

The King and His Reward, Part 1

Luke 19:15-19

We're back in Luke 19 this morning and so I would like to invite you to open your bibles to Luke 19 and the parable that we've been looking at that starts in verse 11 of Luke 19. Luke, 19:11 to 27, "As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they suppose 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. 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 those 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 have been faithful in very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'

"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.' 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 you 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?'

"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 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.'"

Think about that for yourself. What he gives you, what he requires of you to be a steward of in this life. It's not really about what you gain, the amounts, it's not material in nature, his concern is relational in nature for each one of us; that's

this nobleman here, pictured in the parable. Before he returns to set up his kingdom, to govern the kingdom that he's received, he wants to test and prove and reveal the true character of his servants. He wants to find them. He hopes to find them when he comes back. He wants to find them loyal and reliable, dependable. That's what he's after. He's after character in them.

Now we have seen how the nobleman chose to resource his servants. How he set them up to work and invest and gain during the period of his physical absence from them. And as we noted, he didn't give them a huge amount of money. He gave him enough. Not a huge amount of money, but enough. It wasn't insignificant. It was, a mina was about a hundred days wages. So maybe three months of wages, three months of work, worth of money and as we said clearly we could see by that the noblemen's concern is not really about making money. How do we know that? Because he doesn't give them a lot of money, just a little. The smallish amount is just enough to test their character. How so? Because those who have poor character, they react badly when they get less than what they think they deserve.

When those with poor character are entrusted with less responsibility than they think they're ready for, then they

think they're entitled to, those with low character, those with hearts of pride, those with self-centered interests and self-centered ambitions, they tend to resent the master. They tend to become embittered in their hearts. Oh, it may not come out overtly, but just below the surface it's seething. It's tainting their thoughts and their judgments.

So, this is the perfect amount of money to test character. Will all ten servants serve the nobleman faithfully? Will they work just as hard with this little as they would with a whole lot? Will they be loyal, joyful, obedient in his absence or will they despise the master's kindness and refuse to do his work and share in his interests?

Listen when you and I, when we are entrusted with little, whether it's little in our own estimation or it's little in the estimation of others whose opinions we regard, like family, or friends, or coworkers, to be tested with little, to see if we'll work and serve anyway. Joyfully, cheerfully, eagerly, zealously, hardworking people, hardworking Christians, serving kingdom interests, and not our own interests, not serving our own pleasure, our own ambitions, our own schedules, but serving our king and counting that to be a greater pleasure than whatever

ambitions or desires we can come up with. Whatever hobbies we love to entertain ourselves with.

Do we count his work, his kingdom priorities to be more important, more joyful to be a part of? Again, we don't work with the little for the sake of praise or approval or visible success. The idea here is to test our hearts to see if we'll work because we love Christ, because we love to do what honors him, because we love to work in the things that honor and please him, no matter what it is we're doing or how much we have or what it is he asks of us.

And in the interest of true friendship with us, in the interest of genuine partnership with us, true fellowship with us, participation in our Lord's work is what he's after. In the interest of our future usefulness in his kingdom, our Lord tests us not by giving us a lot, again, by giving us little. He intends to, through this test, through this proving, through this exposure, he intends to improve our character, because, let's face it, any of us could be in the position of those servants who have bad character at first, right?

All of us have struggled with some of these attitudes. Not one of us have been perfect in this regard. And so, with the test and with the proving, with the time that we struggle and

fight to invest the little that he's given us, he improves our character; he matures us in his grace, helps us to see his goodness, helps us to see his intentions and his design in testing us and in so doing, he prepares us for our future with him that we would work with him and for him, and work for the purposes of extending his kingdom. That's what this is all about.

So, looking back at the parable for today, we're going to cover verses 15 to 19. We've already covered 11 to 14 last week. Today, 15 to 19: The king and his reward and for next time we'll put off for now. The next time we'll look in verses 20 to 27. The king and his reckoning, which is the longest section which is a, it ends the parable on a note of warning. A note of warning. So, as we look today at the king and his reward verses 15 to 19, we'll break this down into three parts. The king's return, the servants' report, and the king's reward. Verse 15 says, "When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, so that he might know what they had gained by doing business."

All right, let's break that down just a little bit, starting first with the significance of the king's return. The

significance of the king's return, it says when he, that is the nobleman, when he, the nobleman, returned, having received the kingdom. So that means the nobleman has become what? King, right? So, this nobleman, this king, when he returns, having received the kingdom. This means his bid for the kingdom was successful. What he set off to receive, he actually did receive. And that's significant for two reasons. It confirms first the nobility of his character, and it also confirms the reliability of his word.

So, by receiving the kingdom what he, what he has accomplished, what he set out to do by receiving that kingdom, it confirms the nobility of his character and it confirms the reliability of his word. By contrast the nobleman in Jesus' story, he possesses the character of a true king. He is fit to rule. He returned to his native land, verse 15, "having received the kingdom." Having received the kingdom, the passive sense there, where this nobleman has to go and not take a kingdom for himself. He's not going to conquer and take over something. Instead, he's receiving, he's the passive recipient.

If they, if he is a recipient, the passive in this sentence, well, who's the active giver of the kingdom? Well evidently, we see an invisible sovereign in the story, who is in

the white space in the text. This invisible sovereign is the one who confers the kingship upon the nobleman and that obviously represents whom, that's God the Father, right? So, the greater sovereign, this is the one who knows the good character of the nobleman.

The invisible sovereign in the story here is the one who trusts this nobleman, knows his character and he entrusts the kingdom to him. So, the nobility of this man's character is confirmed because the great sovereign in the story, this significant person who is supreme in his sovereignty and supreme in his authority and power, though he's invisible, he is ever present and he has confirmed the nobility of this man's character. He's granted him the kingdom. He's entrusted the kingdom to him.

In the king's return, having received the kingdom, it also confirms the reliability of his word. We know that he departed, verse 12, with two purposes in mind. Yes, the first was to receive the kingdom. The second was what? To come back, to return to his native homeland. So, he told his ten servants in verse 13, "engage in business until I come."

And the final verb is in the present tense, as we said last time, making it emphatic here. I am coming, you might say, I am

most certainly coming. It's emphatic. It is sure. It is certain. It is reliable. And the verb is *erchomai*. I am coming. And the verb in verse 15, the, in our text has that word *erchomai* at its root. So, there's an obvious connection Jesus is making between the promise of I am coming and the fact that I have come.

So, in the king's return, Jesus wants us to see how receiving the kingdom, number one, confirms the nobility of the king's character, number two, the reliability of the king's word. Confirms his nobility and confirms his reliability.

The second thing who, we see here, upon the king's return, we see his primary concern. We see his first order of business. We could call this the first priority upon the king's return, the first priority upon the king's return. Just prior to his departure, Jesus revealed to us in verse 14, a pretty significant detail that not all was well in the land.

This man's citizens hated him, and they sent a delegation after him saying we don't want this man to reign over us, so the nobleman leaves anyway. And he leaves knowing that he's got a rebellious faction in his own country, in his own homeland, this uprising that is seeking to unseat him. That's confirmed as the delegation meets him before the sovereign that he's going to stand before.

So obviously the fact that he's returned and having received the kingdom means that delegation from his rebellious citizens is unsuccessful. They weren't able to stop the sovereign from seeing the nobility of his character and conferring upon him and entrusting in the kingdom, But the king knows that upon his own return, he's going to have to deal with these rebels. He's going to have to cleanse and purify his land of all factions and all trouble for the good order of his society.

So, we would expect that suppressing an uprising is going to be foremost on his mind, paramount, the very first thing he wants to take care of. Not so, right? What do we see is his primary concern? When he returns what's his first priority? Well, closest to his heart, preoccupying his mind is to summon his servants and see how they did. Is that what you would do? That's what he does.

Jesus says in verse 15, "He ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they'd gained by doing business." And this reveals a couple of important things about this king. First, we see this king is a pretty cool customer, isn't he? I mean, he is confident. He is untroubled. He's confident, he's composed, he's poised, he's

dignified, he is kingly, you might say. He's acting every bit the nobility of the king that he is.

So, the king, he'll address the rebellious. He'd get to them in do time. For now, his first order of business, verse 15, he orders these servants to whom he'd given the money to be called to him, so that he might know what they'd gained by doing business. Again, is this about money? No, it's not about the money. The increase in the money is, yes, one indication of productive activity while he's away.

But it's, it's the activity itself that he's interested in. Which demonstrates this activity on their part, demonstrates loyalty to him. That's what he really wants to see. If it were about the money, as we've said, he would have given them a whole lot more money than a mere one mina apiece. No, he's interested to be with his servants. He's interested to have them in his presence, which is why he's prioritized meeting with them before he attends to any other business.

This makes perfect sense, doesn't it. That the Lord would start here? That he'd prioritize his own servants. After he has received his kingdom and after he's returned to his homeland, where many of his citizens indeed hate him, the first priority has to be really to make sure that his own servants, those

closest to him, those who are of his own household, he needs to know who's really with him, who's on his side, who shares his interest, and what a joy it is then to find faithful, loyal servants, those who share in his love, those who share in his work.

Again, when we peel back the metaphor, the parable, to reflect upon the reality that this represents how comforting it is, isn't it? How encouraging it is to remember our Lord's interest in each and every one of us; to be mindful that while he is away, he's thinking about us, all the time. He is praying for us. Romans 8:34 says he's interceding for us according to the will of God. He loves us. He's eager to return. He's eager to summon us to himself and let us all together rejoice in exchanging stories in us, telling him how we did. Not as if he doesn't know.

So, now that the king has returned, how did his ten servants do? Let's consider a second point, number two, the servants' report. In verses 16 to 21 we hear from three of the ten servants. And the three reports that we receive here represent all ten of them. It's not necessary for our Lord to tell number one came, number two, number three, number four, number five, all the way up to ten. He doesn't do that. That

would be tedious. And so, he's only trying to get to the gist. The main point. So, he gives three reports, two of them from the faithful, one from the unfaithful, and the three represent all ten. So, we don't know what the other seven are like. We don't know what category they fit into, but we'll just take it in proportion that it's two for one.

All right, today we're going to look at the first two servants, the faithful ones. Will put off that unfaithful servant until next week. Notice the report of the two faithful servants', verses 16 to 19, "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.' The second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas'. And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.'"

So the two things we see here that I think that rise to the surface here of our observations, faithfulness and humility. First, the evidence of faithfulness in the servants' report. Both servants report an increase. And that increase points to their industry and the productivity that they engaged in while their Lord was away. These two servants, they're different men. They're different men with different gifts, different talents.

Both of them, though faithful, both of them measured and commended for their faithfulness, their reliability, both of them being pleasing to the Lord and equally so, equally pleasing to the Lord. So, the first servant in his report he uses the verb which is *prosergazomai*, *prosergazomai*, which may indicate that this increase that he brought to the Lord came by trade or by investment.

Good rate of return for investing stocks, according to some sources, and is an annual rate of seven percent or so. If you get above that man, you're doing really well. He's describing, Jesus' describing here a one thousand percent increase, one thousand percent, which means I want that guy as my money manager, don't you? This guy is effective.

But in the case of the first servant, just focusing on his gifts and talents and abilities and what it is he's kind of designed by God to do. *Prosergazomai* refers to the gain that comes from trade or investment. So, this servant is wired to be more of a manager. He's exercised very diligent, attentive oversight, investing the Lord's mina. He has been on top of it. This servant didn't just put the mina in the bank and let it accrue any small amount of interest. He's not lazy. He didn't hand it over, hand it over to some broker, leave it to someone

else and forget about it while he goes and does other work. This guy is watching over the Lord's money, personally, very attentive to it. So, he's a white collar guy and hard and faithful in his work.

In the case of the second servant, the second servant in reporting his mina's increase, he uses the verb *poieo*. It's common verb *poieo* to make or to do, and that probably refers to an increase that's gained more by sweat equity, by good old fashioned hard work, elbow grease. So perhaps this guy is more the artisan, the Craftsman, the tradesman. This guy, has all of that. He has the whole package. It's remarkable. And again, if somewhere in the range of seven to ten percent is a healthy profit margin and running any business, this servant has done exceedingly well. Again, he's gained a five hundred percent profit in his business.

That's the level that these guys are at and remember too, don't forget they have demonstrated faithfulness in a climate of absolute hostility against their master, against who they represent. So, they've had to work against the grain. They've had to push past the headwinds, against their business. Means these faithful men have really proven themselves, haven't they? Reliable. They've demonstrated they're loyal to the Lord when it

cost them something. They've been tested and they've been found to be dependable. Now, for many, this kind of fantastic success would be way too much for the ego. These are faithful men.

And second thing we see in this report is the evidence of humility. They're humble men. They're faithful and they're humble. We see the evidence of humility in the servants' report. It starts out by both servants addressing their master as *kyrios*, as Lord. He's the Lord. And when he asked him a straightforward question, what do they do? They give him a straightforward, concise, succinct answer. They not only call him, Lord, they treat him as Lord. And then they attribute their increase not to their own ingenuity, not to their own intelligence or their own diligence or their own hard work. They attribute the increase to what the Lord gave them to the Lord's mina.

What does it say? Their Lord, "Your mina has gained." It's "your mina has gained." It's not my work. I really did a lot of work for that 10 minas, and I really did a lot. I appreciate you acknowledging it. I've just been waiting for your return because I knew you'd appreciate. You're a hard working man. I'm a hard working man. No, he says it's your mina. Your mina is, is what gets, it's not really even the mina.

It's the, it's that pronoun, possessive pronoun your. That's what gets all the glory here, right? The mina of you. That's what's driven the productivity, that's what's gained. And that's the only thing, really, that explains one thousand percent return on an investment or a five hundred percent profit in a business. It's not their own doing. The gain is attributable only to what they've received from the Lord.

They know, and they believe firmly with deep conviction, that the real energy driving the productivity is in the Lord's mina. It's the fact that it's the Lord's. Anybody else's mina, no power, his mina, power. And these servants, they really do get what the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians to humble them in their pride. "What do you have that you didn't receive? And if you then received it, why do you boast as though you did not receive it?"

These are the same servants of Luke 17:10, after doing all that, they were commanded. They come in having worked in the field and having served the master. They say, "Hey, we're just unworthy servants. We're only doing our duty. I mean, there's nothing here to commend." They're like the psalmist in Psalm 115:1 who cry out "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your



faithfulness!" That's what's, that's what's going on here.

That's what the increases do to your love, your faithfulness.

You did it. Not to us, oh Lord, but for the sake of your mina,
oh Lord.