

PUT THIS MONEY TO WORK

Luke 19:1-27

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.'"

There are two stories in this passage. The first is a story of the holy Son of God and Zacchaeus the tax collector. The second is the parable of the minas. Jesus teaches us the truth of God that we should be fruitful and creative people who know how to put money to work.

First, Jesus welcomed Zacchaeus (1-7).

Each gospel tells many stories about Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. All of these stories are sad, partly because many kinds of helpless people, such as ten lepers, a man born blind, a man of ill-repute, Zacchaeus, came to Jesus in defiance of the fact that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem to die on the cross as the Lamb of God. But they are all most beautiful stories which move people's hearts down through the generations. In the stories, there is one story about Jesus and Zacchaeus at Jericho. Verse 1 says, "Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through." They say Jericho was very wealthy, situated in the Jordan Valley and commanding both the approach to Jerusalem and the crossings of the Jordan River, giving it access to palm forests and balm groves. All this decorated the town with natural beauty and combined to make it one of the greatest cultural centers, and also one of the greatest centers of taxation in Palestine.

In Jericho, a man was there by the name of Zacchaeus, which meant upright or outstanding. Probably his parents named him Zacchaeus in the hope that he would be a great man in the sight of God. They must have done their best for him, sparing nothing in order to raise him as an upright person in the sight of God. But contrary to their wishes, he became a despicable tax

collector. Soon he was promoted to a chief tax collector. Then he became wealthy; then a man of ill-repute. Was he happy with his wealth? No, he was not happy because people called him a public sinner. Man's desire for honor and recognition is indeed great. Zacchaeus must have expected that his people would say of him, "He is an upright person in the sight of God." To his surprise, people whispered behind his back, "You tax collector!" a man of no national identity. In addition, Zacchaeus was not accepted anywhere. Jews did not recognize him as a fellow Jew, and Romans did not accept him as a Roman, though he was a Roman puppet. He was living all by himself. What was worse, when he hardened his heart and wanted to make money by any available means, demons crept into him until he became a Jewish demoniac.

But he found hope in Jesus. Look at verse 3a. "He wanted to see who Jesus was..." What made him want to see Jesus? He had already heard about the good news of Jesus, that he welcomed sinners and tax collectors and ate with them. But there were several obstacles for him to overcome to come to Jesus. First, his hindrance was the crowd of people. Zacchaeus was too short compared with others. All the people were like football players, and he was like "Kermit the frog." When Zacchaeus wanted to come to Jesus, he was sunk into bigger people. Finally this small man was nudged, fell down and was trodden over until his body was black and blue with bruises. At that moment, he saw a sycamore-fig tree ahead of him. That tree was a great inspiration to him. However, his big stomach hindered him from climbing up the tree. But where there is a will, there is a way. After a few moments, he could see Jesus.

When Jesus arrived at the spot, he looked up and saw Zacchaeus hanging in the sycamore-fig tree. Jesus said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today" (5). Jesus welcomed him as his own youngest son. We don't know how Jesus knew his name. Anyway, Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately." Jesus knew that no one associated with him. Jesus knew he was suffering from a sense of dishonor. Jesus knew that he was as lonely as a widowed pigeon. As soon as Jesus saw him, he welcomed him, saying, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately." It was precisely Jesus' voice. But it was an invitation of the holy God, and the moment of divine mercy to Zacchaeus.

Jesus also invited him. Jesus was willing to invite Zacchaeus. But Jesus

did not have his own house. So Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house. When Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house, he was inviting Zacchaeus to talk with him about the secrets of the glorious kingdom of God. Look at verse 6. "So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly." He immediately came down from the tree. Probably the seat of his pants was torn after being caught by a sharp point of a cut branch on the tree. But it did not matter. What was the people's response? People there began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner'" (7b). Anyway, Jesus was going to Zacchaeus' house despite people's devilry and insult.

Second, Zacchaeus' repentance (8).

Though he looked like a man of no conscience, Zacchaeus had suffered most from his guilty conscience. When the heavenly sunshine shone in his heart through Jesus' one word, he came to the realization that he was a selfish man. So he said in verse 8, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Then Zacchaeus would have nothing left for himself. But it didn't matter. He was happy. His guilty conscience was gone and he was overwhelmed with spiritual happiness. He had been a kind of mental patient due to his selfishness. But when Zacchaeus met Jesus, he became a happy man. For the first time, he cried many tears endlessly, partly because he was happy to see Jesus, and partly because he realized how he had wronged the helpless and the defenseless; how he had caused so many women to go to hell. When he repented, his humanity was fully rehabilitated, and the image of God in him was fully restored.

Third, Jesus accepted him as a son of Abraham (9,10).

Look at verse 9. "Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.'" When he saw that Zacchaeus had repented, Jesus was happy. In the past, Zacchaeus was branded as a tax collector and as one who betrayed his suffering people. People looked down on him as a traitor of his poor people. But Jesus forgave all his sins. Not only so, Jesus also highly exalted him, saying, "This man too is a son of Abraham." At that time, to be a son of Abraham, one of the chosen people, was indeed great to the people of Israel. Zacchaeus was branded a

public sinner. But Jesus reinstated him as a chosen Jew. Though the world abandoned him, Jesus recognized him. Zacchaeus was now a heavenly prince. Zacchaeus was now an heir of the kingdom of God. Jesus' joy was great to see Zacchaeus' change and restoration to his sonship. In the past he was a heavy burden to his household and his people. But now he was a blessing to all people. So Jesus said, "Salvation has come to this house." Look at verse 10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Zacchaeus' coming to Jesus brought forth such a great result.

Fourth, put this money to work (11-17).

Zacchaeus knew he was smart. Even if he was a smart man, he became a social outcast. So in this part, Jesus tells how to use our abilities for our King Jesus. Now Jesus was near Jerusalem. The people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once (11). The people of Jesus' time were mostly fortune-seeking people due to their false hope. Most of them went secretly to magicians to hear something fantastic, such as becoming a rich man, or going to heaven without spiritual struggle. Of course, the hope of the Messiah had enabled the Jews to endure all kinds of hardships and sufferings. But the Messiah they had expected was not the one based on Bible prophecies, but a political messiah who could satisfy their fortune-seeking desires (1Co 1:22-23a). How about the disciples? They should have learned the deep meaning of his suffering, death and resurrection. But because of their sinful desires, their spiritual eyes were blind. They could not see God's plan of world salvation. They could not see God's love for all mankind.

Look at verse 12. "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return." Here, "a man of noble birth" refers to Jesus; his going to a distant country, to his ascension, and his return, to his Second Coming. He went back to the heavenly kingdom so that he might come back to this world as King and Judge. Verse 13 says, "So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'" Here, "his servants" refers to his people. One mina is about three months' wages. He gave his servants the money and said, "Put this money to work." How nice it would have been if he had said, "Use the money properly." "Mina" can be compared to many different gifts, such as man's life itself, freedom of choice, talents, intellect, inspiration, imagination, the hard-working

spirit, leadership, courage, humbleness, and so on. Man's life is definitely limited within a certain period. The life in a man is abundant and unlimited. The potentiality in man is limitless in its scope.

Man's joy comes when he works hard to make his life fruitful (Jn 15:11). Therefore, each person is obliged to God to bear fruit 30 times, 60 times or 100 times. Life is comparable to money. Those who put their lives to work for the glory of God will have victorious lives (2Ti 4:7). What does it mean when Jesus said, "Put this money to work"? "Put this money to work" means "Work hard and gain some profit without fail." Our King Jesus does not want us to remain fruitless. He wants us to make things work out by devotion to the things he gave us. It's possible for anyone who has heart. There is a saying, "Where there's a will, there's a way." For those who take the King's words absolutely, nothing is impossible. "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king'" (14). His subjects hated the kingship of Jesus. Look at verse 15a. "He was made king, however, and returned home." Supposedly, people did not want him to be their king because he was not a permanent based king, but a temporal based king. But in reality, they did not like him because he comes again to make them give an account. Whether we want it to happen or not, Jesus will come again. When he comes again, he will ask each person to give an account (2 Co 5:10). Let's see what happens when there is accountability.

Look at verses 16,17. "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'" This servant took his master at his word absolutely, put the money to work and earned a profit. What was his reward? "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied." This was his reward. The Master's recognition, "Well done, my good servant!" is the best reward all mankind should aspire for. The people of God don't want the recognition of people, who are the same sinners with us. Our Master's reward is very special. What is it? It is more work. Look at verse 17b. "Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities." It meant, "You must work for me ten times more." What a reward! "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities'" (18,19). The master gave the second servant the same reward as the first and assigned him five times more work to do as his reward. "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" (20,21). In short, he was too smart but lazy to put the money to work. "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant!'" (22) The master rebuked his laziness of not putting his mina to work (22-24). The master said in verse 24b, "Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas." The master's decision seemed too hard. So those standing there said, "He already has ten!" From a worldly point of view, the man who kept his original capital of one mina was a fairly good person, wasn't he? But to God he was a lazy person. God treats lazy people as the enemies of God. God does not forgive their laziness. Verse 27 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."

In this passage we learn that we must live a victorious and fruitful life by being stewards of God's children.