

January 19, 2020
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Luke
Community Baptist Church
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FAITHFULNESS Luke 19:11-27

A modern confession about faithfulness might sound something like this: “Oh yeah! I’m all about being faithful, dependable, trustworthy, committed . . . as long as it doesn’t require a sacrifice.” Faithfulness, dependability or commitment doesn’t take place in the arena of convenience. It is going to require sacrifice. The person who is not willing to make a sacrifice is not going to make a good volunteer.

Does it matter if you are not faithful? Maybe that depends on whether someone is counting on you. If others do not depend on you, commitment is no big deal. Then again, if no one is counting on you, you are not exactly a chief contributor in life, are you? The call for faithfulness implies that someone is depending on you to uphold your end of the agreement. We are urged to be faithful because others are counting on you to do what you agreed to do or even what is typically expected of you.

And when we are not faithful, we make life difficult or even miserable for the people who trust us. Solomon was spot-on when he concluded, “*Like a broken tooth and a lame foot, so is confidence in an unfaithful person in a time of crisis*” (Proverbs 25:19 GWV).

Any organization that relies on volunteers (whether it is a political committee, a car club, a bowling league, or a tree house club) is especially reliant on the faithfulness of those volunteers. Working with volunteers creates a special level of challenges. Someone has said that trying to accomplish a worthwhile goal while working with volunteers is like trying to herd cats.

Of course, when I think along these lines, I am going to make clear and direct application to the local church. The vast amount of

our work is carried on by committed, faithful volunteers. The paid staff in nearly any church cannot possibly accomplish all that is required in ministry. On one hand, almost everyone engaged in the assembly named Community Baptist Church is a volunteer. On the other hand, if you are truly a member of the Body of Christ universal, you are more than a volunteer. You are a conscripted servant of Christ.

Christ our King expects His people, the citizens of His kingdom, to be dependable and faithful. In fact, He motivates us toward faithfulness by reminding us many times that, in the future, we will all stand before our King and give an account of our faithfulness. We all will be required to answer to Christ our King for how we used the benefits, abilities, talents, time, spiritual gifts, and opportunities that He provides to us while He is away.

Do you ever think about that? Do you ever imagine what it will be like to stand before Christ, your Creator, Savior, and King to answer the hard questions? Everyone will be required to do that. Most of the human race will stand before Christ the eternal judge having rejected Him as their King. He will judge them according to their works of rejection and consign them to everlasting punishment. The rest of us, the true servants of the Savior, will also give an account for our works. Many of our works will be destroyed. Some will survive. What will you say to your King about how you managed His gifts?

A Story About Christ our King. (vv.11-27)

The opening verse of our text, sets the stage for this very important story from Jesus. We read that Jesus gave it in the context of while He was teaching. He told it, *As they heard these things (v.11a)*. This text naturally flows out of the previous context according to Luke’s telling of the Christ story, the good news.

In the previous chapter and opening verses of nineteen, Jesus gave three important examples (*these things*) of responses to the offer for eternal life. The rich young ruler rejected eternal life, preferring to hang on to his idol. The blind beggar embraced eternal life as the incomparable gift of the Savior. The tax collector embraced Christ’s invitation to eternal life, which resulted in divesting himself of his

idol. Those were important lessons about right responses to the good news of the gospel.

But the term *these things* refers most directly to the very important declaration by which Jesus drew all three of those examples together. *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10)*. That is what He was doing. That is what He continues to do. Jesus is not on earth any more, but He has given His followers the responsibility to continue to bring the lost to Him to be saved. That is what we are supposed to be doing.

Before entering Jerusalem in triumph, Jesus told one more story, a parable, to illustrate the important work His followers do while He is in heaven. This story is similar to a story Jesus told according to Matthew 25:14-30. There are some very important differences between the two stories because Jesus taught a particular principle to particular hearers in each of the stories. For example, Matthew’s record shows that Jesus told the story while He was in Jerusalem, but Luke’s account took place while Jesus was still in Jericho. In Matthew’s account Jesus told the story to only the disciples, but in Luke’s account Jesus was talking to the whole crowd. In Matthew, there were three slaves in the story, but here in Luke we find ten slaves. In Matthew, Jesus gave differing talents or property to the three slaves. In Luke, the ten slaves received ten minas. According to Matthew, everyone got the same reward, but in the story Luke recorded the slaves each received differing rewards.

Jesus told the story in Matthew’s account to make a particular point to the disciples about stewardship. Jesus told this story in Luke’s account to stress the importance of faithfulness to anyone who would follow Him.

So here we read how the King told a particular story. *He proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately (v.11)*. The text points out that the timing of this story is very important. The next event Luke recorded was Jesus entering Jerusalem in triumph. Such an entry into the capital city would be the kind of thing a king would do. Indeed, by the entry Jesus was presenting Himself as the King of the Jews. Of course, we know that the leaders, and subsequently the crowds, rejected Jesus and killed

Him. But still, Jesus’ triumphal entry fit well into the scenario that He was going to overthrow Rome and establish the nation of Israel.

Many people mistakenly believed that all of the Old Testament prophecies of the restored kingdom of Israel was about to take place. That is part of the reason Jesus desired to tell this story to the crowd that would be following Him up to Jerusalem.

Now let’s look at the story itself (vv.12-27). There was a king according to verse twelve. *He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return” (v.12)*. Jesus told about a hypothetical nobleman, or ruler (king), who had to take a trip to a far country in order to receive his kingdom. Having been granted the kingdom from a superior ruler, the king would return to rule in his kingdom.

As in other parables, Jesus was telling an earthly story that taught a heavenly meaning. Surely everyone in the crowd that day would have been familiar with a story just like this. Somewhere around 32 BC, Herod the Great had negotiated with Marc Antony to gain the right to rule the region of the Roman Empire that included Israel. At his death in 4 BC (about two years after Christ was born and he had ordered the massacre of the Bethlehem babies), his kingdom was split between his three sons. That was like current events to the people in Jesus’ day.

At Herod the Great’s death, his son Archelaus temporarily took up rulership of Judea. Right away, in a show of force, he ordered the massacre of three thousand worshipers at Passover in 4 BC. But then the wicked guy had to go to Rome to have his “kingship” officially recognized and instated. The Jews sent a delegation to plead with the emperor not to grant Archelaus kingship based on his past actions. Caesar Augustus heard the case but eventually granted Archelaus authority to be king, if and when he won the confidence of the people. He never did win the people’s confidence, and eventually he was replaced with a series of governors, of whom Pilate was the fifth.

We know that within a couple of months from Jesus telling this story, King Jesus would return to heaven where He remains while His “kingdom” is being shaped. He is the King in the story.

In Jesus’ parable, the king had enemies. *“But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us’” (v.14)*. On one hand, this picture reminded the

people of Archelaus. More important, this was a story about the polar opposite of Archelaus, Jesus Christ the only perfectly righteous King. And true to this story, the citizens over whom King Jesus should have reigned, said, “We do not want this man to reign over us.” In a matter of days the crowd would shout, “*We have no king but Caesar!*” (John 19:15)

But, the king will ultimately punish his enemies. “*But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me*” (v.27). So, too, the day is coming when King Jesus will order eternal punishment of His enemies. He will assign them to a punishment worse than death. He will consign them to live forever in the Lake of Fire.

According to the story, the king generously gave opportunities to his servants. “*Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come’*” (v.13). As he prepared to take the journey, the king in the story challenged ten of his servants. He gave each of them a mina (ten being equivalent to three months wage). He told the slaves to be pragmatic with the endowment until he returned. The Greek word translated by the phrase “engage in business” is *pragma*. Obviously, we get the English word pragmatic from this word. It meant that the king expected the slaves to do something with what the king gave them.

As the story developed we learn that the king had faithful servants. “*When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these 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 a 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’*” (vv.15-19).

The king called the servants to give an accounting of how they used their gifts. The king expected gain (v.15). In fact, one servant was able to testify that he had experienced 1000% profit. The king rewarded him with ten cities. It was a reward that far exceeded what the king had given at the beginning. Another servant testified that he

had experienced 500% profit. Likewise the king rewarded him with five cities.

But, then the sad reality is that the king also had a false servant (vv.20-26). He was a wicked servant. “*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 reap what you did not sow’*” (v.20-21).

There was this “other” slave. He was not **another** slave of the same kind (that would have been the Greek word *allos*). Rather, Jesus used a different word to describe another (*heteros*) servant of a different kind. The “another” slave was not like the faithful slaves. Motivated by fear, this slave tried to shift the blame to the king, his master! He accused the king of being a *severe man*. The accusation means austere, being too strict, harsh, unfair. What a contrast to the other two servants who experienced great gain because of the king’s generosity!

The unfaithful slave also accused his king of being a thief. One thing is very clear in this story. The faithless servant just didn’t trust his king. Where there is no trust, there can be no true relationship. Well maybe he was right not to trust the king. Didn’t the king tacitly acknowledge that he was untrustworthy. Not really. The king actually did not acknowledge that the accusations were true where we read, “*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?’*” (v.22).

Rather, here the king said something like, “If you really thought that I was austere and untrustworthy, why didn’t you invest my money?” The other servants’ responses to the king indicated that none of these accusations were true. The third slave was unfaithful because he didn’t trust his king, and, therefore, he did not have a relationship with him. And just as the king accused him, the man could have invested the money. “*Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’*” (v.23).

The king’s rule in offering reward strikes us as unfair. “*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 to 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” (vv.24-26). And everyone in the crowd felt like saying, “That’s not fair!” Here is an important reminder: God’s rules are not fair—they are just! If this is what the Creator and ruler of the universe says is right, it is right.

How the Story is Relevant to Us.

King Jesus is returning. In the larger scope of our king returning He will judge the enemies. In *The Revelation*, John wrote what Jesus revealed to him about those last days. *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).*

Every person who rejects Jesus as their Savior and King will upon the moment of death enter *hadeis*. That Greek word refers to the place that is called hell in the rich man and Lazarus story (Luke 16:23). As the story indicates, it is obviously a place of torment. But it is not the final residence of our King’s enemies. After the Millennium, every living, eternal soul that has been suffering in *hadeis* will be gathered at the great judgment seat of Christ, the Great White Throne. Every single one of those people will be judged according to their works, will be found missing in the Lamb’s book of life, and will be cast into the lake of fire for eternity. Those are the very obvious enemies of the king (which in the story included the faithless servant).

But the enemy is not the only kind of person who will face King Jesus the Eternal Judge. As we read in His story, Jesus will also judge His servants. True believers will be required to give an account about our service. God wrote through Paul, *For we must all appear*

before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil (2 Corinthians 5:10). In that judgment, true believers will experience loss and reward at the King’s judgment seat. *For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).*

The judgment at the end is just because King Jesus has given us opportunity to serve Him in this life. He who gives opportunity also gives ability to serve. As in this story, we all receive the same gift, the same gospel in which we invest in this life. The gospel is our work, just like it was Jesus’ work. He came to seek and save the lost. Our chief purpose in life (to glorify God and enjoy Him forever) stands and falls on the gospel.

The good news that God Himself has provided salvation from sin through His own sacrifice is the channel, the means for glorifying Him. There is no greater glory! What are you doing with the gospel? What part does the gospel play in your lifestyle? How has the gospel impacted your own life?

But also, as in the Matthew story, we all receive talents, spiritual gifts, and such according to our King’s design and purpose. Our king intends for us to invest all of these in the work of the Lord. We are to use all the gifts, talents, opportunities to tell, show, illustrate, teach Christ, the point of the gospel.

And He who gives the ability to serve also gives opportunity to serve. This lifetime is the only opportunity we have to use spiritual gifts from Christ’s work and glory. So how do you invest the time that the King gives you? What do you do with your circumstances? Do you complain about them? Do you wish they would go away or change? Or do you talk to Christ about how He intends to use your circumstances to glorify Him?

How do you capitalize on your experiences to illustrate gospel lessons? We are supposed to be using the gospel in conjunction with

the abilities the King gave us to help others see the King. Stop to think about this simple connection: How are the characteristics of the Holy Spirit (the King's representative) working out in your life in your relationship with other people to lift up the gospel? Listen again to the character of God. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:22-24).* Demonstrating these traits in life is living out the gospel.

Finally, what will you say to "King Jesus"? How will you explain your responses to distractions that keep you from serving Him? Life offers so many distractions on purpose. Satan pushes the passing stuff of the passing world into our paths in order to get us to stop being so "heavenly minded" that we are "no earthly good."

We do well to adopt the attitude of Nehemiah. His enemies kept pestering him, trying to interrupt the work of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls. One day they sent him a message asking him to come and meet with his enemy, who intended to do him harm. His reply: *And I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:3).*

Professing Christians lose so many opportunities to put the gospel to work through their abilities because of fleshly attraction. They cannot take time out from their hobby in order to encourage a brother or sister. They dare not attend a church service because it would cause them to miss their favorite television show. Their pleasure and ease is so important that they would never risk stepping outside their comfort zone to use what the King gave them for His glory.

When you give an account to King Jesus, will you try to excuse your stubbornness like the unfaithful servant tried? People whom Christ has purchased by His blood, and within whom He has placed His Holy Spirit, will not be stubborn against God for very long. It's too painful. Many professing Christians are so determined to be in control of their own lives that they cannot serve the King.

God does not have a very high view of that attitude. Hear the words of God through the prophet Samuel when he confronted stubborn, self-willed King Saul: *"Has the LORD as great delight in*

burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

When you stand before King Jesus, will you justify your self-centeredness? I cannot be faithful in service to Christ and be faithful to my own whims too. At some point, I have to sacrifice self and selfish desires. We easily fall into the trap of the faithless servant and blame God because doesn't make life pleasant for us. The people who are angry with God, falsely accusing God of being unfair or unjust, who blame God for the problems they have created in life are almost certainly unregenerated. Real servants might be confused and perturbed about God's work that we don't understand (Job and Jonah), but if we are born again, we get over it quickly.

This story points out the important principle that real relationships are built on truth. Take away the trust, and there is no relationship. Faithful servants are people who have a true, genuine relationship with King Jesus first. So the many religious people who know much about Jesus can talk intelligently about Jesus, and even claim to be in a relationship with Jesus. But because they don't trust Jesus in life, they really cannot maintain a relationship with Him. They are the kind who take the blessings from King Jesus for granted and hide them in a napkin. What will they say when they stand before Jesus?