

**Text: Luke 19:11-27**

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. <sup>13</sup> So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' <sup>14</sup> "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' <sup>15</sup> "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. <sup>16</sup> "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' <sup>17</sup> " 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' <sup>18</sup> "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' <sup>19</sup> "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' <sup>20</sup> "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. <sup>21</sup> 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.' <sup>22</sup> "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? <sup>23</sup> Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' <sup>24</sup> "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' <sup>25</sup> " 'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' <sup>26</sup> "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. <sup>27</sup> 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.' " — NIV84

**Prayer of the Day:**

Lord God Almighty, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit that we may always look forward to the end of this present evil age and to the day of your righteous judgment. Keep us steadfast in true and living faith and present us at last holy and blameless before you; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. God, now and forever.

**Verse of the Day:**

Alleluia. Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. Alleluia. (Matthew 24:42 RSV)

**Sermon Text:**

This parable would make a great bedtime story right? Okay, so not so much. Jesus presents us with a pretty challenging little picture here, doesn't he? Today we take a look at a parable in which we're left asking a piercing question. "**Which servant are you?**"

It's kind of a longer section of scripture today, so perhaps it would be good for us to make sure we have the major players in mind. There is a rich nobleman who becomes a king. There are citizens of the nobleman's territory who want nothing to do with him. Finally, there are 10 servants to whom the nobleman entrusts ten minas.

Now consider the parts they all play. The rich nobleman heads off to be made King. In order to do so he must set up stewards of the territory he currently controls and so he assigns each a mina to conduct his business while away. He then sets off with a delegation of the citizens in hot pursuit who do not want this one as their king. However, they are unsuccessful and the nobleman returns with a crown upon his head and the title of King to go with it.

Now the day of reckoning comes. The King wants to know how things went while he was away and with his new title come new responsibilities for those in his service. One servant comes in having been quite successful in the master's absence. The result is a tenfold return on his investment. Faithful work is rewarded with nobleman status as this servant is placed over ten cities. The same occurs for a servant who presents a fivefold return.

But then we learn of another servant. He mistakes shrewd business dealings for cruelty and fears the king instead of respecting him. His misuse of the mina results in nothing at all, not even a return on an investment had he deposited it. The result is that even what he has is taken away from him and given to the one who has proven faithful. And while we consider unfaithfulness, those citizens who opposed the king, they shall be slaughtered for their insolence. Like I said it's not a bedtime story is it.

So what does this mean? Well, King's are usually a picture of God as we consider this kind of imagery. This King would seem to be a great picture of Jesus specifically. Who will ascend into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father and will return to judge the living and the dead. Citizens of the Nobleman who oppose His Kingship are a pretty easy grab as well, the Jewish peoples of Jesus day in large reject Him and refuse to accept Him as Messiah, King and God. And the servants, those who work in service of this King in His visible absence would seem to be believers, Christians, you and I by God's grace and faith He has given us. Easy peasy, sermon over moving on.

Well, let's hold on a minute! Now, we need to pause and think here because one of those servants doesn't fare so well! Ah, yes that last one kind of makes us a little edgy doesn't he, but I would also submit that the Israelites were also members of the kingdom as well, servant in their own right who we find opposing this King. And Just like that, things have gotten a little last judgmenty haven't they? So now what?

Well, work hard and make minas and you'll be saved, yes!?! Uh, pastor, Reformation Sunday was literally last week and well, scripture says works don't earn us a place in heaven. Absolutely correct so, as I said before this parable isn't about Stewardship or vocation primarily, is it?

So another question for clarities sake is in order. What are the minas that God has given to His Church? What great gifts has God left for His people, that we might use them regularly until His return? It's the means of grace isn't it? Has he not told us to go and make disciples through means of Baptism and His Word (Matthew 28:16-20)? (Read through the great commission in Matthew this week and consider the parallels to this parable. They'll jump out at you.) Has he not urged us to "do this in remembrance of Him" that His minas might multiply in our lives as he grows them in forgiveness, life and salvation? And when we seize on this understanding of the parable it explodes with End Times meaning.

So, ***which servant are you?*** One faithful in the use of the means of grace, regular in the hearing and receiving of the gifts and graces of our God as He pours them out exactly in the ways He has promised them to us. Or one who misunderstands their importance and interprets his

desire for your eternal welfare as harsh demands which just constantly expose our short comings and sin? We therefore take the gifts of God that have been granted to us and cover it up with the vises of the world around us to numb the knowledge that we are frankly unable to stand perfectly before this King. We just can do it, so why even try?

Or instead, are we like the citizens of the territory who oppose this King because frankly we don't like how he operates. Forgiveness ought to come with the requirement for a bit of elbow grease and at least a sprinkle of our own effort. After all doesn't this parable teach that faithfulness is rewarded? We're better than others, so we should get what's coming to us.

I know the answer in my own life and I'm willing to bet you do to, even though you don't like it. God is in no way being harsh when He asks us to listen to Him. Nor is he too hard when He demands that He be first in our lives and that we prove faithful with the gifts that He has given us. And because they are His gifts, he can give them out to us in whatever way He sees fit and thankfully He does because we could never earn them, elbow grease and effort included, if God gave us what we truly deserved for our actions, well I shudder at the thought of it. God's word's through Paul to the Thessalonians are frightful in regard to the enemies of Christ, <sup>8</sup> *He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.* <sup>9</sup> *They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).*

So how are we to be saved? On the day of reckoning, when the King returns I want to be the servants who are rewarded with nobility and given cities. Really those who are granted heaven and all the joys it contains. Consider for a moment words spoken by Peter, *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).* As he announces our nobility, our citizenship in heaven do you hear why? It is because of the mina isn't it? It is because God gave us of Himself.

Scripture tells in deepest detail the story of the King, who though he was God set aside the full use of His power and glory for us, came to His own people, only to be rejected by them that as they hung him on a cross, His perfect life and innocent death might be the perfect payment for our failed attempts to earn favor with a holy God. It is precisely this message, this Gospel that encourage us to be faithful with. It is this message He has left us with in Word and Sacraments that it might grow and flourish among us as He has promised. So that when He returns whether the return has been 10 fold or not, because of His labor and work He may look to us as say, "*Well done, good and faithful servant! ... Come and share your master's happiness (Matthew 25:21)!*"

As our lesson showed us, that message will not always be well received, it may even be opposed, but we need not worry. It is that message, which grants the power to live as God's people, even as it announces a God who lived for us. So, ***which servant are you?*** Though sin would make us enemies of God, through Christ, we ARE good and faithful servants. Amen!