

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Luke 19:11-27 (EHV)

¹¹ As they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. ¹² So he said, “A man of noble birth traveled to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then to return. ¹³ He called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Conduct business until I return,’ he said to them.

¹⁴ “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to be king over us.’

¹⁵ “When he returned after receiving the kingdom, he summoned the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to find out what they had gained by conducting business.

¹⁶ “The first one came to him and said, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten more minas.’

¹⁷ “He said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you were faithful in a very small matter, you will have authority over ten cities.’

¹⁸ “The second one came and said, ‘Master, your mina has produced five more minas.’

¹⁹ “So he said to him, ‘You will be over five cities.’

²⁰ “And another one came and said, ‘Master, here is your mina that I laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹ For I was afraid of you, since you are a demanding man. You take what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.’

²² “He said to him, ‘You wicked servant, I will judge you with your own words! You knew that I am a demanding man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. ²³ Then why did you not put my money in the bank? Then, when I returned, I could have collected it with interest!’

²⁴ “He said to those standing there, ‘Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’

²⁵ “But they said to him, ‘Master, he already has ten minas!’

²⁶ “‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ²⁷ Now as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and kill them in front of me.’”

Dear heavenly Father, as we hear your Word, let your Holy Spirit work on us so that we may remain faithful with the holy gifts you’ve given us until our Lord Jesus Christ returns. Amen.

According to Jesus, they were all given the same amount, but they ended up with different results.

In the parable, each servant was given the equivalent of three months wages, which would be around \$23,000 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics today. Some might say this is a large amount, but others may think this isn’t much to work with. No matter what they thought of this amount, they were all given the same amount and were told to put *his* money to work by trading with it.

After being coronated as their king (whether they wanted him as their king or not), he came back and asked each of them what they gained from trading *his* money.

The first one made ten times the amount given him, and since he’d done so well, the king gave him ten cities to look after. The next one made five times the amount, so was put in charge of five cities.

Then one of his servants came to him and virtually said ‘You’re a hard man wanting to gain unfairly from my hard work, so I just kept *your* money in a handkerchief. You can have your money back!’

In response, the newly appointed king took his money back and then gave it to the one who had already made ten times the amount, which others thought wasn’t fair. After all, most people don’t like to see the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer!

But they forget the king is allowed to do whatever he wants with *his own* money. It’s *his* choice to reward those who faithfully put *his* money to work, while the one who thought the king was hard and unfair was

judged according to *his own words*.

Now, what's the point of all this?

Well, we might be tempted to argue to point of this parable is that we should make the best use of what God has given us, whether that be time, talents, money, or possessions.

This seems to make sense, doesn't it?

If this is the case, I should say 'Here endeth the sermon' and we can all get on with our day!

But if this is all we get out of this parable, then we miss the point!

We need to remember that, according to St Luke, this is one of Jesus' last parables before he arrived in Jerusalem to be crucified.

It doesn't make sense that one of the last and most important things Jesus wants to tell his disciples before he dies is that they must make the best use of whatever money, talents, time, or possessions they've been given!

So, let's look more closely at the context of Jesus' words.

What we learn is that this parable comes just after the moment when Jesus met Zacchaeus, that vertically challenged tax-collector who climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see Jesus. Jesus announced to him that Salvation has come to his house because the Son of Man came to save what was lost. This is what Jesus had said *just before* today's reading which begins 'while the disciples were listening to this...'

After this parable, Luke tells us Jesus entered Jerusalem as a humble King riding on a donkey. Once he entered that city, he cleansed the holy temple, but some challenged him asking by whose authority he was doing these things.

Soon afterwards Jesus would inaugurate the Lord's Supper during his last supper with his disciples. Then our Lord and King would be betrayed, denied, falsely accused, unjustly tried, and crucified. He'll be mocked for being the King of the Jews and his own people will reject the sign which declared him to be the King of the Jews. Yet, in one of his final acts as our King before he died, he'll grant paradise to one of the criminals by his side.

So, this means Jesus, the Son of Man and Saviour of the world, purposely tells this parable to those around him about a man of noble birth who was going to be coronated as an unwanted King *just before* he was on his way to Jerusalem where he would be rejected by his own people and crucified as the King of the Jews.

Therefore, this parable isn't just about what our Lord gives us all equally, but also about his reign over us as our King and our response to his reign...which produces different results.

But what is it that our Lord and King has given us equally?

In this case, it can't be money, talents, abilities, or possessions, because we don't have equal amounts of these things. We might argue that we're all given the same time, but while we're all given the same length of each day, we're not all given the same number of days.

Yet there is something Jesus, our Lord and King, has given all of us equally.

The Lord and King of the Church has given his servants, including you and me, *his eternal, living, Spirit-filled, and performative word*.

For instance, he has given each of us *his Spirit-filled word* which assures us of his love, his forgiveness, and the promise of eternal life for all who believe. He gives us these things equally. None of us are any more, or any less, loved, forgiven, or saved. None of us get more eternal life than another.

Similarly, he's cleansed us of sin, adopted us as his children, and bound us to himself in the waters of baptism in accordance with *his Spirit-filled word*. He's spoken *his Spirit-filled words* over the bread and wine which binds his body and blood to these elements for us to eat and drink for the forgiveness of our sin.

We're to receive *his gifts spoken through his Word* and allow them to do *his work* on our hearts, souls, bodies, and minds to build our faith and love.

But what are we to do with these gifts? How can we prove to be faithful with *his gifts*?

Well, notice the first servant said 'Lord, *your mina* has made ten more'.

The *gift did the work* and produced the remarkable result, not the servant. The only reason the servant was successful is because the servant was faithful in *putting the gift to work*. Because he proved faithful in *putting the gift to work*, he wasn't rewarded with extra glory, but with extra responsibility. He proved he was faithful and responsible in the task of *putting the King's gift to work*.

Also note the gift was never the servant's to possess and he acknowledged this by saying '*your mina*' did this. In this case, he doesn't tell us we have to do the work or be successful with them, but rather we're to put *his gifts* to work. God's holy word will produce the results and won't return to him empty. The only way his gifts won't produce any results is when we reject his reign by letting his gifts remain distrusted and unused.

We all receive the same gift, but we don't end up with the same result.

Now, many of you may have a bible or three in your homes, but how many times do you pick them up and read them? How many of you are reluctant to spend time deepening your faith and trust in God through attending bible studies? How many of you are tempted to rush through a short devotion so you can get on with the 'more important' things of your day and not allow God's word the time to do its work in your heart and mind?

Is God's word going to produce a fruitful result when you leave it all wrapped up in its pretty cover or give it little time in your devotions, or will it work more effectively when you actually read it and meditate on what God, as your Lord and King, is saying to you?

It shouldn't surprise you to know there's a spiritual resistance to reading or hearing God's word. As the parable warns us, God will punish those who are indifferent to putting the King's gifts to work and who resist his rule in their life.

On the other hand, he promises his word will do what he sends it to do. When the word of God dwells in your hearts and minds, it won't produce such things like pride, selfishness, division, hatred, or jealousy, but instead will produce the fruit of faith, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – the very things this world needs right now!

Jesus is calling his disciples (including you and me) to faithfully *put his gifts to work* while he's away. He promises he'll return at a time we won't expect him, but what will he find when he returns? Will he see how the gifts of his holy word, his holy baptism, and his holy communion are working love and forgiveness and grace in our lives, or will he find we've kept his holy gifts wrapped up in a hanky: unused, untouched, and unwanted?

They all received the same gift, but they produced different results.

May we all let God's holy word and Holy Spirit teach us how to live in his holy presence so we may lead a holy life, even as Christ has made us holy. May we let his baptism keep washing away our sins through repentance and faith. May we let him reassure us of his love and forgiveness as we hear our sins are forgiven for the sake of Jesus' obedience, suffering and death, and as we faithfully eat and drink his holy body and blood in the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of our sins.

By all means, let's make the best use of what God has given us, whether that be time, talents, money, abilities, or possessions, but most of all, may we all make the best use of his free gifts: the gifts of his Word and Sacraments. May God's word produce many blessings in our lives and in the lives of those around us, including the gifts of faith, forgiveness, love, peace, hope, and life.

May we all be faithful in our use of *his holy and precious gifts* until he returns so that...
...the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds as we trust in our Lord and King, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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South Burnett Lutheran Parish
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