

The King and His Retribution, Part 1

Luke 19:20-27

Well, you can turn in your Bibles to Luke 19 as we finish up the parable of the minas, Luke 19:11-27. "As they heard these things, he," Jesus, "proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the Kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He said therefore, 'A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. And calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'

"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. 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've been faithful in very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' The second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' He said to him, 'And you're to be over five cities.'"

"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, reap what you did not sow.' 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? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest.'

"He said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' They said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas. '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. But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"

So we've been through, in the past couple weeks, the first two sections. We've seen the king and his resources in verses 11 to 14. Highlights the nobility of the king: his character, his concerns, his design. A noble man. A noble king, a good man with a good heart. Wise, kind, generous. That's the king. And then in verses 15 to 19, when that king, that nobleman goes off to a far country, having received a kingdom, he comes back with a title,

a king. He's got a land, he's got people who come to him and pay tribute.

So that's the king and his reward, as he returns to his homeland to reward his faithful servants for their faithful service. And they've been working in a land of complete hostility to the king. Remarkable faithfulness that's only explained by a heart of love and loyalty to their sovereign. They love him.

For today, verses 20 to 27, the longest section of the parable, we see the king and his reckoning. The king and his reckoning. Jesus is in Jericho, as we've said. He's in the home of Zacchaeus. He's mere hours' walk from Jerusalem, and here he's surrounded by his twelve apostles. He's surrounded by a throng of dis, of disciples, those who've been traveling along with him; some of them maybe for a long time, ever since his ministry in Galilee; others maybe more recently picked up in Perea or Jude.

There're also there around him at this time in Jericho, Jewish pilgrims who have traveled along with him along the road, going, intending to go up to Jerusalem for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They've joined with the band of disciples, and so they've become excited along the way, they've

been, as they've been hearing the significance of this group of disciples and who is in their midst, that it's none other than Jesus, the Christ of God, the Messiah.

So they know that they're near Jerusalem. They suppose the Kingdom of God is gonna appear immediately, that the Romans gonna be overthrown, that the Jews are gonna finally get their due reward. So that in their collective ex, excitement, and this messianic enthusiasm of the disciples. We're gonna see there's a good bit to that to see in the rest of the chapter, as we'll see as they enter into Jerusalem, but Jesus needs to set expectations. He needs to explain a couple things and so he tells a parable for the sake of his true disciples, who, like we have done by his grace, they have discerned that the analogy he's making between the story of the parable and the reality the parable portrays, it has to do with his retur, his departure, and his return.

He tells the parable so they will understand that, at this time, so they understand there's going to be a gap, there's going to be an interval during which I expect you to do my work; that's how we've taken this. That's how many of us have been encouraged and challenged and that's one of the main reasons

he's telling this parable, is for our sake, for true disciples' sake.

True disciples have the heart of the two faithful servants in the parable. They take that single mina of theirs, and they put it to good work. They love their master. That's the heart of a true disciple. They love him. They rejoice to serve him, anything else in their life is just, sometimes it's a distraction, but they understand by God's choice and design, they've, God's given me this lot, and I work in and through it for his glory, because I love my master, even in the presence of hostile countrymen, scoffers like we read about in 2 Peter 3; those who hate our Lord.

We work hard while the master is away. We're eager to welcome him home. We're eager to report to him, to have that accountability when we'll come before him and report to him on the progress of his minas, that the power of his gospel to save and to sanctify, we love thinking about that. We love working in the meantime. False disciples, on the other hand, they're also there in the midst. They are mixed in among the true. And so Jesus is telling this parable with them in mind as well.

Many of these current disciples, those who are going to put him on a colt, spread their cloaks in front of him, and shout

"Hosanna," welcome him and champion him, and sing praises of God as he enters into Jerusalem. Many of them will be abandoning him in the end. One apostle in particular will be the cause of his betrayal and arrest and downfall. These are the false disciples, they're self-deceived, and they are portrayed in this third servant, and they serve as a cautionary tale for us all.

We're gonna see in this false servant. We're going to see, number one, the vile justification, vile justification. His justification for his behavior or his lack of action is vile, it's despicable, it's reprehensible, it's a vile justification. Luke tells us, "Then another came," Luke, recording Jesus's words, "Another came saying, Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief, for I was afraid of you because you're a severe man. You take what you didn't deposit, you reap what you did not sow."

This servant appears before this king. He tells his master what he's done and then why he has done it. And just like the other two, we note that he addresses the returning king as Lord. He calls him Lord. Same term, same identification, meaning I am your servant. You're my Lord. I'm your servant. We have the right relationship. So he's claiming an identity just like the other servants.

Unlike his fellow servants, we notice that this guy has a whole lot more to say. Obviously his conscience is bothering him here. He's feeling the, the tension that's caused by his neglect, especially as he's just heard his fellow servants report the great gains that their minas earned. He knows, I got some 'splaining to do. He's just heard the evidence of their faithfulness. He's just heard how, while he has been self-indulgent, they have been sacrificial, hardworking, doing what the master required.

One had, in, had invested the mina diligently. Another had worked very, very hard, building business, reproducing with it. He's just heard of their faithfulness. But this man's indolence, his neglect, his carelessness, his outright indifference toward the honor that's been given him; he's feeling right now the burning sense of shame. And I've got to imagine, in the presence of a king, with the title of a king, power and authority of a king, he's just got that panicked feeling of being caught. He's exposed. He's gonna have to give an account. I think that's something that the scoffers fail to realize, is that one day everybody is gonna stand before that king.

Luke has prepared us, actually, to see the servant in the correct light. It's hard to see it in English. Impossible

really, but our translation says, it says, "Then another came." Another: there are two words in Greek that can be translated, another, but with opposite meanings. There's the word *allos*, which can mean another of the same kind, and then the word *heteros*, which means another of a different kind. This is the latter.

This is another of a different kind. He's another servant, oh yes, but different than the previous two, of a different nature, of a different manner, of a different heart. First two servants are faithful. This one is another, he's unfaithful. He's false. So the Lord is already preparing us for this in this account. We see this, this false servant, he's identified right from the front, so we know what we're seeing as we get into his explanations. We see that this false servant has put on a bold face, hasn't he? He's trying to cover up the evidence of his fraud. He's done nothing, and he knows it. He's earned nothing, and he knows it. He's produced nothing, and so he tries to cover it over with flattery, fakery, and a false accusation.

First, the false servant attempts flattery, flattery. He addresses the returning king with the same title of respect as the other two servants use, calling him Lord, *Kyrie*. Is that how this servant has treated the nobleman, as his Lord? To call him



Lord and then refuse to obey him is hypocrisy, high-handed hypocrisy and to call him Lord, in spite of the evidence, in spite of his actions, in spite of his heart? Obvious flattery, in an attempt to deceive. Jesus rightly said of people like this in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and you do not do what I tell you to do?" Drop the title or change your behavior. So he attempts flattery.

Second, the false servant attempts fakery. Fakery. Can't see it in some of the translations because they left out a word. But the New American Standard and the King James Version rightly provide a translation for the Greek word that's in there, but it's hid, it's not in the, translated into the ESV. But it's the word *idou*. *Idou*, which means behold, behold. So rather than, as our translation says, and as the ESV renders it, "Lord, here is your mina," and that's not necessarily wrong, it's a translation choice. But that translation doesn't allow us to see the servant's attempt at fakery, so more literally, the servant says Lord, behold your mina. That's what he's saying. He's trying to, actually, rather than cover it over, rather than trying to minimize, he's trying to draw attention to it. "Lord, behold your mina, which I kept away, laid away in a handkerchief." Like, pay no attention to all the, the nothing. Look over here at this.

Jesus gives another version of this story in Jerusalem just a few days from now. He tells this during the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:25, and in that version the false servant takes the master's talent, which is a whole lot more money, 60 times the mina, takes the master's talent, and he buries it in the ground, Matthew 25:25. Since a talent is a significantly higher sum of money, as I said, valued at 60 times more than a mina, it makes sense that he buries it in the ground because he wants to prevent thieves from stealing it.

In this version here, as he tells it in this context, the unfaithful servant tells the master and he's almost using boasting language, "Lord, behold your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief." It's actually the imperfect tense. So he's basically saying, I was keeping it laid away. Like, the whole time you were gone, I was making an effort to keep it laid away. He's portraying himself as being active, even though there's no action there. This is like smoke and mirrors, totally. I've continuously been keeping it laid away, hidden, tucked safely out of sight. Good for you. You've done nothing. You've done nothing.

The word handkerchief here, *Sudarion*, it's a Latin long-word, *soudarion*, from the verb *sudor*, which means to sweat. So

it's, it would be probably crass to see it as a sweat rag, but that is how you could translate this, as a sweat rag. That's how, that's what he's laid it up in. But there are other sweat rags that aren't just for sweating in, and that's kind-of the sense here. It's more like the silk handkerchief. So it's something nice, something that might be translated as a burial cloth over the face of Jesus. So it's more like that. It's more like something that could be pictured as ornate, something decorative, something soft and silky and smooth.

It's as Alfred Plummer has said, "He's not owning a fault. He's professing a virtue here. He's saying, 'I've not lost or spent any of it.'" He's trying to portray himself as being so careful, as treating the mina with such delicateness, even to, to the point of keeping the dust off of it, so that it can retain its shine. Master, here it is, safe and sound. Check it out, Lord. You've entrusted the mina to me, and I've done exactly what you wanted. I've kept it for you. Is that what, what the nobleman wanted? Back in verse 13, we just read it. "Here's a mina for you. Now, go engage in business." Not go and hide it, keep it dust free. Go and use it, get it dirty, tarnish it, make it work, continue doing that until I come.

The mina is seed money, it's capital, invest it by entrusting it into the hands of this servant, one he deemed trustworthy. So it's less about the money for this master, it's more about the people. It's about people with dependable character, those whom he can give his money to and guarantee that that money is going to earn in their hands because they're trustworthy, or they're faithful. He's gonna make, those servants are the kind that are going to make his mina earn and gain and multiply. It's always the point, that he's looking for the character of that person.

This attempt at hoodwinking the master, as, as he tells the parable, as Jesus tells this, is not gonna be lost on the crowd. They know exactly what's going on here. It's actually quite a humorous picture. This is, it's a laughable attempt by the servant in saying, pay no attention to my neglect, pay no attention to my nothing. Look over here at exactly what you gave me, which is shiny. As if the master would fall for this? No. Behold your mina safe and sound; dust free, as dust free, and as shiny, oh Lord, as the day on which you gave it to me.

We see in Proverbs 20, verse 8, "A king who sits on the throne of judgment winnows all evil with his eyes." You can imagine, right about now, that's exactly what's going on. As the

deadpan gaze of the master is boring a hole into his soul, exposing his heart, laying open for everyone to see in that courtroom, exactly what this man's made of.

The servant's conscience here is pricked. And so what does he do? Drop on his knees, bow, confess his sin? No, he can't leave it there. He doubles down, and he sees the need now to do some tap dancing. Hit it, Ginger, on the piano, boom and he starts tap dancing. He's got to justify his neglect. He's got to explain, somehow, his failure. We would call this defending himself.

He's attempted flattery and fakery and now, third, the false servant attempts a false accusation. This is how he doubles down, with false accusation, by slandering his master's character. You believe it? He responds here to the quizzical look in his master's eyes, that's bringing conviction to his conscience. And the unfaithful servant says in verse 21, "I hid your mina. And here's the reason why. Because I was afraid of you." Really?

"I was afraid of you." Look, I'm the victim here. I'm the victim. Why? What reason in the master is there to be afraid? "I was afraid of you because," huh, here's the evidence, "You are a severe man. You take what you didn't deposit. You reap what you

did not sow.” He accuses him of being a severe man. The word is *austeros*. Austere. He's an austere man. You're, you're a demanding man. You are a taskmaster. You're an overlord. You're always so stern, so exacting. I can do, never do anything right around you. You're unreasonable. You're critical. Impossible to please.

You know what he's saying? He's saying, it's your fault. It's your fault that I was paralyzed into inaction. I just couldn't act. I was so scared of you. And he backs up that slander with more slander. You take what you didn't deposit, you reap what you didn't sow. Yuh, not hard to see what he's saying there. He's calling his master a thief. Those who withdraw what they didn't deposit, what do we call them? Bank robbers. Sic the FBI on them, those who reap what they didn't sow, those are either tyrants or plunderers from a foreign land, those who invade and raid and steal all the crops to feed their army, or a tyrant.

This servant's hubris, trying to double down in the middle of his shame, knows no bounds. And all this leads him to, really, an outright contradiction. Who's he trying to kid here? “You take what you didn't deposit. You reap what you didn't sow?” Wait a minute. But in verse 20, he just acknowledged,

"Lord, here is your mina." He's totally contradicted himself. The one that you deposited with me, the one that you gave me to sow. Here's your mina back. So it, he totally acknowledges, oh, this master did deposit something.

I don't think he's being insincere here. I think he's being sincere. But obviously we can see that in his sin, his pride, in his laziness, in his utter disregard of his master, all these charges are coming, flooding in by his conscience. Which, in the presence of the master, and with that gaze fixed on him, is starting to bring charge after charge and accusation after accusation, from his conscience to his heart and instead of repenting, instead of saying, you are right, you are just, what does he say? You're unjust, you're the problem. He doubles down in his sin. He chooses to ignore the shame, ignore the conviction, and it results in more blindness for him. Faulty reasoning, total contradiction here.

You know what it shows about the servant? It shows that, no matter what the title was on his name tag, no matter whose name was on his company van, no matter who or what he claimed to be, in spite of the fact that he's been living in the noble's household, eating the nobleman's food, consuming all of his

stuff, making use of the privileges of the household, representing the nobleman, this man does not know his master.

His master is a complete stranger to him. He calls him Lord, but refuses to do his will. He says he's afraid of him, but fear doesn't keep him from accusing him straight to his face. He pretends to know him, to know what kind of man, what kind of man he really is. Come on in for a secret. I'll tell you what he's really like. The only proof he provides is his slander.

It's like so many voices we hear today, isn't it? Out there playing the victim, feigning an interest in justice, claiming to be oh so afraid of the oppressive power. Calling it toxic this and toxic that. All feigning an interest in justice, pretending justice is on their side, that they represent a righteous cause, meanwhile, what's in their hearts is evil, sin, a guilty conscience that they want to suppress.

Let's look a little closer, past the incendiary accusation, actually examine the facts, and what you see is more than just a vile attempt at self-justification. What we see is that, "The one who condemns the righteous," Proverbs 17:15, "The one who condemns the righteous is an abomination to the Lord." He is condemning a righteous master who is not only innocent, he is a





righteous master, a kind master, a wise master, a good and faithful and noble man. The one who condemns such a one as that, he's an abomination to the Lord, one that the Lord hates.