sir, I can."

After thinking about the matter for a few minutes, the judge said, "I believe that you are both telling the truth. One of you claims to have lost 900 pieces of gold, and the other claims to have found 800 pieces of gold. Inasmuch as there are only 800 pieces of gold in this purse, the merchant should look for a person who has found a purse containing 900 pieces of gold, and the carpenter should keep this purse until

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he finds a man who has lost a purse containing 800 pieces of gold."

In this way justice prevailed, and the merchant who did not keep his word lost all of his money.