

July 11, 2010

## *Living in the Light of Christ's Return*

### *Do You Call Him Lord?*

**Luke 19:11 – 27**

This morning I want to encourage your hearts to live in the light of His return by leaving 1 Thessalonians for a bit to turn to the book of Luke to look at a story that Jesus told about the day of His coming. In fact if you look through the gospels, Jesus was always telling His disciples about His return. He wanted them to be ready when He did return and not be caught by surprise. And so in Luke 19, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and as He was going through Jericho, He has this encounter with a man named Zaccheus. And that is a great story that served to highlight His mission and the ultimate reason why He came – but I am not concerned with the wee little man this morning. We will get to that when we go through the gospel of Luke sometime in the future, Lord willing.

Our attention this morning is focused on the story he tells after that encounter – the parable of the ten servants. And we need to notice why He found it necessary to tell the disciples this story. Look at verse eleven: *As they heard these things, He proceeded to tell a parable, because He was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.* Luke 19:11 Jesus was headed to Jerusalem for the last time in His earthly ministry – it was another opportunity to explain what would happen when He was finally gone – but we know the disciples didn't get it yet. In spite of the fact that He told them over and over – 'I'm going to Jerusalem and I'm going to be killed' they didn't get it. I don't know what they thought, but I do know that they didn't think He would be crucified.

In fact they thought just the opposite for some reason. They thought that He was going to announce His kingship when He got to Jerusalem. They had seen glimpses of His power and authority – healing the sick, raising the dead, opening blind eyes – they had even been given power and authority themselves as He sent them out on one occasion. And they thought, 'Yeah, we're going to Jerusalem – Jesus is going to be crowned King and we're going to reign!' Two of them even got their mom to lobby for positions in His government. I don't know what they thought about all the times Jesus told them plainly that He was going to die. They were thinking 'Kingdom restoration' and Jesus was talking about reconciliation – that is, on the cross, Scriptures tell us, *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.* [2 Corinthians 5:19]

Right before they all went to Jericho, Jesus sat them down again and said: "*See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For He will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging Him, they will kill Him, and on the third day He will rise.*" Luke 18:31-33 Maybe they superspiritualized it as some do and thought 'Yes, You are going to die to Your old life and rise to live as King'. I don't know. But the Scripture says that He told them this story **because** He was close to His appointment with the cross – **and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.** And the restoration of all things was not going to happen right then, and He wanted to prepare them for the wait.

So he tells them this story. *He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.'* Luke 19:12-13 Jesus was telling them that He had to go away – He had said it before in many different ways – and here is another. **And the point of the story is what needs to go on before He comes back.** This nobleman calls ten of his servants and entrusts some money to each of them and tells them to **'Engage in business until I return'**. That phrase could literally be translated, **'Make a profit'. 'Here's some money – make more'**. In other words, Jesus was saying, 'I am leaving you, going away to be made king. I am going to give you stuff to invest and make a profit with, and then I am coming back'. By the way, don't miss the fact that it is **the nobleman's money** the servants are getting, and **he expects** to profit from their investments of his money. So Jesus sets the scene with the servants.

Then he brings in another group of people – the citizens: *But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'* Luke 19:14 By the way, Jesus may have been using the real story of the tetrarch, Herod Archelaus, who had his royal palace at Jericho as a way of putting this story in context for His audience. Archelaus was the grandson of Herod the Great, and brother to Herod Antipas. He was proclaimed king by the army, but declined to assume the title until he had submitted his claims to Caesar Augustus in Rome. But before he left to go do that in person, he slaughtered three thousand Jews one Sunday who were planning a revolt. And the Jews hated him for that and they they sent a delegation to Rome to protest his claim to kingship – saying, **'We don't want this man to reign over us'** – and he never did get the title of king. Jesus just mentions them here, but don't lose track of these guys, their story comes later.

*When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business.* Luke 19:15 So we have the king who has received the kingship – in strong opposition to Archelaus who never did – and the king returns to see what had become of his money. And this is the central point of this whole thing – **What have you done with what God has given you?** Earlier we referenced 2 Corinthians 5:19: *in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* One of the things we have been entrusted with is the gospel and Jesus is coming back one day and is going to ask – 'How did you do? Did you make a profit for Me? Did you invest the gospel in the lives of the lost to expand My kingdom and glory? Come here, tell me what you did.' That is not all we have been given as we will see, but inescapable fact is that **He will ask.** And we **will** answer, for better or worse.

So the king begins to ask and in verse sixteen: *The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.'* *And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'* Luke 19:16-17 Now a mina, to put it in perspective, was a Greek coin that was worth about three months wages – a good sum, and the first servant put it to work and made ten more and got a **'Well done good servant!'** [*For what it's worth, that is really all I want to hear on that day.*] We are not told how this servant made the increase – we just know he did and got the commendation and the prize – ten cities to rule over. This again highlights the fact that heaven will not be a trillion-year singspiration. There will be work to do – labor, not toil, work, not sweat – we will be engaged in the ultimate, productive, fulfilling, satisfying work ever.

The next servant doesn't do quite as well: *And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.'* *And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.'* Luke 19:18-19 But the king doesn't seem to mind that this guy only pulled off a five hundred percent increase. He doesn't ask him why he didn't come up with ten like the first guy, or say 'You could have done better'. He gets the same praise the first one does. We don't see the 'Well done' here, but it is implied in the text. We should take away from this that **what really matters is what we've done with what we've been given.** All that we have been given is for kingdom profit. Nothing we have is our own – it has been given to us by God and the measure of our success in life is not the amount of things we pile up but whether what we have been given makes a profit for the king.

Our money is given to us to turn a spiritual profit – our cars, our homes, our jobs, our wives and children – our health or sickness, our triumphs and tragedies, are given to us by God to make a profit. Our responsibility is to be good stewards of what God gives us. What this is teaching us is that **we will be held accountable for what we do with what we have been given.** The King is coming and when He comes He is going to ask – 'What did you do with My mina'?

Then we get to the next guy who is simply called 'another one'. It's never good in Scripture to be called 'another one'. *Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'* Luke 19:20-21 First of all this servant thinks that what he's been given is his - *You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'* Somewhere between the king giving him the mina and this audience with the king, he got the idea that the mina was his. The king gave the servant the mina to begin with – it was never his. **God cannot take anything from you – it's all His in the first place.** A good reality check for us is from time to time, look at all we have been given – count your blessings, in other words – and say over it all – **'It all belongs to You, Lord'**. It is reported that one Emperor of Rome employed one man to do one thing, and one thing only. And that was to stand and walk beside him when he was being honored for something and whisper in his ear – *'You are just a mortal'*. We need to do that with our stuff – 'It's all Yours God'.

So the king responds to this accusation: *He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?'* Luke 19:22 The king is not agreeing with the man's accusation – there is a question mark at the end of the sentence there. He is doing what he said – taking the wicked servant's word and using it to condemn him. *Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'* Luke 19:22 In effect he was saying that this servant either did not know the king – or he was an outright liar. In other words he was saying, 'If you believed that I was a severe man – and that I took what was not mine and would require something back for it – there is no way that you would have done nothing with what I gave you. You are either lying to cover up your laziness or you don't know me at all'.

My contention is that this wicked servant didn't know the king at all, and that he was a liar. There is of course the fact that the Bible calls him the 'wicked servant' that helps to clue us in. Wicked people don't know God. That's why they are still wicked. I don't believe that this guy really thought the king was coming back. He had no sense that the mina he had been given wasn't his and the king would require an accounting when he returned. He wasn't living with the return of the king in view. He had no idea that judgment day was coming. In fact I believe he thought it was probably unfair of the king to demand this accounting and he shouldn't be judged.

That reminds me of so many people who take the view that if God is a God of judgment – they want nothing to do with Him. 'If God is a God of judgment, I don't want Him'. That is really, really, really, stupid. If God righteously and justly judges sinners – then I want everything to do with Him! Wouldn't you rather have the Judge of the universe on **your** side? To say, 'If God is going to judge me I'd rather not thank you very much' is pretty much like standing in the middle of the railroad tracks and turning your back on a speeding train headed your way and saying, 'I dare you'. 'Go ahead and judge me'. That is stupid. How does that help? How does that get you a win? If you knew the day was unavoidable – after all he did say, *You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow* – why would you avoid Him? The fact is, he was a liar.

So here is what the judge does: *And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!'* Again, here is the assumption that something actually belongs to him, and the judgment is unfair. **Use it or lose it.** If you do not deal faithfully with what God has given you, one day it will be taken away and given to another. *'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.'* Luke 19:24-26 Notice those words - *but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.* In some translations the sense of the verse is translated this way: *'even what he **thinks** he has will be taken away.'*

Finally, the king moves on to the judgement of the second group in this parable – those citizens who hated him and didn't want him to be king over them: *But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.* Luke 19:24-26

So we have three distinct judgments outlined for us in this parable. The first of course is the good servants who invest their minas wisely and show a profit for the king. **Good servants of Christ understand three things: all they have is given to them by God – everything they have been given is to be invested for the king – and one day there will be an accounting.** In regards to our homes, our money, our jobs, our cars, our families, everything has been given to us to be stewarded with care and for spiritual profit. And the judgment of God will be not what you have – He gave it to you in the first place – but what you have done with what He gave you. God has given me a wife and children so that I can invest in them and use my time and abilities to point them to God and make a profit for Him. He's given me money so that I might use it to further His kingdom and not let it all terminate on me. He didn't give me money so I can pad my nest or spend it frivolously on myself. He's given me friends and co-workers so that I might invest the gospel in their lives. **Good servants of Christ understand that all they have is given to them by God – everything they have been given is to be invested for the king – and one day there will be an accounting.**

The enemies of the king don't need much exegesis – they are slaughtered. The enemies of Christ face a judgement one day that puts them out of it forever. They never pretended to be one of the king's servants. But it is the judgement of the wicked servant that is probably the most stunning. In the parallel passage in Matthew this wicked slave is thrown into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. I don't believe that is heaven. In heaven there'll be no tears – but there are plenty here. Here is what this story tells us. The wicked servant looks like the good servants on the surface.

In fact there was no distinction made by the nobleman before he left among any of the ten. Which tells us that this guy is a person that is somehow connected to the church, related to the family of faith but does not know God nor does he intend to submit to His Lordship. The best Biblical example is a man named Judas. Remember him? Was he not handpicked to be one of the twelve? Was he not present when Jesus was opening blind eyes and healing the sick and raising the dead? Didn't he go with the others when Jesus sent them out to proclaim the Good News? We can go on and on relating all the ways in which Judas was apparently one of the chosen. He was related in some way to Christ, he even had some responsibilities within that fellowship – and yet we find that in the end he does not know Christ nor worship Him as Lord.

One of the telling scenes comes in the Gospel of Matthew as the disciples are sitting around the table with Jesus at the last supper and He tells them that one of them will betray Him. All the disciples began saying one by one 'Surely not I, Lord? All the way around the table its Lord, Lord, Lord – until we get to Judas and he says, 'Rabbi – teacher' not Lord. This is the issue with the wicked servant and in our churches today we have people who call themselves Christians, who have responsibilities in the church, who look good on the outside – but they have no intention of letting Christ rule in their hearts – they have not made Him Lord of their life. For Christ to be made Lord in your life, you first must come to the realization that you have nothing that He has not given you – and then what He has given you is not for you to use for yourself but for Him and His purpose, and you live with the realization that He is coming back to demand an accounting of those gifts.

One more thing about this guy – he wasn't judged for what he had done – it was for what he had not done. It was not the sin of commission – it was the sin of omission – he hadn't invested the mina. In fact he hid it away so nobody knew he had it. Some people think that they are doing well because they aren't doing something bad. That is how the Pharisee in Luke 18 viewed things: *God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.* That is they live with a bunch of Thou shalt nots and if they are not doing those bad things, they feel pretty good about themselves, they may even feel Christian. But James tells us just the opposite: *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.* James 4:17

I just want to leave you today with seven questions to meditate on and answer.

**Do you call Him Lord?** That is, do you call yourself a Christian?

**Is Christ Lord of your life?** That is, if you call yourself a Christian, is Christ really Lord?

**Are you submitting to His kingship in all things?** Are there areas in your life where you do not submit to Him?

**Do you consider all that you have as gifts from God?** Or do you think that it is yours because of your hard work?

**Are you investing them for His profit?** Or are you investing them for yourself?

**Are you living your life with the sobering realization that He is coming back one day?** That is, are you living in the light of Christ's return?

**Do you know that you will give an accounting?** Do you understand that you will answer the question, What did you do with My mina?

In the church today there are good servants working and serving right alongside wicked servants and to the unaided eye, they are identical. But there is a day coming that will expose the difference between the two and all will become clear. Be sure on that day that the faith you say you have is the genuine article and you hear **'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of Your Lord'.**

*Our good and gracious God and Father,*

*Grant that we would know You as Lord and King of our lives and submit unreservedly to You in all things. Help us to live with the sobering realization that You will return soon and we will give an accounting as stewards of Your grace. May we not be ashamed on that day but with joy present You with the offerings of our investments of Your good gifts to us. Help us to understand what is at stake before a holy God. Don't let us deceive ourselves that simply by not doing bad we are doing Your will. Grant us confession and repentance over all those areas we have not submitted all to You and help us cling only to You. For those who have never confessed You as Lord we pray that today You would grant them conviction of sin, and repentance and faith in Christ Jesus the Lord. Let us be those who truly delight in God through Jesus Christ and spread His joy through the gospel to all people, we pray in the name above all names, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*