

We'll never forget the Holocaust (**picture**). Japan will never forget Hiroshima or Nagasaki (**picture**). America won't forget Pearl Harbor (**picture**), the assassinations of JFK, Martin Luther King (**pictures**), Vietnam (**picture**) or 911 (**picture**). The Jews of Jesus' day never forgot what a violent man, Archelaus, Herod's son was, even though it'd been thirty years.

For the only occasion in all of His parables that Jesus taught, the parable we're studying today is the only one that's based on an actual historical event. We're continuing our series, *Finding Jesus* and are in the last quarter of Luke. #82 if you're counting. Please turn to Luke 19:11-27 (p. 878).

This parable begins with an allusion to a tragedy the Jews would never forget. Jesus' audience is immediately on the edge of their seats. Thirty years earlier, before Herod the Great (**picture**) died (the one who murdered all of the baby boys in Bethlehem). Herod divided his empire among his sons giving Judea and Samaria to his son, Archelaus (**picture**). But Herod's bequeathal was subject to Roman approval, so Archelaus had to go to Rome to have Caesar Augustus (**picture**) approve his appointment as king.

Before he left, there was a riot in the Temple and Archelaus sent in soldiers and had over 3,000 Jews slaughtered. The Jews despised Herod, but hated Archelaus and were repulsed at the thought of his being king. So, they dispatched a delegation of 50 men to Rome to appeal to Caesar for a different king. There they were joined by 8000 expatriate Jews living in Rome.

Caesar rejects their appeal. Archelaus became the new ruler. He's mentioned once in Scripture, Matthew 2:22, when Joseph and Mary return from Egypt. It was the biggest scandal in recent times. Jesus is walking from Jericho to Jerusalem and the late Archelaus' palace is in Jericho. It's a reminder of that vile man and horrible event as Jesus taught this parable.

The echoes in the parable were obvious for the Jews. A man goes off to be appointed king. He's pursued by a delegation who oppose him ruling over them. Jesus, too, is about to take an extended trip, though they didn't know it would follow His crucifixion. His ascension was the beginning of this journey to receive His Kingdom. He, too, will return after an extended absence to claim His Kingdom. The Archelaus scandal hovers in the Jewish psyche and was part of their lore, "*Archelaus the wanna-be.*"

Obviously, Jesus wasn't suggesting that He's a murderous despot but He's using their history to teach that He too is going away, about accountability of what He's entrusted to us, and that there will be a final accounting. Every believer has been given a stewardship. It's **Use it or Lose it**. This parable unpacks very opposite responses to Jesus. This is powerful stuff. If you're taking notes...

1.Context is everything if you're going to interpret the Bible accurately. Most of us have had someone say, when you're discussing the Bible or Christianity, "*Well, that's just your interpretation.*"

When it comes to having a conversation about Scripture, you can anticipate someone will raise the "*that's just your interpretation*" objection. Once someone throws out "*that's just your interpretation,*" the conversation often comes to a screeching halt. It often happens when a topic is brought up like "abortion is wrong" or "Jesus is the only way of salvation." What do you do?

Philosopher, Paul Copan (**picture**) suggests a reasonable response is: "*There are many truths that I myself don't like or find difficult to accept, but not liking them doesn't give me the freedom to reject them. I have to accept that they are true.*" For example, if your bank tells you you're overdrawn, it'd be silly to tell them, "that's just your interpretation. I have checks left."

A key to accurate Bible interpretation is context. You can't pull a verse or passage out to develop an interpretation. Context is essential for accurate interpretation. Here's a video highlighting the importance of context (**video**).

Chapter and verse breaks aren't part of the original Bible. They help us but were added 1,000 years after Scripture was complete. One of the best ways to read the Bible is to read a chapter at a time. Unless it's a very long book like Isaiah, it helps to read an entire book at one sitting. At the very least, read the passages before and after what you're seeking to understand to get a context. As someone said, "*A text without a context is a pretext.*"

Many misinterpret this parable. As I prepared to preach this passage, I discovered my initial observations were wrong. *Why?* I overlooked the context. Until I dug into the passage with the context, I didn't understand it.

What's the context? Zacchaeus' conversion and his accepting the gospel. It's not an isolated parable but is connected to the Zacchaeus narrative. Jesus may have even given this while at his home. That sheds light on understanding it. Notice the phrase, "*As they heard these things, Jesus proceeded to tell a parable.*"

2. We're to focus on our mission and trust Jesus with His. Jesus taught this parable as He drew closer to Jerusalem. His disciples still believed the kingdom would appear after Jesus arrived there. Maybe they thought Jesus would be crowned king. They expected elements of Messiah's kingdom to be displayed immediately and that Jesus would fulfill Messianic prophecies. They're wrong. Even after His resurrection, they still don't get it. Just before He ascends to heaven they ask, "*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" Jesus said to them, "*It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority*" (Acts 1:6-7).

We tend to be extremists. On one side, like the disciples, we're over-expecters. Some today, when anything happens in Israel, take it as a sign that Jesus' return is about to take place. That's the disciples. They're focused on establishing His Kingdom now, but aren't paying attention to His mission.

Scripture is clear. Only God knows the time. That doesn't keep some from predicting when. But our day is more characterized by *indifference*. We're like the ten virgins (Matt. 25) who fell asleep waiting for the Bridegroom. Much of the Church is asleep. It's been 2000 years since His first coming and we've zoned out. The Jews were spiritually asleep when He came the first time. We're like them. Jesus is coming back! God always keeps His promises. 1 in 24 verses in the New Testament refer to the return of Christ.

The disciples were looking for a political Messiah with no concept of a dying Messiah. We're often so focused on this world's mess, we look for a political solution. Our mission isn't political. Until the King returns, our mission is to take as many as we can to heaven with us. We're to faithfully serve an absent king, making use of the gifts He's given us until He returns.

Jesus' coming is imminent, but there's a delay between His ascension and return. His servants are to faithfully serve Him until He returns. We're in that gap. It's what this parable unpacks. Jesus will return but until then our focus is to be on staying faithful and ready. We're to be busy serving Him, actively seeking to bring others into His Kingdom, not watching the skies.

Before Connecticut became a state, the colonial legislature was in session when a thick darkness blotted out the sun. A cry was heard, "It is the day of judgment! Let us go home and get ready!" But one member of the legislature, an old church deacon, stood up and said, "*It may be the day of judgment—I do not know. The Lord may come. But when He does, I want Him to find me at my post, doing my duty up to the very last moment.*"

Mr. Speaker, I move that candles be brought in and that we get on with the business of the colony." Our parable reveals what we must be doing while we're waiting for His imminent return.

3. This parable distinguishes between the faithful and unfaithful. We're blessed with two wonderful part-time Administrative Assistants, Jane Carson and Susan Riddle. It's astounding all that they get done though both work other jobs besides serving here at Grace. Like most of you, I receive lots of email. Then, there's lots of email flying back and forth between staff. Every now and then, I miss something. When that happens, Susan, will teasingly ask, "Did you skim?" Until I dug into this parable in preparation for today, I think I've skimmed this parable my whole life. You may have too.

In Matthew 25 Jesus gives what we know as the Parable of the Talents. Many of Jesus' parables are similar, so we wrongly assume this is Luke's version of the Parable of the Talents. There are some key differences and it has a totally different application. The King James to distinguish it from the Parable of the Talents calls it "*The Parable of the Pounds.*"

"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'."

Many preachers use this as a sermon on giving. It's not about money, or talents, time or spiritual gifts. Remember, context is critical. It follows one of the greatest evangelistic encounters – Zacchaeus' salvation. In that context this parable points out that we all have one task, living out our salvation.

Jesus is the nobleman who goes to a distant country to receive the kingdom. It's a reference to His ascension after His resurrection to heaven. During His time away, He entrusts to each servant a mina, about four month's wages.

Here's what's very important – *each* one gets the same amount. Do we all have the same spiritual gifts? No. The same talents, money or amount of time? No. In the parable of the talents each servant receives a different amount to invest. In the parable of the minas each receives the same amount.

What do we all get the same amount of? The gospel. No one gets more; no one gets less. We all get the same. As bad as you are or as moral as you are, it takes the same amount of gospel to save you. Each one of us is given the same amount of gospel. Whether you're the Apostle Paul or Billy Graham or a small child who comes to Christ, it's the same amount of the gospel. All ten get one mina. Ten is a picture of completion. The fact that each received a mina shows that it wasn't just the twelve apostles in view. It's all of God's servants. This parable isn't directed to those in leadership, but to

every believer. We all have been given the same gospel and are told to do business with it for our King during His absence.

Jesus didn't give us the gospel just so we'd enjoy it. The gospel isn't just so we can go to heaven when we die. It's to be lifechanging. It's not our private possession. We're not to just benefit by it or memorize it. We must invest it!

First, it's to be invested in our own life. 2 Cor. 5:17, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* You won't find anyone in the New Testament who accepted the gospel that wasn't radically changed from the inside out. 1 John 2:3-4, *"by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. Whoever says 'I know Him' but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in Him."* If you've got the gospel, it revolutionizes your life. If your life hasn't been turned upside down, maybe you don't have the gospel. We all have the same gospel and are to invest it, putting it to work in this world.

How do we put the gospel to work? First, by growing in our own Christian lives. The gospel isn't just having a ticket for heaven. It's about living heavenly now. We grow as we repent of sin, read the Bible, pray and depend more and more on the Spirit in our daily lives. Then, we're to put it to work by sharing it and making disciples. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you"* (Mt. 28:9-20). In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* That means in your family, you're to invest the gospel. God doesn't care if your kids go to college or are rich. Your mission is to seek to make them disciples.

Your workplace, your neighborhood, your family, where you shop – those are all places you're to invest the gospel. We put the gospel to work by loving our spouses, our children, neighbors, employees and employers. By loving them, we let Christ's love flow through us so that we're not sharing human love, but Christ's love, so that they might come to know our Savior. That's investing the gospel.

We're to get busy with the gospel! We're to share it so that it multiplies and fills this world (1 Thes. 1:8; 2 Thes. 3:1). Only 120 believers met together on the Day of Pentecost. Before that day ended, there were 3,000 more. Before long, there were 5,000. In a short time, their enemies accused those early Christ-followers of *"filling Jerusalem"* with the gospel (Acts 5:28).

If you don't possess the gospel as your own, you're not a Christian, no matter how often you attend church, pray or read your Bible. A Christian has heard the good news that Jesus Christ is the Savior of sinners and has personally believed that good news as his/her own. A true Christian doesn't only believe in a general sense that Jesus is the Savior, but believes it in a personal sense, that Jesus is my Savior and died for my sins. When I stand before God and He asks, *"Why should I let you into heaven?"* my only plea will be, *"Because I've trusted in Your Son who shed His blood in my place on the cross."* If you've personally believed that, then the gospel has been entrusted to you. It's not been entrusted for you to hoard, but to share.

We're to do the business of the gospel in the midst of a hostile environment. *"But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us'."* This group of people have no idea that this Man's kingdom began before creation. It's the created saying to the Creator, *"We don't want you to be our King."*

Christian radio host, Dr. Michael Brown ([picture](#)) said, *"I believe there is a common thread that unites the new atheism [and] radical left. It is the philosophy that says 'We will not have God & His Son rule over us!'"*

Liberal Stanford professor, Richard Rorty ([picture](#)) was even more direct, telling parents of college students that, as professors *"we are going to go right on trying to discredit you in the eyes of your children, trying to strip your...religious community of dignity, trying to make your views seem silly rather than discussable."*

The servants are to invest the mina in the face of those who angrily protest, *"We do not want this man to reign over us."* In the parable it's a reference to the Jews who reject Jesus. Beyond that, it refers to this evil world that's hostile toward God and doesn't want to submit to Jesus as Lord. It's in this hostile world we're to do business with the gospel, multiplying it by investing it in lost people's lives. Clearly, there's a risk in doing business in a hostile environment. But the greater risk is not to do gospel business at all.

Every believer is to be a gospel investor. Look again at verses 15-19.

After Jesus returns, He asks for an accounting. We're only told of the responses of three servants. They fall into two categories: two increased the king's money. One hasn't done anything with it.

Notice that neither of the first two take personal credit. That's because the power of the gospel is in the *message*, not the skill of the *messenger*. The servants don't say, *"My great business skill multiplied your mina."* No, they say, *"Your mina has made..."* The power is in the gospel, not the servants. It's God's power working through His Word. The gospel takes people from death to life and transforms God's enemies into His children. That's power! It's the gospel that motivates us to take Christ's love out into a hateful world.

The first one had a ten-fold profit, turning the one mina into ten more. He's taken what was entrusted to him, used it well, multiplying it many times over. His master commends him: "*Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.*"

His responsible use is now rewarded with increased responsibility. He's shown himself faithful in a little thing, so he'll be faithful with more, so more is given to him. The master doesn't directly praise the second, but rewards him proportionately to his success. His mina earned five more, so he's put in charge of five cities. He, too, receives a proportionate reward which indicates that he also has done well.

So what's going on here? This is the Judgement Seat of Christ or Bema Seat. At the Judgment Seat of Christ believers won't be judged for salvation. That happens at the Great White Throne. There those who have rejected Christ will be judged.

If you're a believer, your salvation is eternally settled. But we will be rewarded for faithfulness. It's similar to a graduation. Everyone graduates but only the faithful graduate with honors. Because of our time limitation, we can't unpack this today, but you'll find that Scripture talks about the Judgement Seat of Christ in Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Corinthians 5.

We do learn some things here about the doctrine of rewards. Rewards will be proportionate to our faithful service. Matthew Henry writes (**picture**), "*This intimates that there are degrees of glory in heaven; every vessel will be alike full, but not alike large. And the degrees of glory there will be according to the degrees of usefulness here.*" So, while in one sense, rewards are proportionate to the service, in another they far exceed the service. Earning a mina is "a very little thing," but the reward is to be over an entire city. That's a huge responsibility.

The Lord notices all of the service. All we do for Him will be richly rewarded. Sometimes when we serve the Lord, it seems like no one notices. Jesus always notices. Our labor in the Lord is never in vain. Each of us should be laboring so that one day we'll hear Him say, "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*" That will be reward enough; everything else is grace upon grace!

Do you see yourself in business for the Lord with His gospel? He's entrusted the gospel message to every believer and said, "Do business with this until I return." Are you doing business with the gospel? Are you using the good news of Christ as Savior to bring others into His kingdom?

That's the question Jesus wants us to consider in this parable. If you don't see yourself as a "gospel entrepreneur," you won't think about ways to multiply the gospel. We must see ourselves in the gospel business, using Jesus' capital to make a *profit* for Him in His absence. What we do with the gospel has eternal significance. What are you doing with the gospel? If we're not thinking that way, we should change our thinking, because...

It's very serious to fail to share the gospel. Look at verses 20-26.

What sins do you think are serious? Do you believe it's serious to fail to obey the Great Commission? It's apparent most don't. It's why we don't share the gospel. But Jesus takes it very seriously. It's why He died. It's His last command. Doing nothing isn't neutral, it's punishable. Though we're saved by grace, it's not some vacation by faith. We're to serve the One who bought us from the slave market of sin by being His witnesses. Many of us don't share out of fear, but I don't believe it's fear of God. It's fear of man.

Rather than investing, this guy puts his mina in a *handkerchief*. It's a sweat rag. It was used to cover the back of your neck in the heat. He doesn't hide it or bury it, which is what they usually did with treasure.

Then, he slanders his master and accuses him falsely. He makes a vile caricature of him. Nothing indicates his master deserve this attack that he's a *severe man*. Like Adam, he makes excuses and blames his master.

The first two servants had already demonstrated his charges are false. If anything, his master is gracious and generous. If his master was harsh, shouldn't that alone have motivated him to invest his mina?

He loses what he has as his master takes his mina and gives it to the one who earned ten more. Though there's a protest, it makes good business sense. Give it to someone who has a track record of faithfulness and success, and will go and do something with it.

This lazy servant is the main focus of this parable. It's **Use it or Lose it**. It's an overlooked, yet basic principle of the Christian life. Wasted opportunity means loss of reward. If we don't use what God entrusts to us, why should we have it?

Many scholars debate on whether this man is even a Christian because he hides the gospel. If you've been given such a wonderful gift, why would you hide it? If his life was transformed by the gospel, why would he mischaracterize or accuse God who gave it to him?

No one, not even the fans of a losing team, hide that they're a fan. Have you heard about the recent debate about the re-naming of Miller Park? Yet, what have the Brewers ever done for anyone, other than a bit of pleasure and money for overpriced stadium food? Being a Brewer's fan costs you.

Yet, Jesus gave His life for us and then we don't share that? If you've been forgiven of an unpayable debt and given so much, grace for this life and eternal life in heaven...how can you have been given so much, hide it and never share it? Does that make any sense?

Jesus calls him an unprofitable servant. This third one represents many in the Church, professing Christians who know the gospel, yet are indifferent and unconcerned. Spiritually, they're lazy and aren't using the opportunities given them to further Christ's kingdom. They selfishly live for themselves and make up excuses as to why they don't share the gospel and serve Jesus.

At the Judgement Seat of Christ believers like this will be like a man who wakes up and discovers that his house is on fire. He rushes out with only a sheet wrapped around him. All his possessions are lost, but he's saved. What a sad experience it will be for unfaithful Christians at that time.

This third man should frighten us. It's possible to read the Bible every day, go to church each week, but live only for yourself. It's possible to take everything God has given us and basically live as if we are the point of life.

Someday those who rebel against Jesus will face judgement. *"But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me."* It'd be easy to skip this last verse. It seems so harsh. Yet, this should be our motivation to invest the gospel. Judgment is coming. If we reject Jesus, there will be a final accounting.

Recently, I saw an insightful quote by Kevin DeYoung (**picture**), *"If we have no interest in God now, why would we want to spend eternity with Him?"* It's a good question. Right now we can debate and argue, but when the final curtain drops, Jesus Christ will judge those who have rejected Him.

Are you ready? Those who rejected Him crucified Him, yet still He offered forgiveness to them again and again. Even on the cross, He cried, *"Father, forgive them."* They persecuted the Church, so 40 years after the crucifixion, God had had enough. Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were scattered.

God is patient but ultimately there will be a final reckoning. We may be horrified by the fierceness of these words, but beneath the terrifying imagery is a solemn fact: Jesus is coming back. Every person must make a choice. Either accept or reject Him. It's a decision of life and death, heaven or hell.

Personally, it's very hard for me to think about hell. It breaks my heart that many that I love, unless they turn to Christ are doomed to a Christless eternity. But the Bible clearly teaches that there will be punishment for all who refuse the Kingship of Christ. Shouldn't that motivate us to share the gospel? If I really believe that anyone who rejects Christ will suffer in Hell, shouldn't that motivate me to share the gospel?

God said, *"I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked,"* nor should we. There should never even be a hint of delight that the wicked will get their just desserts. There should only be great grief that someone is lost and a passionate desire to share the gospel with them, that Jesus loves them and died for them so that they can live be forgiven and live eternally.

Conclusion: There is no neutral spot when it comes to Jesus. Each of us is in one of these categories; serving faithfully, hiding our faith or rebelling against Him. I hope no one here is actively opposing His right to be King. If you are, repent quickly before He comes and you face judgement. There may be some who profess to know Him, but you're living for yourself. You're not doing business for the King. You need to begin using the gospel in the Master's business.

Wonderfully, some are faithfully serving Him. They are wisely investing the gospel.

Recently, I read that William Carey (**picture**), famous pioneer missionary to India, wrote his son a letter that said, *"I am this day 58, but how little I have done for God."* I understand that. As I prepared this, I felt the Spirit's conviction and the guilt of my own failures and many lost opportunities with the gospel. Beloved, we must get serious about the gospel. It's our mission. It was Jesus' last command to us!

We must invest in the gospel. It's easy to rationalize or excuse our failure. True change only comes when we first repent of our sin. Repentance and confession are the beginning of spiritual growth.

An honest prayer of confession would be: *"Lord Jesus, to the extent that I've failed to use opportunities you've given me to share the gospel, I confess and repent today."* Then, we need to ask the Lord for new opportunities to share the gospel. I try to pray every day that the Lord will give me an opportunity to share the gospel with someone that day.

Every believer has been given a priceless treasure. We've been given the gospel to invest. By His grace, as much as I can, I want to share it. I want to hear, *"Well done, good and faithful servant."* Don't you? Jesus is coming back. Are you ready? How's your gospel investment in His Kingdom?