

Luke 19:11-27

Dear Workers in God's Kingdom:

"It's hard to find good help these days!" We frequently hear that expression. Employers tell us that there is a shortage of people willing to fill positions, show up each day, take responsibility, and do the job well.

One of the reasons proposed for this is that many people today think life is about being entertained. Oh, having some enjoyment in life isn't wrong. But God didn't put us here just to be entertained. Even Adam and Eve worked and found joy in their work in the paradise called Eden. Paul writes in Ephesians, ***"We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which he prepared in advance for us to do"*** (Eph. 2:10). What is fulfilling, rewarding, and brings blessings to others is using our gifts and abilities to accomplish God's purposes during our few short years on this planet.

All of us, every single one of us, have gifts given by God to use in service to him and others. Today, using Jesus' words in Luke 19, we want to consider this question: ***"What Am I Doing with what the King Gave Me?"*** (1) *Am I showing responsibility?* (2) *Am I remembering his imminent return?*

1

It was Palm Sunday. There was a certain electricity in the air. Jesus was very popular among the common people but vehemently despised by their leaders. The tension was tight, like a wire ready to snap. Luke writes, ***"The people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once."*** The people were waiting for their new king! After all the miracles Jesus performed and the wisdom he spoke, they thought they were finally going to get their king to drive the Romans out and liberate them! This king would reestablish the glory days once enjoyed under David and Solomon, and life in Israel would be good again.

So Jesus told them a parable to bring them back to reality. They would have their King. But his kingdom wasn't going to be in Israel. And while they waited for this King, it wasn't time to sit around and twiddle their thumbs!

"A man of noble birth traveled to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then to return" (EHV). Jesus, who certainly didn't look like a king when he arrived into this world in the little po-dunk village of Bethlehem, and who did not look like a king when he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday, was soon going to depart his followers. His death was days away. But he was going to return. And *when* he returned, he would certainly appear as a King -- in fact, ***"the King of kings and Lord of lords."*** There will be no doubt that he is King -- not in the minds of his followers, and not in the minds of those who hate him: ***"At the name of Jesus every knee will bow"*** (Phil 2:10).

In the parable, the king gave 10 servants 10 minas (1 each). That would be like 100 days' wages each. ***"Put this money to work," he said, "until I come back."*** When the man returned as king, he asked for an accounting of what they did with the mina. ***"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'" The king replied, "Well done, my good servant!"*** Because he had proven faithful, he was put in charge of 10 cities in the kingdom. Another servant came whose mina earned 5 more and was put in charge of 5 cities.

But one servant came back with the same one mina. He had simply hidden it in a piece of cloth. The king was livid! Now, I suppose we could defend the servant and say, *"Well, at least he didn't lose it!"* But what had the king said to him? ***"Put this money to work."*** The servant had flatly disobeyed. He even blamed the master for his failure: ***"I was afraid of you, since you are a demanding man..."*** (EHV). The king replied, ***"Why didn't you just put it in the bank, then?"*** At least it could have earned interest. The servant should have respected his master and obeyed his command.

Jesus is our King. He's given us all many minas -- rich gifts that we can use to be a blessing to others. He wants us to use those gifts and talents and not be idle. To **not** use the gifts the King has given us is to waste those gifts and their potential. And to waste the King's gifts is to disobey and dishonor our gracious King.

Fellow Christians, we all have business to take care of for the King because he has certainly taken care of the very most important business for us. He has given us the totally free gift of the forgiveness of our sins. He has given us the totally free gift of faith to believe it. He has given us that uplifting message and the abilities, means of income, and source of love to share that message with a world that desperately needs it.

It's important for each of us to ask, "*How am I doing with my mina?*" Am I a responsible steward/servant? Do I respect the King and his desires?

Christians don't wear a uniform like athletes or a costume like actors. Those are on for a while and off for a while. Working for the King is different. It's not a job. It's who we are. Part-time Christianity isn't a thing, and Jesus and his gospel gift are too precious a commodity to keep in a lazy servant's "*piece of cloth.*"

2

Now is the time to invest these gifts, to put them to use, because the King could come back any time.

Do remember what it was like to go to class in school unprepared? Maybe you never did. But I can tell you, even if its accidental, it feels horrible: fear, guilt, anxiety! If there was a hole to crawl into, it couldn't have been deep enough! If it was winter, maybe you prayed it would start snowing so hard that the principal would send everyone home before that class started.

That's how the lazy servant must have felt -- but the inevitable happened. The king returned. Now he had to give an accounting for his unfaithfulness. So he got angry and made excuses.

There are **two ways** to look at the imminent return of Christ: fear or rejoicing. For the unbeliever, the Last Day strikes fear. "*Mountains, fall on us!*" Jesus said the people would say. For the believer, the Last Day will bring joy. While we admit we cannot live up to the King's perfect expectations, we know and believe that, by the Holy Spirit's grace and work, Jesus has given us pardon, peace, and purpose. As has been said, "*Those who refuse to be ruled by the perfect grace of Christ will inevitably be ruined by the perfect justice of Christ on the Last Day.*"

We can thank God that, if Jesus returns today, we'll not be sitting on our hands, but as busy as beavers and as industrious as honey bees putting to good use the gifts he has given us as trusted and responsible servants of the King.

Amen.