

3. The Parable of the Ten Minas

Luke 19:11-27

The Parables of Jesus

Warm-up Question: If I were to give you \$100,000 in gold and you had a time machine to go back to any situation in history to invest to benefit yourself and your family for the present time, where would you go and how would you invest the money?

How many of you have heard of Ronald Gerald Wayne? Not many, I would think. He was a co-founder with Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak at the start of Apple Computers and provided critical administrative oversight over the whole new venture. He worked with Steve Jobs in Atari before the three men started Apple in 1976. Wayne drew the first Apple logo and wrote the partnership agreement and the Apple 1 manual. He had 10% ownership of the company but gave up his share of the new company for a total of 2,300 US dollars, after being with Apple only two weeks. Later that same year, he received a check for 1,500 US dollars for his agreement to forfeit any claim that he might have toward the company. In the first year of its operations the company had an income of 174,000 dollars, and in the next year, 1977, the company had sales of 2.7 million US dollars. The following year it rose to 7.8 million, and in 1980 it had sales of 117 million. By 1982 Apple had a billion dollars in annual sales. By September 2012, Apple became the largest publicly traded corporation in the world by market capitalization, with an estimated value of \$626 billion.

Today, Wayne lives in a 2-bedroom house, 60 miles outside Las Vegas and barely worth 150,000 dollars, and he drives a 2002 Chevy Malibu. If Ronald Wayne had held on to his 10% share, it would be worth 35 Billion US dollars! I wonder how many times Ronald Wayne has looked back and wished that he had the foreknowledge to stay in the company and invest his share wisely. If he had stayed with the company for only a while longer, I wonder how this would have changed his life. In this passage that we are studying, we read a parable that tells the story of three people and their investments into the Kingdom of God. As we read this parable, I want us to focus on the eternal return that comes from the investments that we make in this life.

¹¹While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. ¹²He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. ¹³So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' ¹⁴"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' ¹⁵"He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, to find out what they had gained with it. ¹⁶"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' ¹⁷"Well done, my good servant!" his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' ¹⁸"The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' ¹⁹"His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' ²⁰"Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' ²²"His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant!

You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? ²³Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' ²⁴"Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' ²⁵"'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' ²⁶"He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ²⁷ But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me'" (Luke 19:11-27).

The Expectation of the Disciples

Jesus had begun the 17-mile climb from Jericho to Jerusalem, a rise of 3,600 feet. As they approached Jerusalem from the east, they had to go around the Mount of Olives. In verse eleven, the Scripture says that the people with him thought that the Kingdom would appear any moment as they did the climb. There would have been excitement among those accompanying Him because they were convinced, as we are, that Jesus was and is the Messiah. Since those traveling with Jesus believed He was the prophesied One, the Messiah King who would rescue His people. As they neared the Mount of Olives, they may have recalled the Old Testament prophecy of Zechariah:

4On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. 5You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him (Zechariah 14:4-5).

It is also likely that those with Him knew that the very day He was entering Jerusalem, was the same date spoken of in Daniel 9:24-25. Daniel the prophet had foretold that, from the time of the commandment going forth to rebuild Jerusalem, there would be 476 years or 173,880 days, and then the Messiah would come. Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey precisely to the day that Daniel had prophesied. The Scripture tells us that the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. No wonder they hailed Him as King and spread their coats before Him as He made His entrance to Jerusalem! (Matthew 21:4-11). The disciples thought that the holy angels would appear to fight with the enemies of Israel as they were approaching the Mount of Olives across from Jerusalem. That prophecy will be fulfilled in the future, but that time was not yet. To bring the disciples down to reality, I picture Jesus taking a break from the climb, sitting down with the disciples and focusing their attention on an essential truth that He wanted to convey to them in this Parable of the Ten Minas.

This parable is unique because Jesus refers to a real historical event. It was a story that was common knowledge at that time. Christ grabs the hearts of His hearers by telling them the story of Archelaus, one of the sons of King Herod the Great, a subordinate king to the Romans that had been ruling over Judea. When King Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided up, and Archelaus was given half of the territory, but the title of king was not given to him. This lack of the title disturbed Archelaus.

The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that his ego demanded that the title of the king be conferred on him. Archelaus decided to go to Rome and ask Caesar for the title. To his surprise, when he got to Rome a delegation of his own family plus fifty Jews and Samaritans, had traveled by a different route and opposed the request of Archelaus for the title of king. 8,000 expatriate Jews living in Rome also joined the fifty. Together they told Caesar of the time that Archelaus had killed 3,000 Jews during Passover, heaping up their bodies in the temple before torturing others. All that he did was to prove that he was as dominant as his father.

Those that were gathered there in Rome pleaded with Caesar. They did not want this man to rule over them! After listening to both sides of the dispute, Caesar decided to give half the kingdom to Archelaus, but gave him the title of Ethnarch instead of the king, promising to make him king if he proved worthy of the title.

Jesus was talking on two levels. Without commending Archelaus, the Lord spoke of a noble person, Himself being the noble person, who is to go to a distant country, heaven, and receive His kingship from a superior power, His Father. The parable focuses on two sets of people. Some are those who oppose Jesus' kingship, while the others are servants who are to invest what is given to them while He is away.

Indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ is the noblest person. First of all, He is the Son of David, the noblest birth of a Jew. But His nobility is not earned so much by being a descendant of David but of His character. He is the most reputable person we have ever met. Who is like Him? He is the kindest, most generous, gracious Man, who has ever lived! Each of us who try to live up to His standards of nobility falls far short. If you have ever studied and saturated yourself in the gospel accounts, how can you not fall head over heels in love with this Man?

Even though His servants greatly love this noble person, many hate Him and do not want Him to rule over them. "We have no king but Caesar," they say. The Bible makes it clear that you read these words as either one or the other. Either you are an enemy of God or a servant of Christ. There is no other way.

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters
(Matthew 12:30).

The Parable of the Ten Minas seems to be similar to the Parable of the Talents, but there is a difference. In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), one was given five talents, another two, and another one. A Talent was a unit of weight. In New Testament times, a talent weighed around 130 pounds.¹

It was usually a weight of gold or silver. We can see these talents as representing our gifts, abilities, knowledge, and finances—in short, our total resources. Some are given more skills and abilities than others and are accountable to God for what they have received from Him. The Parable of the Ten Minas is different. Each one of the ten servants was given the same equal

¹ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talent_\(measurement\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talent_(measurement))

amount, one mina, an amount equivalent to three months' wages. The emphasis in this story is not on the gift, but instead on the theme of investment.

Put This Money to Work

If we are all given the same amount, what do you think the Mina represents? What is meant by the phrase, "Put this money to work?" (Luke 19:13).

It is possible the mina represents the fact that we have all been given the same amount of hours in a day to invest in the kingdom of God. Time is a commodity of which we in the West seem to have less and less. If we sit down to examine how we spend our time, it can reveal how little of our time we invested. Another thought, though, is that the mina represents that which is given to all of us in an equal amount, the stewardship of the message of the Gospel.

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile (Romans 1:16).

The gospel is the most powerful thing on planet Earth. Nothing on earth transforms a life like the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever the message of what Christ accomplished on the cross is preached, it meets with opposition. The reason for the opposition is because we have an enemy that does not like his slaves released from the slave market of sin. But no matter what opposition servants will receive from the enemies of God, we are to spend ourselves in this holy endeavor—the stewardship of getting the gospel out to all the earth. Our Master said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world and then the end shall come" (Matthew 24:14). We are not to be servants who spend our Mina on our comforts—we have been given a job to do, to glorify God and release men from Satan's servitude. The message of God's love, mercy, and grace toward all humanity is a sacred trust given to all who believe.

On the contrary, we speak as men **approved** by God to be **entrusted** with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts (1 Thessalonians 2:4 Emphasis mine).

The word *approved* in the above verse is the Greek word "dokimazo." It means to test something as to whether or not it is counted worthy or approved. God allows us to go through the fiery trial of testing so we may be counted worthy to carry the sacred trust of the gospel to others. God has entrusted the Gospel to us, His servants. God tests our hearts to refine us so that we can be trusted truth-bearers.

Why didn't the master give specific directions as to how they were to put the money to work?

Notice that the Noble Master did not set one of them over another. All were left to sort out the details themselves as to how to put the money to work to bring the most significant return on their Master's capital. It does not rest on the pastor or the evangelist to get the gospel to all nations. All Christians will be held to account when the Master returns for what they did with the Master's resources. The Master (in this story, the Nobleman) entrusted the same amount to each with no instruction. He did not stand over them, but he gave them complete freedom to do what

they determined individually to put the money to work. The grant of money was a test by the Master. We must be aware of this test and realize that God is watching to see how faithful we are with what He has given to us.

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Romans 14:12).

Every Christian has a responsibility to promote and spread the gospel in any way they can. We cannot keep it to ourselves. The Greek word translated by the phrase "put this money to work" (NIV) or "occupy" (KJV) is *pragmateuomai*. It means to do business, invest or trade intending to bringing a return on the investment. It is interesting that we get the word pragmatic from this Greek word. Pragmatic means to deal sensibly and realistically with something. We are responsible for sitting down and thinking through ways we can pragmatically invest our resources in such a way as to get a maximum return for the kingdom of God.

When I was working with my father as a commercial fisherman on the East Coast of England, it was an all-consuming hunt to find the fish. When we saw them on our fish sonars, we maximized our catch by setting up the right net for the fish we were to catch. The faster we could tow the net through the water the less fish would escape. Our hunt was for the most valuable fish, the delicious and prized Dover Sole. All of our faculties were involved in the pursuit.

It is no different to work with my Heavenly Father now that I am working with His nets! His souls are so much more valuable, and to catch them requires all of our faculties to be involved. Every life is precious and valuable to our heavenly Father. Our task involves us sitting down and thinking pragmatically as to how to catch the maximum amount of His precious ones. There is no more significant task on planet Earth than the catching of men. **"Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).** The thing that stands out in this passage is that the Nobleman was looking for faithfulness. Two things reveal the hearts of the servants. First, it speaks about their view of the Nobleman and their relationship to Him, and secondly, it showed their priorities in life.

When we believe the gospel and receive the grace of Christ into our lives, we are obligated to employ our talents and abilities to share with others what has changed our lives. We are to do what we can to give it away to others. We are to invest our time, energy and money promoting the Kingdom of heaven wherever we can.

Can you think of an instance when you invested time into someone else's life and saw a difference in the life of this person? It can be a friend, family member, or someone you may have helped at some time in your life. If no one comes to mind, is there someone you feel needs your time?

In verse 24, the mina kept in a sweat cloth or handkerchief was given to the one who had gained ten. The master gave the ten minas back to the man so that now he had 11. The Nobleman didn't need the money. It is clear from the text that the increase of the master's investment was kept by each of the two men along with the reward of cities as well. The one who did nothing had no prize and no investment seed money, either. There were no other penalties or punishment for his lack of investment as shown in this passage. I think he was sorry that he did nothing. The man

who did nothing gives us an example of the type of believer who will get to heaven, but he has laid up little treasure in heaven for his "homecoming" (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

¹⁹Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19-21).

The noble master was not interested in the money itself; he calls it "a very small matter" in verse 17. To a King, what are three months' wages of an ordinary worker? The action was merely a test to see the level of their faithfulness in their use of what the servants were given. He wanted to find out who among his servants managed their Lord's money with prudence and trustworthiness. Those who are faithful in small matters can be trusted with the more significant responsibility when he returned.

To everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away (Matthew 25:29).

When we read these words, they do not seem fair. However, this principle holds true, and we see it demonstrated every day. Can you think of some examples of how this is true?

If you do not exercise your body at all, it will grow weak. A person cannot excel in a sport or activity without repetition and practice, whether it is musical ability, dance, or writing. If one does not cultivate a craft, the ability he has will wane and not be used to its fullest. Someone who speaks a foreign language, but never uses it may even lose the ability to converse in that language. So what they had will be taken away. However, if the skill is cultivated and used, it will grow and continue to be put to use, perhaps in multiple ways.

Similarly, when we involve ourselves in pursuit of spiritual things, our spiritual senses are honed. Giving ourselves to worship, the Word of God, and prayer and service to others will create greater spiritual hunger and spiritual fruit. If we neglect our spiritual life, our desire for spiritual things withers, and we will not bear much fruit. So, it is our choice. This is one thing with which God will not interfere because He wants to see what we do with our desire and choices. He has placed His treasure in earthen vessels, or jars of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7). He has set His treasure in us! He has no other "back up plan." We may be surprised in beautiful ways if we cultivate what He has given us and see what He will do. His grace has a beautiful way of multiplying things far beyond what we could accomplish in our strength.

The Servant's Reward

The master seemed delighted and full of praise for the one who brought a 1000% return on his investment. He said to him, "Well done, my good servant!" (Luke 19:17).

What are your thoughts concerning the reward that was given? There is a vast difference between three months' wages and the worth of whole cities!

What would be the combined income of ten cities in America? It seems a vastly different amount to the value of ten minas. The use of a city, perhaps, is one way of showing the disproportionate amount rewarded for the energy, time, and money invested by the first two people. I believe that God is showing us that:

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

You may say, "It sure sounds like a lot of work! I want to live out my days resting in Bermuda or Hawaii. To take charge over ten cities is not a reward that I would like!" I see this reward as a reward of trust and character. It speaks of the closeness of the relationship with the Master. With whom does the CEO of any major company enjoy close fellowship? In any healthy organization, it would be his top executives.

In the same way, we will be working and relating close to our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. What a joy that will be! The idea of a city implies that there will be responsibility and authority as we have a share in His rulership in the Kingdom of Heaven. The concept of a city helps us concerning our understanding. The passage above says that our mind cannot conceive of what God has got planned for those who love Him. We may think of the word "reward," and we immediately have our idea of what a reward would mean. God's reward will far surpass what we can imagine. His generosity comes forth from His abundance.

It seems that the one who gained tenfold on his investment went at it with all his heart. There will be many in that day that will say, "Why didn't I invest more of myself into that which matters?" We will see, in retrospect, those things that are truly important in God's economy. Let's learn that lesson now while there is still time to apply it! What is vital in God's economy? Look at the life of Jesus for that answer. He spent His life investing in people. We will not always see the results, the fruit of our labors in this life, but I am convinced that we will know the full extent of the impact of our lives from the vantage point of eternity. Several things come to mind as lasting forever: the knowledge, wisdom, and Word of God that we have laid up in our hearts, and people whose spirits are eternal.

I want to finish with the words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a famous English preacher and theologian who once spoke on this passage. He said:

Jesus has made us kings and priests, and we are in training for our thrones. What if in this congregation I am learning to proclaim my Master's glory to myriads of worlds! Possibly the preacher who is faithful here may yet be made to tell forth His Lord's glory to constellations at a later time. What if one might stand upon a central star and preach Christ to worlds on worlds instead of preaching Him to these two galleries and to this area! Why not?

At any rate, if I should ever gain a voice loud enough to be heard for millions of miles, I would speak none other than those glorious Truths of God, which the Lord has revealed in Christ Jesus! If we are faithful here, we may expect our Master to entrust us with higher service hereafter! Only let us see to it that we can endure the test and that we profit

by the training. As our account comes out in the very little, so will it be with us on the grand scale of eternity. This view puts another face upon the work of this lower sphere. Rulers over ten cities! Rulers over five cities! Brothers and Sisters, you are not fit for such dignities if you cannot serve your Lord well in this world with the little He has entrusted to you. If you live wholly to Him here, you will be prepared for the glories unspeakable, which await all consecrated souls. Let us go in for a devoted life all at once! Time is so short and the things we deal with are comparatively so small! We are soon coming out of the eggshell of time- and when we break loose into eternity and see the vastness of the Divine Purposes, we shall be altogether amazed at the service bestowed—which will be the reward of service done. O Lord, make us faithful!²

Prayer: Please Lord; make me aware of Your soon-coming kingdom. Grant me wisdom and grace to invest my life in the things that matter—the King and His people. Help me to live as Jesus did. Amen!

Keith Thomas

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com

² (Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307).