

Scripture Reading:

Luke 19:11: “11 As they heard these things, [Jesus] proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. 12 He said therefore, A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. 13 Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, Engage in business until I come. 14 But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, We do not want this man to reign over us. 15 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. 16 The first came before him, saying, Lord, your mina has made ten minas more. 17 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. 18 And the second came, saying, Lord, your mina has made five minas. 19 And he said to him, And you are to be over five cities. 20 Then another came, saying, Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; 21 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. 22 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? 23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest? 24 And he said to those who stood by, Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas. 25 And they said to him, Lord, he has ten minas! 26 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. 27 But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me. 28 And when [Jesus] had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.”

"Laboring in the Kingdom"

This morning we return to our journey through the books of Luke and Acts coming to the end of the second major section of Luke's Gospel. Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem and He tells a parable to correct some of the misconceptions that His disciples and others had about what was about to happen at Jerusalem.

- Jesus knows that His appointed time has come, having set His face toward Jerusalem some weeks or months before.

Jesus is now days away from facing the agony of bearing the full wrath of God because of OUR sin! His disciples for the most part, are expecting something more in line with what the religious leaders of the day thought would happen:

- The Messiah would come as a military conqueror like King David, casting off the yoke of Rome & launching a new Golden Age for the nation of Israel.
- Such was NOT the case!

Jesus was about to receive and establish His Kingdom -- BUT He has come as the suffering Messiah who must save His people from their sins! -- These people, now clothed with the righteousness of Jesus, become His bride, the Church -- And finally, through this Church the Holy Spirit would spread the Kingdom of Christ throughout the entire world as promised in Daniel chapter two. In other words, the Kingdom would NOT appear immediately, but over time as we serve the new King

Jesus tells the parable to all who were present, because he was near to Jerusalem, and "because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately."

- NOBODY had it right at this point so there are instructions and warning for everyone in this simple parable.

This parable is very similar to one that Jesus will tell just to the disciples near the end of the long discourse that He delivered to them on the Mount of Olives regarding the judgment of Jerusalem and His coming, which is recorded for us in Matthew 25...

- There are differences with how the servants are given resources and rewards that we will discuss in a moment.

The religious leaders are listening to this first parable, so Jesus is clear about how the citizens who do not want to be ruled by this King – that would be THEM –

[these 'citizens'] are slain before the King at His coming which gives us a vivid picture of the destruction of Jerusalem & of course it has implications for the final white throne judgment as well.

In both parables you have the faithless servant, who here in the first one is left empty-handed. But, in the second, which Jesus gives just before Judas betrays Him, that servant is cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- **Obviously we have some very pointed warning in both cases!**

There are two ways to consider the timing of what is being described in these parables: I tend to agree with Augustine that the far country referred to is the Gentile nations: After His ascension Jesus scatters His Church so they take the Gospel to the Gentiles in the early years of the Church and then Jesus returns to judge the City of Jerusalem and the Nation of Israel.

The other view to say that it talks of Jesus ascending into Heaven to receive His Kingdom and returning at the end of time to the final judgment.

- **These don't have to be mutually exclusive and can both be seen in the text.**

So whether it is the early disciples being faithful to take the Gospel to Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth, or a picture of all of church history, there are practical lessons that we are to learn about Kingdom living and that is what I want to focus on today!

The picture that we are given in the Epistles of the New Testament is that God has given us His Word to preach with power and granted various gifts to His people through the Holy Spirit. Everyone is given the power of the Word equally and the gifts are given at the discretion of the Spirit.

We see both of these in the two versions of this parable:

- **Here in Luke each of ten servants are given the same amount of money**
- **In Matthew each servant is given a different amount of money: One ten talents, one five talents and another one talent.**

It is very appropriate that we consider these lessons as we approach the end of the ordinary or normal time in the Church calendar: This morning being the 25th Sunday of ordinary time this year, just three weeks away from our new year with the beginning of Advent.

This is why I chose the title, "Laboring in the Kingdom" and this is what we are to remember each and every year as we move through the second half of the Church calendar:

- **We are to apply the great truths in the birth, life, death, burial, resurrection & ascension of Jesus in the practical living of our lives!**

Jesus said many times and in many ways, IF you love me keep my commandments.

Jesus said those who HEAR and DO the Word will be blessed.

- So Jesus is here giving His disciples & all who will listen some very practical illustrations of how all of this works out in our lives:

The noble is about to go away and so, 13 “Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, & said to them, Engage in business until I come.”

- Now please notice in our new age of socialism, that Jesus uses the concept of doing business to make this illustration!

Jesus expects us to understand the concepts of increase and profit to understand what He is teaching. Our God is a God who loves to bring increase and I think this is why so many of the god-haters of today talk endlessly about LIMITS: They believe we have a static economic pie: There is only so much wealth and if you get a dollar more than someone has to get a dollar less. They talk endlessly about how limited our national resources are: If you believed the experts of my youth, you would think that we ran out of oil ten or fifteen years ago! And kids, we need to remember that oil was only discovered in the 1800's!

- What great resources of the future could our great God lead some of you into discovering?

Jesus in BOTH versions makes it clear that an increase is a good thing: Something that pleases the master and will be rewarded. This is a concept that is responsible for much of the wealth and riches that we enjoy in Western Civilization.

It is not unique to the west because all men are made in the image of God, so you always have some creative and productive work, BUT there has been much MORE in the West and that is because we took what Jesus taught here very seriously: After the Reformation there developed what has come to be called the Protestant Work Ethic. Our salvation in Christ is all of Grace, and as we see in these parables, we are given the Word and individual talents by grace as well!

We are to use these to increase wealth for the master: Jesus is pleased with increase and angered by sloth!

So let me show you a simple illustration of the concept of increase:

- Do you remember all those pumpkins at the harvest party up at Trinity Ranch?
- How about all those pumpkins that we used around this hall for the Reformation night celebrations.

LOTS & LOTS of pumpkins, right?

- ⇒ Where did they all come from?
- ⇒ And where did Mark get them?
- ⇒ From a few pumpkin seeds!

- So this is one simple way to picture what Jesus is explaining here in the parable:

Let's imagine the servants are each given one package of pumpkin seeds.

The first goes out & plants them in really rich soil, waters & cares for them and has ten barrels of pumpkins ready when the Lord returns.

The second servant plants his in soil that is not quite so good and forgets to water his plants a few times and in the end he has five barrels of pumpkins for the master when he returns.

The last servant is selfish & slothful: He knows the seeds were not his in the 1st place & thinks the Nobleman is going to take what he raises. He just puts the package of seeds into a drawer so he can give them back to the master when he returns.

- NOT a good idea!

We serve a God who created all that exists out of nothing! Now we cannot create something from nothing but we can use what God has created to bring increases, in material like pumpkins and in wealth or value with the work of our hands.

- As I said, the Lord is pleased with increase and this is what we see in the text:

15 When [the nobleman] 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.

- Judgment day has come and each of the servants must give account...

16 The first came before him, saying, Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.

- Please note what this servant says: "YOUR MINA has made ten minas more"

As I said, our salvation is all of grace and so are the provisions that we are given to serve the Lord:

- ⇒ This is why the tithe is still important in our age of Grace:
- ⇒ It is not legalism
- ⇒ It is not so the church can have a fat treasury
- It is so that we REMEMBER that ALL we have belongs to the Lord: All of our wealth and our increase are HIS
- Bringing Him the first fruits reminds us of this!

This passage is also very timely with the new team that is taking charge in Washington next year:

- Notice that the Lord does not TAX or punish success, rather He rewards success!

17 “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.”

- If we wanted to carry out our pumpkin example, the Lord would be saying, you have done well growing some pumpkins now I want you to run an entire chain of grocery stores!

As we have often said, God loves to bless His people and we have surely seen this in Western civilization

We see the same principle with a second servant who gains five and

20 Then another came, saying, Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; [this is the one who put the pumpkin seeds in the drawer] 21 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.”

- This man has forgotten who he was and what had been given to him!

It is a severe warning to all of us that we not become proud of who we are as Christians AND that we should never neglect the many gifts and talents that God graciously gives us. We do NOT want to come under the same judgment that this man faces...

22 “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? *[note: This is a question!]*

23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?”

Even if this man did not want to serve the master, he could have given those pumpkin seeds to one of the other servants and taken a few more pumpkin seeds in return!

Next we see some insight into the mind of God as we see how His priorities are often very different that what seems natural to our fallen nature: It is certainly not what the wicked servant had expected!

- Remember what I said about all the talk of limits?

The modern mind would say, oh, now the poor soul feels terrible because he has failed his master: Maybe he needs some more education so he can better learn how to grow pumpkins!

- Surely the other two servants have plenty to share with this one that now feels left out!
- This is NOT what we will see from the Nobleman and when we see the reactions from the others, we should note that this modern thinking is not so modern after all!

24 “And he said to those who stood by, Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.”

25 And they said to him, Lord, he has ten minas!”

Even IF you are going to take his coin away, surely it should not go to the man who has the most!

- **But this is exactly what is done, because God loves to bless His people!**

26 “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.”

- **Our God is not a God of limits!**

Then we come to the very sober judgment of verse 27: Dealing with those who would not have the King rule over them:

- **We will discuss this in much more detail during the ministry of Jesus in the final week at Jerusalem**

But, it is timely today as Theron and I will shortly have the heartbreaking task of announcing the first excommunications here at Church of the King:

Issues and circumstances leading up to an excommunication can be varied and complex, but the bottom-line is always the same when you have hardened rebellion: They refuse to bow the knee to the authority of Jesus and His Word!

27 “But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.”

This is the sad end for all those who refuse to repent: With those who are cast out of the Church, Paul tells us that we do so hoping that Satan will buffet their flesh so they can be saved in the day of the Lord, and this should be our constant prayer for those who are excommunicated!

28 And when [Jesus] had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.”

Next week Jesus enters Jerusalem to be the sacrifice for sins. After His resurrection He goes to the Father to receive His Kingdom and leaves us as His servants to faithfully serve until He comes again, at our death or His second coming.

- **Jesus has granted us His gracious salvation and placed us in the midst of the greatest wealth and prosperity that has ever been known in human history.**

Someday soon, Jesus will ask each of us what we have done with the treasures we have been given:

- **Have we increased or squandered the vast wealth of our nation which should be used to advance His Kingdom?**

- **Have we faithfully raised the many covenant children He has blessed us with so they can serve the King?**

May God grant us the wisdom and strength to be good stewards, ready to show the master the increase of His wealth when He comes!

May we all hear those words recorded in Matthew when Jesus tells this parable a second time: “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”

Communion Meditation:

II Corinthians 2:4 “For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

5 Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure not to put it too severely to all of you. 6 For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, 7 so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. 9 For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. 10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”