

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.’”

In the last passage, wonderful Jesus moved our hearts to tears. In Jericho, on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus stopped and called Zacchaeus down from a tree to have fellowship with him. Zacchaeus was so happy to be invited by Jesus. No one in Jericho seemed to like him. But Jesus, whose time was very limited, chose Zacchaeus as the one he would spend time with. Jesus cared for this one man at great cost to himself. Jesus was misunderstood and despised for doing so. Finally, Jesus would give his life as a ransom for sinners through his death on the cross. Zacchaeus’ heart was melted by Jesus’ love and he repented sincerely for his selfishness. It was the day of liberation from sin and the day of salvation for Zacchaeus and his household. Then Jesus said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” This is good news of great joy for all mankind.

Today’s passage is the parable of the minas. Jesus educates his followers about the coming of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God comes when Jesus comes again. At that time there will be reward and punishment for his servants, as well as the destruction of his enemies. Jesus wants us to be rewarded on that day, not punished. Let’s learn from Jesus what we must do to be rewarded when he comes again.

First, the kingdom of God is spiritual and it will come (11-12).

Look at verse 11. “While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.” To those gathered around Jesus and Zacchaeus, it was the most marvelous moment. A selfish and lonely chief tax collector accepted the love of Jesus and repented from his heart. He took drastic action to begin a new life—a life of love for Jesus and love for his neighbor. Zacchaeus actually began to distribute tax refunds to the people around him. The reality of his change amazed those standing there. They felt that heaven came down and descended on Jericho. The power of God to change this one man kindled new hope in their hearts. They began to think that anything was possible. They might have envisioned Caesar Augustus coming to Jerusalem, bowing before King Jesus, repenting for using military force to oppress weak nations, and then submitting himself and Rome to the sovereign rule of King Jesus. Utopian idealism was gaining power among the people moment by moment.

However, they did not understand what the coming of the kingdom of God really meant. Their expectation was tainted by their sinful nature. They thought they could walk into Jerusalem behind Jesus and enter paradise, just like that. In his laziness and easygoing mentality, sinful man always wants the kingdom of God to appear at once while he stands there watching and cheering for it. Actually, Jesus had already dealt with this problem when he told the Pharisees, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation...the kingdom of God is within you”(Lk 17:20-21). However, the sinful human idea that a political kingdom would magically appear when Jesus entered Jerusalem still dominated the minds and hearts of many. The kingdom of God is spiritual; it cannot be grasped with an unspiritual mind. No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. How did Jesus deal with people who misunderstood the kingdom of God?

Jesus did not directly rebuke their unspiritual minds. Jesus told them a parable so that after their euphoria diminished they could think seriously about the kingdom of God. According to God’s time schedule, many things must happen in the process of establishing the kingdom of God. Jesus wanted his people to understand that he must do something first. Moreover, they had something to do as well.

Look at verse 12. “He said, ‘A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.’” In this verse, the man of noble birth refers to Jesus himself. Indeed, Jesus is of noble birth. As the angel said to Mary, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High” (Lk 1:32). Jesus is the very Son of God. Jesus came to this world in human form and became the servant of all. But the time was soon approaching when he would leave this world and go to the Father. Through his death and resurrection he fulfilled the will of God for world salvation. Then he ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. There he received his appointment as King of kings and Lord of lords. Someday he will come again to this world as the King and Judge to bring an end to all unrighteousness and injustice and to establish the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

What a glorious day that will be! Isaiah foresaw it and said, “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:6-9). The apostle John said in Revelation 21:1-4, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’” We must have in our hearts this hope of Jesus’ second coming in glory. The kingdom of God will come. Amen.

Second, put this money to work until I come back (13-15a).

There would be a considerable time between Jesus’ departure and his return. What his servants do during this time is the crux of this parable. 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 received one mina. They say that a mina was about three months’ wages for an ordinary worker. The servants must put this money to work and make a profit for their master. He did not tell them how to do so. They had to think creatively and find inspiration. Then they had to work hard, giving their minds and hearts to the task. Until now, they had been servants who did what they were told to do. From now on they had to be stewards who could work independently. The servants refer to Jesus’ disciples. Soon Jesus would leave them after entrusting them with the task of world evangelization.

Those who accept Jesus as king are all his servants. Then, what is our mina? First of all, a mina is one’s life. No one made his own life. Each person’s life comes from God as a precious gift. God is the giver of life. When God made man, he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being (Gen 2:7). Our lives came from God. Our lives are limited in time and space, but they have a tremendous potential to produce fruit and glorify God. This includes our natural talents, be it an artistic nature, musical ability, the power of speech, a brilliant analytical mind and so on. There is a woman of God who is always humble and prayerful. But she has a great talent for accounting. Recently, she began using this talent for the work of God and she has brought our bookkeeping system into the 21st century. We thank God for this. One man of God has a talent for construction work and for managing labor-class people well. He has offered his talent to the Lord to construct a new Bible house at UIC. We thank God for him. When we work hard for the glory of God we are happy and find the meaning of life.

Even more to the point in this parable, our mina is our new life in Christ and the gifts that God has given us. Everyone has at least one gift from God (1Co 12:7). St. Paul said in Romans 12:6-8, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” We must diligently use the gifts God has given us to build up the body of Christ to be fruitful and prosperous and to evangelize the lost. Now our Easter Bible Conferences are approaching. Those who are preparing messages must give their hearts to the task and use all their ability for the glory of God. Some people want to serve these conferences “behind the scenes.” This can be an excuse for laziness. We must all participate and work hard to make our own conference fruitful and successful for the glory of God. Let’s read verse 13b. “‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’”

Look at verses 14-15a. “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.” It is interesting that Luke’s parable differs from Matthew’s parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30). Luke does more than tell the story. Embedded in Luke’s account is an allusion to actual historical events. Both Herod the Great (40 B.C.) and Archelaus (4 B.C.) became kings in Palestine by traveling to Rome and being appointed over the opposition of their Jewish subjects. By combining factual history with Jesus’ parable, Luke lends a deeper sense of reality to Jesus’ teaching. Jesus wanted his people to know that his kingship was real and his kingdom would come. Indeed, in spite of all opposition, God made Jesus King of kings and Lord of lords. And he will come again at the right time to reign on earth forever.

Third, reward and punishment (15b-27).

Look at verse 15b. “Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.” The first thing the king did was to send for his servants. He was eager to hear their good reports. He probably wanted to include them in his inaugural celebration. The first one came and said, “Sir, your mina has earned ten more.” What a good report it was! This man earned a 1000% return on the original investment. He took his master’s word to heart and put his money to work. Enemies talked badly about his master, but he did not entertain their evil words in his heart. He believed his master’s word that he would return as king. He worked hard every day, though his master did not watch him. It was because he loved his master. He was loyal to his master. He wanted to please his master.

What did his master say? Look at verse 17. “‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’” The master praised his servant highly. This servant proved himself trustworthy. What a good word it is—“trustworthy.” The master had trusted the servant. The servant had shown himself worthy of the master’s trust. When we are recognized as trustworthy by God, we are truly happy. The master’s recognition is a great reward. But that was not all he gave the servant. He also gave him more responsibility and a bigger job to do. He said, “Take charge of ten cities.” A city is beyond comparison to a mina. A mina is just money. A city is full of people. He was put in charge of ten cities. It was like being promoted to a governor.

The second servant came and said, “Sir, your mina has earned five more.” “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’” Implied is the recognition of his master who found him trustworthy. He also was rewarded commensurate with his trustworthiness. So far, so good.

Then the problem case came. Look at verses 20-21. “Then another servant came 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.’” Instead of working hard to obey his master, this servant calculated. Then he hid his mina in a piece of cloth. Simply speaking, he was lazy. He did not recognize the absolute relationship of a servant to his master. He probably spent all his time doing his own business, hoping that his master would not return. So many Christians are like this. They have been given a tremendous gift from God with which they can do great work of God. But instead of putting it to work by faith, they calculate and become lazy and hide it away. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him of the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

Look at verses 22-23. “His master replied, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’” If this servant lived up to what he believed about his master, he would not have hidden his mina in the cloth. He would have at least put it in the bank to earn interest. This servant knew that his master wanted a profit. But he did not do anything to earn a profit for his master. To the master he was wicked.

What happened to him? Look at verses 24-26. “Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’ ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’ He replied, ‘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.’” The man who earned ten minas not only got to keep those ten, he also received one more mina as a bonus. But the man who did nothing was fired without any severance pay.

Look at verse 27. “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.” 1 Corinthians 15:24 says, “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.” Jesus’ kingship will be established and his enemies will be destroyed. His enemies are the power of sin and death, the devil and his angels, and men who reject his kingship on earth.

In this passage we learn that Jesus will come again to this world as King of kings and Lord of lords. He has entrusted each of us with life and natural talent as well as new life and spiritual gifts. We must put these things to

work with all diligence by building up the body of Christ and evangelizing the lost as we await Jesus' return. We must make a profit for God. If we have been hiding our mina away, let's repent. May God help each of us to be worthy of Jesus' trust until we hear Jesus say, "Well done, my good servant! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities."