

Title: How's your business doing?
Text: Luke 19.11-27
Theme: Faithfulness to Christ is worth it
Series: Luke
Aim: I aim to challenge my people to invest all they have been given for the King.

Ronald Wayne was recruited by Steve Jobs to help launch Apple Company. Ronald was given a 10% share of the company for his commitment. He sold his portion of the ownership in 1976 for \$800. If he hadn't sold it, his share would be worth around \$400 billion today. That may sound like a big regret, but beloved there are bigger ones and Jesus does not want you to live with regret by wasting the opportunities and resources he has given you.

Read Text:

John Piper was pastoring in Minneapolis in 2003 when he released his book, Don't Waste Your Life. The point of that book is the point of this text. You can invest yourself in the American Dream looking for comfort, fame, respect, envy, and of course, pleasure. But who do you know who lives for their own comfort is actually happy and content? Who do you know who pursues fame, has actually found enough and is not threatened by those who have more? Who do you know who demands respect has actually earned it? And who do you know who craves pleasure who hasn't been addicted to pursuing that pleasure that only gives diminishing returns?

Comfort, fame, respect and pleasure are not in themselves sinful, but while God designed you to enjoy them, you were never made to be satisfied with them. Only God can fill and overflow the God-shaped vacuum in your soul and he does when you give yourself to the purpose of making God's fame known in every part of your life. God is so good and kind to command you to pursue the only thing that will satisfy you and prepare you well for eternal life.

Think about how we spend our entire lives getting ready for the next phase and helping others get ready for the next phase. We prepare our children for school, so they are prepared to get jobs, so they are prepared to be productive citizens, so they are prepared to marry, so they are prepared to have children, so they are prepared to raise their children. Everything is driven by the next goal, expectation, deadline, degree, position or pay raise. We get prepared for a job and then for the years when we are not able to work like we once did, then for the declining years and then, bam, death. You try to tell kids that what happens as an adult is way longer than what happens in high school. So, don't make a mess in high school or the season after that because it will create a lot of knots that have to get untied as an adult. But as long as this life is, it is a vapor, a mist, a flower of the field, a poof, that comes and is gone. Here is wisdom. In all of your getting ready for the next phase, do not neglect the most important phase – eternity! What is eternal? Your family is not eternal. Your favorite team is not eternal. Your career is not eternal. Your hobbies are not eternal. Your retirement is not eternal. The Kingdom of God is eternal. That is why Jesus told us to seek it first. But we have to know what that means. And the disciples were not clear on that so Jesus told them this story in order to help them be prepared for what is going to happen.

1. The Setting for the Parable (11-14)

The setting of the parable is the place, the purpose, the people and what a mina stands for. The place looks to be in the house of Zacchaeus (“as they heard these things” that Zacchaeus said). The purpose is informed by the 2 reasons stated in v.11. 1) Because he was near Jerusalem and 2) because many assumed the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. This is the last thing that Luke records before the Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem. We are probably less than a week away from his death.

Ben Sasse, is a former senator from Nebraska, and former president of the University of Florida. He has pancreatic cancer and a few months ago, was given a few months to live. He is close to “borrowed time.” In an interview with 60 minutes last weekend he said that since he is likely getting close to death, that people assume that he all of a sudden has very important things to say and has a lot more wisdom than before. But it is true that when someone knows that their years are now weeks or days, that you get a sense of what really matters to them from how they use the limited time they have left. So, we are right to feel the weight of importance of this parable. The time is short. Jesus is days away from the cross. And this parable summarizes many things that Jesus has said and it challenges us, and hopefully wakes us up to the reality of this short life and the significance of the one to come.

The second reason is because the people “*supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.*” Therefore, this story is another attempt on the part of Christ to correct an assumption. The people who “*heard these things*” heard them through a filter. That filter trapped the truths they did not want to hear and believe and let through the ones they did. As a result, they were not listening and therefore not understanding. They wanted the kingdom but not the cross. Jesus talked repeatedly about the cross, but they dismissed that. They were excited about going to Jerusalem but for the wrong reasons. The Kingdom of Christ is built on values that are antithetical to this world. Jesus is telling them:

Cross first, then kingdom. Death first, then resurrection. Suffering now, glory later. This is the framework for how we live.

- Serving first, then leadership
- Faithfulness in small things, then promotion
- Listening, understanding, empathizing, then speaking
- Deferring, not demanding
- Submitting to God’s good demands versus demanding things from God

These two reasons set up the three types of characters. The Nobleman is Christ. The servants are the disciples and followers of Christ. The citizens are those who hate Christ. They don’t want this man to reign over us. Why not? They want to be their own king. This is our world. And finally, the minas. A mina was equivalent to what a laborer would earn in 3 months time. In this story a mina represents everything that God has given you. So, what happened?

2. The Story

The story has two parts: 1) The Nobleman means a man of noble birth. He is royalty, like a prince. This is Christ who is going to be leaving his servants for a time and he is telling them this and preparing them for his absence by telling them what to do while he is gone. That is exactly what Christ is seeking to do with this parable. He is informing his disciples that he is going to be gone for a while because he is going away in order to receive honor and a kingdom. What Jesus is preparing them for is the fact that he will die, will be resurrected and will ascend to heaven. He is going to be gone from them. He is going away.

Ten servants are called. 10, not 12 because this parable is about more than the disciples. This includes all followers of the King. The servants are given resources to "*Engage in business until I come.*" He does not tell them how long he is going to be gone but just that he is going to be gone and will return. The servants are under the authority of the king and what they are given is not theirs to keep but theirs to use in order to benefit the King. The term servant actually means bondservants. They are completely owned by the Nobleman who trusts them with some of his resources. Yes, they are under his command. Yes, they are charged with working for his benefit, but he is giving them responsibility by entrusting them with resources. He tells them to "engage in business." He does not micromanage them but apparently leaves it up to them to steward what he has entrusted to them in order to benefit the king upon his return.

Note that each servant is given the same amount of money. The point of this parable is not so much on what you are given, but how you use what you are given. In another parable of Jesus, the servants are given different amounts, but here, they are given the same which emphasizes the equality of expectation that Jesus has for every servant. Every follower of Christ has the same responsibility to use whatever he has given you to benefit him while he is gone. But there is more to the story.

There are a group of citizens who send a delegation after him. This delegation of representatives of these citizens are following the nobleman to where he is going to be formally given the kingdom. They do not want him to reign over them. This leads us to believe that the kingdom that he is receiving means that he will be formally enthroned as the king over the area where he is currently seen as a nobleman. V. 14 says plainly that the citizens hated him. They hate him so much that they send a delegation after the king to appeal to whomever is giving him the kingdom to stop him from being anointed king over them.

This action would have made sense to those who heard Jesus that day because the Jews were known for sending delegations to Rome to protest certain leaders. But this is not only bold, but consider how the citizens would have likely treated the servants of the Nobleman. If they hated the nobleman, they would certainly seek to make life difficult on his servants, which may be a factor in this story as we go along and that is how we are to understand this. The actions of the citizens and the consequences of their actions only occupies 2 of the 16 verses. The weight of this parable focuses on the encounter with the newly appointed king and his servants upon his return.

This brings us to v.15. The King returns having received the kingdom. He has the kingdom. He is the king and he demands an accounting of his resources and orders the servants to appear before him *“that he might know what they had gained by doing business.”* He gave them resources to use on his behalf in order to benefit him. Let’s stop here for a second and make sure that we understand what Jesus is saying. Jesus not only gave this parable to prepare the disciples for what was going to happen, but he gave this parable to prepare you and me for what is going to happen. Jesus is the King. Jesus is going to return as the King. Jesus is going to set up his kingdom on this earth. Jesus is going to answer our prayers for *“Your kingdom come, your will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”* This is going to happen. It is not if, it is when.

Meanwhile. We are in the meanwhile. We are in the interim. We are the stewards. I pray that you understand this. Everything that you have has been loaned to you for a season by the King. It is not yours to keep, not yours to waste, but yours to engage in business for the king. All that you have is to be seen as his, and all that you do is to be seen as his business. If you are a follower of Christ, your stewardship as a servant, your mission as his servant is to benefit the king by using what he has given you to bring him gain.

Do you honestly see that everything that you have has been loaned to you from God and you will give an account of how you used it? How are you using it for him? How is your life helping the king’s mission and plan? What is the plan right now? The plan is for God’s people to establish healthy churches in order to display his gospel and glory all over the world. These churches are people who commit to live together in a way that is counter-cultural because we understand that the citizens of this world have rejected the king and do not want him to reign over them. We, however, can’t wait for him to return and seek to live now in such a way that it gives others a preview of what that kingdom will be like so they will want to come and join with us. Following Christ is your whole life seeking to make him known in committed community with his people.

Three servants are mentioned. The first servant took his mina and earned 10x the amount of it. That is very impressive. It may also be an indication that the nobleman was gone for a good deal of time as well. The King is delighted! He says, (v.17), *“Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.”* Whoa Jackson! Did you get that? Let’s do the math. Again, a mina was about 3 months wages for a laborer. At \$18 per hour a laborer can earn about \$5k a month, which means a mina would be about \$15k. This guy earned 10 mina more. That means he now had \$165k (original 1 plus 10). \$165k is a decent amount, but look at the math of the king. The servant gives him \$165k and the king gives him 10 cities! Faithful in a little, displays that this servant could be trusted to act on the interests of the king so the king gives him 10 cities. And also note how delighted and encouraging the king was. He did not say, *“Alright, that’s what I expected.”* He was demonstrative in his praise.

The second servant echoes the first servant. Both of them are very clear. The mina given to them was not theirs but the Lord’s. (v.18) *“Lord, YOUR mina has made five minas.”* This guy is given 5 cities! Think about what happened when he went home that day. Honey, we just got 5

cities! This man was faithful. He did use the king's resources for the benefit of the king and he did it faithfully and wisely. He got a kingdom benefit for his investments and efforts and his handsomely rewarded by the king for it.

"Then another one came." (v.20) This third servant gets the most attention. He did nothing but give an excuse for his disobedience. Instead of engaging in business he hid the mina in a handkerchief. In essence he said that this is your fault. If you weren't so intimidating and demanding, I wouldn't be paralyzed with fear over investing. It's amazing to see how many people try to blame others for their sin. I wouldn't threaten my wife and children and swear at them except they make me do it. (that sort of thing) In this case, this man tries to blame God for his disobedience. But, can you blame God for your failure to obey him? No. He accuses the king of being a severe man and being harsh and demanding. Which, by the way, is that even true? If the king was so harsh and severe, would he reward the first two servants with such generosity? This servant is condemned by his own words as the king points out. If the king was so harsh, and the servant really believed that, then he would have at the very least put his mina in the bank and received interest. This servant was wicked. He did not do what he was commanded to do and, in the end, his mina was taken from him and given to the first one. If the King is so severe then why did he just give that mina to the first servant? That means that the first servant now had 12. That means that instead of taking these minas back, the King was allowing these men to keep them, plus what he gave them to rule over. This third servant was left with nothing. When the crowd witnessing this accounting expressed amazement that the king would give another mina to the first guy, the King said, "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."

This parable is a massive encouragement for faithfulness and a massive warning for both unbelief and rejection. The third servant, while associated with the other servants did not really know the King, did not trust the King, did not obey the King and certainly did not love the King. What he had that he failed to use was not his to keep and he lost even that and everything else. What you do with what you have reveals what and who you really love.

I will ask you again. Do you honestly see that everything you have has been loaned to you from God and you will give an account of how you used it? How are you using it for him? How is your life helping the king's mission and plan? What is the plan right now? The plan that Jesus revealed in his Word is for God's people to establish healthy churches in order to display his gospel and glory all over the world. These churches are gospel people who commit to live together in a way that is counter-cultural because we understand that the citizens of this world have rejected the king and do not want him to reign. We, however, can't wait for him to return and seek to live now in such a way that it gives others a preview of what that kingdom will be like so they will want to come and join with us. Following Christ is your whole life seeking to make him known in committed community with his people. How do you seek to advance the reputation of Christ, his gospel, and his church with what he has given you? What is your business plan? He expects you to have one and to follow it.

For the citizens who hated him and tried to get him removed, the consequence is massive. They are rounded up, and executed before the king. That may sound shocking. It is intended to be because as shocking as this sounds, hell is worse.