

Put This Money To Work

Luke 19:11-27

Key Verse: 19:13

“So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’”

We are beginning a new fall semester. We look forward to learning and growing. We anticipate that our minds will expand, our hearts will be enriched, and our humanity will deepen. But we also realize that there will be difficult days ahead, days that we don't feel like studying. Yet we will study anyway, for we know that at the end of the semester there will be exams. This sense of accountability motivates us to be faithful in study, even when we do not feel like it. In our Christian lives, we need this same sense of accountability. It helps us to be faithful in serving Jesus. In order to plant this, Jesus told us the parable of the minas. We will study in two parts. The first part (11-12,14-15a) focuses on Jesus' promise to come again as King. The second part (13,15b-27) considers what we must do as we await his return. May our Lord's word today inspire us to good works for his glory.

I. “He was made king, however....” (11-12, 14-15a)

As we studied last time, Jesus had visited the house of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, while passing through Jericho. Jesus' love moved Zacchaeus' heart to repentance, and he was changed. His selfishness and love of money vanished. He began to love God and others. He gave big tax refunds to hometown people out of his own pocket! People were amazed and felt that the kingdom of God was touching earth. They expected Jesus' power and love to bring the visible kingdom of God at once. They imagined that Jesus would go to Jerusalem, enter the palace, and claim David's throne according to the promises (Isa 9:7; Lk 1:32). They might have expected Herod the Tetrarch and the Roman Governor Pilate to recognize Jesus as king. Then Caesar Augustus would come to Jerusalem, bow before Jesus, and put the Roman Empire under Jesus' feet. Jesus must have been happy that people were so eager for the kingdom of God to come. But there was a problem with their expectation. Before his glorious reign over all creation could begin, he had to suffer, die on the cross, and rise again. In Jerusalem, he would be rejected by the entire generation, not crowned as king by them. Though Jesus had foretold this repeatedly, people's dream of an immediate Messianic kingdom persisted. In order to correct their concept, this time Jesus told a parable.

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Look at verses 12,14-15a. **“He said: ‘A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’ He was made king, however, and returned home.”** To people hearing this parable, it was not just a story; it referenced their history. Just before his death in 4 B.C., King Herod had appointed his son Archelaus to succeed him as king. However, Archelaus was a cruel man, and was not popular with the people. So he went to Rome to have his kingship affirmed by the Emperor. When he did, the Jews sent a delegation after him, and they argued strongly against his appointment. In spite of their bitter protests, Archelaus was made king. This event proclaimed Caesar’s sovereign power to appoint the Jewish king, regardless of the opposition.

By telling his parable in this way, Jesus emphasized one thing very clearly: Jesus would become king in spite of fierce opposition. Embedded in Jesus’ parable was deep spiritual meaning that would enlighten his people. Jesus is the man of noble birth. Jesus was born to reign. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, he was in very nature God and sinless. Jesus was pure in heart, true in judgment, right in action; everything he did brought life, beauty and healing grace to mankind. But becoming king required more than this noble birth. It meant that Jesus had to take upon himself the sin of the world. He had to become the Lamb of God who died as a ransom sacrifice for sinners.

In Jerusalem, Jesus was unjustly condemned, mocked, and flogged. Then Roman soldiers nailed him to a cross, as the Jewish leaders, citizens and others hurled insults at him. Jesus died in shame and great pain. In truth, Jesus died for the sins of all people, including me and you (Isa 53:4-5). But on the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead. Then, forty days later, Jesus ascended into heaven, to the right hand of God the Father Almighty. God exalted Jesus **“to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Php 2:9-11). All people on earth will acknowledge Jesus as King. We do not vote for Jesus. In the distant land of heaven, God made Jesus King of kings and Lord of lords by his absolute sovereignty. God Almighty will establish Jesus’ kingship in this world despite all opposition. Jesus’ reign will be fully realized when he returns in great power and glory. Then Christ will destroy all powers and authorities that oppose him and raise to life all who believe in him (1 Cor 15:23-24). There will be

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no more sin, or death, or devils. Christ will reign over all in perfect peace and love, and his servants will share this victory with him.

As Christians, it is vital that we hold the promise of Jesus' glorious return in our hearts. However, it is not always easy. Peter warned that **"...in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires"** (2 Pe 3:3). They claim that everything goes on as it always has. In this way, they justify carnal self-indulgence. Their corrupting influence spreads through movies, music, or conversations. We also have our own enemy within--sinful desires that war against our souls. What can we do? First of all, we must realize that the promise of Jesus' coming again was given by the One who rose from the dead. It is the word of the Faithful Witness (Rev 1:5); it is the promise of Scripture (Lk 21:33). Trusting Jesus' words, we must repent our sins and cast out the world's lies every day. Then Jesus' word will capture our hearts and the bright morning star will rise within us (2 Pe 1:19).

II. "Put this money to work" (13, 15b-27)

In Jesus' parable, before going to the distant country, the future king gives a task to his servants. Look at verse 13. **"So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'"** Each servant was given one mina. A mina was about three month's wages. In our times this would be about \$10,000, a considerable sum. The master did not dictate how to use the money. He gave freedom to use it according to their own creative wisdom. It represented the master's trust in his servants. It was their opportunity to serve him while he was away.

What is our mina? Broadly speaking, it is the grace of new life that Jesus gave us. In Ephesians 2:10, Paul said, **"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."** We are not saved by good works. But Christ's saving grace enables us to do good works. For this, Christ sanctifies our natural talents such as the ability to sing, write creatively, paint or draw, solve hard problems, work well with our hands, organize, use modern technology, and many others things. Christ also grants us spiritual gifts, such as the ability to teach effectively, to encourage, to give generously, to serve and lead others, to show mercy, and spiritual insight, as well as many others (Rom 12:7-8). Christ also gives us opportunities to serve him joyfully as he brings people and privileges to us in various ways. On our part, we must decide to put his grace to work by faith. Those who live for Christ in this way

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will multiply his grace all the more. St. Paul is a good example. He received from Jesus forgiveness of all his terrible sins, and the mission of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul let Jesus reign over him by faith each day. The Holy Spirit put to death his sinful nature and changed him into a shepherd like Jesus. Paul put his brilliant mind, his habit of disciplined living, his courageous faith, and his spiritual gifts to work for Jesus. Paul went from one city to another throughout the Roman Empire. Finally he reached the whole world with the gospel. Each of us have talents and gifts that can be used fruitfully to serve God's work. We have received the world mission command to make disciples of all nations. We must put our new lives to work by faith and prosper gospel ministry.

Let's come back to the parable. When the king returned, he sent for his servants to find out what they had gained with his minas. The first servant came and said, **"Sir, your mina has earned ten more."** It was an amazing 1000% profit. St. Paul was this kind of servant. The master said to him, **"Well done, my good servant! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities"** (17). Let's consider these gracious words carefully. First of all, the master praised his servant's good work and his good character. Good work stems from good character. This goodness is not natural; it is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). Then the master put his servant in charge of ten cities. Spiritually speaking, this means that Jesus' servants will reign with him in his glorious kingdom. Later, at the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples that since they had stood by him in trials, he would confer on them his kingdom. He promised that they would share his royal table, sit on thrones, and judge the tribes of Israel (Lk 22:28-30).

In the last part of verse 17, the master said something very important: **"Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter..."** Here we learn that the master was not really concerned about the mina itself; that was a very small matter. But the master was very much concerned about the trustworthiness of the servant. When he was trustworthy in a small matter the master could entrust him with great authority to reign. This teaches us that we must carefully consider the small trusts that Christ gives us. If he gives us one Bible student, we should care for that person with all our hearts. If he gives us one task in his mission work, even something as mundane as cleaning bathrooms, we should do it with all our hearts, minds and strength. Those who are trustworthy in small things will be trusted with great things. I have been told that when Dr. John Jun was beginning his ministry in Korea, he was not given important things to do at first; he did the work of a doorkeeper. But he did it with all his heart and strength. He babysat

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noisy children and arranged worshipers' shoes neatly. Later, the Lord put him in charge of Korea UBF. The ministry grew ten times bigger. Now he has been entrusted as the General Director of all UBF ministry. Missionary Elijah Park has been faithful in managing all kinds of things, small and large, for God's work in Chicago. God has blessed us in many ways and especially the Oakton ministry. Trustworthiness in small things is the secret of success.

Look at verses 18-19. Here we see a second servant. He had the same original capital of one mina. With it, he had earned five more. His master told him, **"You take charge of five cities."** We do not know why this one earned five while the first servant earned ten. There must be a good reason. Nevertheless, he was blessed and rewarded by his master to the degree that he had proved himself faithful. This teaches us the character of the master: he is discerning and just in rewarding his servants.

The parable seems to focus in on the third servant. At least, significant time is spent on him. He came to his master and said, **"Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow"** (20-21). This servant returned his master's mina in tact. He might seem to deserve some credit for not losing it. However, his words reveal a serious attitude problem toward his master. Instead of serving his master, he judged his master. In truth, his master had shown himself to be both good and fair in dealing with other servants. But this servant did not believe this. When he had no faith in his master, he became powerless and ineffective. He was a spiritual paralytic who did nothing for his master at all. There are many like him. They associate with Christians and have the position of servants, but they do nothing for Christ. Such people do not have a right relationship with their master. James said that faith without works is dead. Those who claim to be Christians but have no good works should seriously examine their lives. They are wasting their opportunity and will face tragedy.

What happened to this servant? The master judged him harshly--fairly, but harshly. He did not judge in comparison to the other servants. The master judged him by his own words, on the basis of his attitude toward the master. The master called him "wicked." It means he was morally deficient. In arrogance and laziness, he ignored his master's words and neglected his duty. Finally, his master said, **"Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas"** (24). Here we see that the master did not want his mina back. The master wanted his servants to use his mina as an expression of their faith. We should know that Jesus

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takes blessings and opportunities from unfaithful people and gives them to faithful people. Jesus said, **“I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away”** (26).

Luke leaves no doubt about what happens to those who opposed the king's reign. In verse 27 the master says, **“But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them--bring them here and kill them in front of me”** (27). Jesus' enemies will perish without mercy.

In this passage we learn that Jesus will return to this world as King of kings and Lord of lords despite all opposition. Then he will call his servants to account. Those who put their lives to work by faith and produced a profit for him will be rewarded. Those who squandered his grace will be shamed. Let's put our new lives to work for Jesus in this new fall semester.