

A story is told about President Franklin D. Roosevelt (a remarkable and charismatic man)... who sometimes wearied of those long receiving lines at the White House. ... He complained that no one really paid any attention to what was said.

One day... during a reception... he decided to try an experiment. To each person who passed down the line and shook his hand he murmured, "*I murdered my grandmother this morning.*" ... The guests responded with phrases like: "*Marvelous! Keep up the good work.*" "*We are proud of you.*" "*God bless you, sir.*"

It was not until the end of the line... while greeting the ambassador from Bolivia... that his words were actually heard. ... Not the least bit alarmed... the ambassador leaned over and whispered: "*I'm sure she had it coming.*"

When I read that story... I immediately thought about the section of Luke's Gospel that we are in. Jesus' disciples must have been like those in a reception line for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. They did not bother to listen to Jesus.

Luke 18:31-34 (ESV)

³¹ *And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. ³³ And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."* ³⁴ *But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.*

Jesus could not have been much clearer. And this was the THIRD time in Luke... that Jesus has spoken about His suffering and death. But His disciples were not listening. Well... today we find Jesus and His disciples

just about to enter Jerusalem... where He will be crucified... and Jesus is concerned – because His men still don't get it. They were excitedly think that the Kingdom of God was finally about to begin in just a few days.

Luke 19:11

The setting for this... and the rest of today's passage... is that Jesus is passing through the city of Jericho. He is only 17 miles from His destination of Jerusalem. ... He has been dining at the home of Zaccheus. The tax collector had just made the stunning announcement that he had repented of his sin... and as restitution... he promised to give half of his considerable wealth to the poor and then repay those he had defrauded four times above what he had taken.

We don't know what the conversation was about at Zaccheaus' house... But it made Zaccheaus believe that God's Kingdom was far better than all of his significant wealth and power in THIS world's system. Zaccheaus was at the top of the mountain – in terms of the world system.

But Zaccheaus committed political... social... and financial suicide. There would be little (if anything) left of his estate. ... He also risked losing the respect and confidence of his Roman colleagues. ... If he were a follower of Jesus... no one holding power in Jerusalem would call him friend.

Jesus responded to Zaccheus with heaven's affirmation: "Salvation has come to this house." The tax collector's giant leap from the highest social strata in the dominion of evil to the lowest - gave the man of short stature an exalted status in the kingdom of God.

The Lord's followers "were listening to these things." They too must have been inspired by the thought of their own sacrifices – and how much MORE they were about to gain (once they reached Jerusalem.) ... But they did not understand. nor would they... until much later.

That the people in general were constantly looking for such a kingdom is clear from verses like John 6:15.

John 6:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Even the minds of The Twelve continued for a long time to be filled with such expectations. This can be seen in Mark 10:35–45 (when two of the disciples – pushed by their mother - requested the highest positions of honor in the Kingdom.)

These expectations were especially high (right now) because of the time of year that it was. This was the time of Passover Festival... with its many reminders of the glorious deliverance from Egypt. ... This fanned the embers of the revolutionary spirit. ... (And) the closer these pilgrims drew to Jerusalem... the more (also) the hope of instant deliverance rose. ... Well now they were very close. They had reached Jericho... and Jerusalem was just around the corner. ... [P A U S E] ...

They expected that Jesus was going to Jerusalem to raise an army... overthrow Rome... conquer the world... and usher Israel into a new golden age of power and prosperity... They (no doubt) saw themselves (who had made so many sacrifices - greater perhaps than Zaccheaus... because they had left their homes... businesses... and family.) - Surely they would have prominent positions in Jesus' Kingdom.

Jesus was “the Son of David.” He could reestablish David’s throne. And He was (even) calling himself “*the Son of Man*” (the awesome... divine being of Daniel 7.) ... They had seen His supernatural power repeatedly... and now... with only a seventeen-mile ascent to the Holy City rising before them... their feverish kingdom expectancy was peaking!

But Jesus had something different in mind. He has been telling them over and over that He will do all of that (eventually)... but not “immediately.” The true Messiah — as opposed to the messiah of selfish expectations — came (the first time) with a different kind of agenda. To temper His disciples and to help them shift their earthbound perspective... and in order to see the world through Jesus’ eyes... Jesus told a parable.

Luke 19:12

The parable clearly illustrates that the kingdom of God will not be set up in Jerusalem right away. ... A journey was required... during which Jesus (as portrayed by the nobleman) would receive authority to rule the kingdom.

What Jesus was really telling His audience... was that He (Himself)... after He suffers and dies at the hands of the Romans and Jews... would ascend to the Father in heaven. After a long while... the Father would send Jesus back to earth... having bestowed on Jesus rulership over the entire universe. Jesus is trying to get them to understand that He is about to go to heaven (symbolized by “the far country” in this parable)... from which He would return to earth after a long time. **(Secondly)** He will also use this parable to let them know what His followers are to do – while He is away... and the serious consequences if they don’t.

Now I think it is very interesting... that Jesus is teaching what is about to happen – but as He does so – everyone of His listeners catch more than a parable. Author Kent Hughes writes that this parable played right off the front page of their current newspapers. The similarities of Christ's parable... and what was happening in politics at that very time (or shortly before) are uncanny.

Here is what we know about what was going on – according to Roman historian (Josephus) and other historical documents of that time period. King Herod (who was alive at Jesus' birth) had recently died. But before he died... Herod had given over half of his kingdom to his son – Archelaus.

The Romans did not like to bestow the title of "king" on anyone (which is the Roman word "Rex.") King Herod was a rare exception. He was given this high honor because for his role in defeating the Parthians (a hated Roman adversary.) When King Herod died... (son) Archelaus wanted the same honored title of "king." ... So he assembled an entourage and departed for Rome to ask Caesar for the title. The group included his mother (Malthace)... his friends (Poplas, Ptolemy, and Nicholas)... and other family members (namely... Solome and her children and various nephews and sons-in-law of the late king).

But (much) to Archelaus' surprise... in Rome some of his family opposed his getting the title - even accusing him before Caesar. (And) even more surprising... a delegation of fifty Palestinians (amazingly Jews and Samaritans together) had also traveled to Rome to oppose him before Caesar. The fifty were joined by 8,000 expatriate Jews who were living in Rome at the time.

Archelaus' opponents explained to Ceasar how cruel he was and that he had massacred 3,000 Jews during one of their Passover celebrations... and how he had tortured many others. They also argued that he was inept... corrupt... and was ruining their (otherwise) prosperous land.

Caesar... after hearing both parties... dismissed the great assembly. ... A few days later he announced his decision... which satisfied no one.

Josephus records that He certified King Herod's giving half the kingdom to Archelaus... but he would only have the title "ethnarch" (instead of king.) But Cesar did promise to make him king... if he earned it. ... All returned to Palestine unhappy. ... And Archelaus never did "prove his worthiness to Ceasar" — so he never was called "king."

All this scandal was tucked into the Palestinian/Jewish mind. They saw their current events in Jesus' parable. This would have deepened its impact. Jesus certainly had their attention. ... But the parable had several differences. The biggest (perhaps) is that Jesus is not cruel. Furthermore Jesus added details to teach what His followers need to do.

Luke 19:13

There are a few important matters that I need to point out (before going any further.) ... The FIRST is that in THIS parable... the nobleman gave each of his servants the same amount of money... (instead of different quantities)... and there are 10 servants... instead of three. This is NOT the same parable that we read in Matthew 25:14-30... and it makes some different points.

In Matthew 25... we read what is called "the Parable of the Talents"... and the talents represent ABILITIES. (One servant is given five talents of

gold... a second one is given two... and there is only one other in that parable – who is given one.) The very word *talent* (literally... a large sum of money) has been adopted into English as a synonym for ability... as in a “talented person.”

But here in Luke... there are 10 servants... and each one gets the same amount (a single mina.) ... A mina does not signify an ability... but rather a deposit of *the exact same thing that is given to every Christian* — namely... it is the gospel.

Every follower of Christ is a steward of the gospel. Paul repeatedly would speak of being “entrusted with the Gospel” (for example in 1 Thessalonians 2:4.... 1 Timothy 1:11 and 6:20... and then 2 Timothy 2:2).

Each believer receives the same investment capital for his/her Christian life. “*Joe Christian*” (today) receives the same as St. Paul and John Calvin and Billy Graham. We all have the good news of Jesus Christ and its marvelous effect in our lives.

And we all have the same command: to “Put this money to work until I come back.” ... We must invest the investment Christ has made in us! ... We are to multiply our spiritual capital — invest the gospel — increase the yield of the good news of salvation through Christ! This is not a matter of “*I would if I had the right training... intelligence... or experience...*” It is a matter of obeying the Master. He tells us all to invest it.

With your “mina” (the Gospel of Christ) each of us servants *must do business*. That is the point of the parable. *Those who have heard the gospel must proclaim it!* They must conduct themselves in such a manner that through their word and example sinners are brought to the Lord... But

it is not just evangelizing the lost... It also involved edifying the saints. With the Gospel that has been deposited in yours and my life... we are to see that believers are strengthened in their faith... seeing to it that your fellow believers grow in every sphere of their life (social, economic, political, educational, etc.)... bringing it all under the influence of the gospel... all this to the glory of God.

Let me call your attention back to the last phrase in verse 13...

Luke 19:13b

“Engage in business until I come.” Many translations say: “Occupy until I come...” maybe you have heard this phrase before. This is where it is found (“occupy until I come.”) “Engage in business” or “occupy” is the Greek word ***pragma {prag'-mah}*** which means “to stay busy, to carry on, to set in motion, to accomplish.” The idea of this word involves producing good results through great effort and energy. It does not mean to float around or be casual at the task at hand. This word *pragma* forms our English word “pragmatic” which means “to be active... busy... and practical.” ... The nobleman was commanding his servants to not only stay busy... but gave them what they needed to accomplish tasks while he was absent. He expected productivity.

Someone said: “Postage stamps are getting more expensive... but at least they have one attribute that most of us could emulate: they stick to one thing until they get there.” ...(**LISTEN!**) this is the Lord’s message to us! Occupy till I come. Stay busy and accomplish my will for your life! Serve me and finish the task I have for you! Stick to the task!

Till He comes we are to occupy or stay busy. This word “**till**” reminds us that we will need to be patient at our task and not give up. Waiting is not easy... but that is what we are to do until He returns. If we spiritually fall down (lose some spiritual battles in our lives) we need to get back up and go forward.

- * If you are discouraged, get up!
- * If you are defeated, get up!
- * If you are doubting, get up!
- * If you are depressed, get up!
- * Get up! Get up! Get up!

I love the story (and I have told it here before) about Andrew Jackson’s boyhood friends who just couldn’t understand how he became a famous general and then the President of the United States. ... They knew of other men who had greater talent... but who never succeeded. ... One of Jackson’s friends said: *“Why, Jim Brown, who lived right down the pike from Jackson, was not only smarter, but he could throw Andy three times out of four in a wrestling match. But look where Andy is now.”*

Another friend responded: *“How did there happen to be a fourth time? Didn’t they usually say three times and out?” ... “Sure, they were supposed to, but not Andy. He would never admit he was defeated. He would never stay ‘throwed.’ Jim Brown would get tired, and on the fourth try Andrew Jackson would throw him and be the winner.”*

Picking up on that idea... I think that “The thing that counts is not how many times you are ‘throwed,’ but whether you are willing to stay ‘throwed’ or get back up after you have been down.” ... We may face setbacks... but we must take courage... brush ourselves off... get back up and go forward in faith for Jesus Christ.

Maybe you have tried to share the Gospel with someone and “got throw’d”. Perhaps were once involved in a ministry (helping others in growing their faith)... but somehow you “got throw’d.” ... The battle is the Lord’s... so there is no excuse for us to stay “threwed” and flat on our back! Get back up and get in the battle for the Lord in winning the lost to Christ. Jesus said: “*Occupy till I come!*” What are you doing with the Gospel? ... Will you occupy until He comes?

Luke 19:14

This resembles the Archelaus episode — except that Jesus is a righteous King and his enemies are evil. Oh(!) how the unbelieving have always hated Him. Consider His infamous rejection before the crucifixion:

John 19:14-16 (ESV)

¹⁴ Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” ¹⁵ They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” ¹⁶ So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus,

John 19:19-22 (ESV)

¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” ²² Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

The fact that Jesus was hated and opposed in New Testament times made it difficult for His disciples to serve Him. He was not popular... so His followers were not popular either. Jesus warned them and said, “If the world hates you... know that it hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

The difficulty of the disciples is still faced by Christians today. People resent the authority of Jesus... the authority of the Bible... and the Lord's claim as Savior of the world and the only way to Heaven. This is why you may face confrontation or opposition if you tell others of His saving grace.

Yes... we serve a Savior that is opposed and scoffed by many... but don't forget He is a living Savior (not a dead One.) He is worth serving and His message to us is "*Occupy till I come!*"

Luke 19:15

The attempt to prevent the nobleman from receiving his kingdom failed. So also every attempt to frustrate the Son of man's plans will fail. He ascends to heaven and receives His kingdom... as has already been indicated. The nobleman's return and session with his servants symbolizes Christ's glorious second coming... when He will demand of His servants that they render an account of the manner in which they have dealt with *the gospel*; and (in this connection) with the gifts and opportunities for service that were placed at their disposal.

We are all stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ to give an account of what we did with the Gospel. We will give an accounting of our service and obedience to Christ.

Romans 14:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ *Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;*

2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ *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.

Revelation 20:11-15 (ESV)

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Luke 19:16-19

The first and second servants had gained 1,000 percent and 500 percent respectively on their investment. And they were humble about it... taking no credit for themselves. “*Sir, your mina has earned,*” they both said.

The nobleman (now king) praises both servants and assigns control over cities to both... to each in exact proportion to the profit made. Similarly... the Lord Jesus Christ... at His glorious return will praise His faithful servants... and will reward them in proportion to the degree of faithfulness they have shown. ... They will be given an opportunity to render even greater service in the new heaven and earth.

Luke 19:20-21

The servant says: “*If I earn money... you will take it; if I lose it... you will hold me responsible*”. He pretends that he was so paralyzed by fear that he could not act. Interestingly... the king’s response to the first two servants has already proven this fear false.

The 3rd servant spoke evilly of his lord. He accused his lord of being cruel and unfair. He said the lord would demand more than the servant could produce. This was totally untrue... but this makes such a strong parallel. Thos who disobey the Lord (most often) are not careful about the truth and they make excuse after excuse for their failure.

Disobedient people like to blame God for their failures. They want their sin excused because they want folk to think God is cruel and treats them poorly. (LISTEN!) How one speaks of God says a lot about how that person is performing in regard to his work for God.

There are Christians today that are failing in their responsibility to share the Gospel because they are afraid or unconcerned to do so. They bury their knowledge of the Gospel like money wrapped in a hanky. Fear grips their heart because they fear failure or the rejection of this world... and do not want to pay the price in standing for Christ. They are entangled by their love for popularity and looking good in the eyes of others. Solomon warned us about this fear.

Proverbs 29:25 (ESV)

²⁵ The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.

Others do not serve the Lord because they fear the amount of time it will take to serve Him. They don't want their lives to be interrupted... inconvenienced... or involved in spiritual matters that they don't want to deal with at all. But know this (for certain.) The excuses we make for not serving Christ... WILL rob us of a great deal of His blessings.

Luke 19:22-23

His rationale would make more sense if he had simply deposited the money in a bank to draw interest. Drawing interest required no work from him... and ran no risk of failure. ... No! He must have had another reason for sitting on the money. ... (And it was probably this.) ... The servant did not really expect the king to come back. ... He was not at all concerned about the king's return so he did not bother with the king's business. ... And maybe if believers today (who are not investing what God has given them) were honest... they would admit that they are not really expecting the Lord's return.

Luke 19:24

Use it or lose it. That is a law of nature. If you have a skill in a sport or craftsmanship... if you don't use it... if you stop practicing... you start to lose that skill and are not as effective. Physically... if you do not use your muscles... they begin to weaken. We find the "Use it or Lose it" law in this passage. The master took the pound from the unfaithful servant and gave it to the productive one. That makes a whole lot of sense.

Imagine the shame that the lazy servant felt. (LISTEN!) God has given us opportunities to share the Gospel with others. If we bury those opportunities... we will lose them. The Lord may have to use someone else to get the message to the lost. When we throw away opportunities to serve the Lord or stop serving Him... we can also lose some of His rewards and blessings. John warned us about this.

2 John 1:8 (ESV)

⁸ *Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.*

Every believer has been given the same gospel deposit to invest. Regardless of our abilities... if we invest it... we will receive rewards far beyond reason or measure.

Luke 19:25

By transferring the unfaithful slave's *mina* to the care of the most successful slave... the master proves that he cares less about fairness than faithfulness. Be that as it may... the master was fair. None of the slaves ended up with less than when they started out. Even the worthless slave ended where he began. ... He started with nothing and he ended with nothing.

Luke 19:26

It is a basic principle of the Christian life that wasted opportunity means loss of reward *and possibly loss of the privilege of service*. If we do not use the gifts God gives us under His direction - why should we even have them? Somebody else can make better use of the gifts to the glory of God.

Luke 19:27

Only one group suffered loss in the parable. The citizens who rejected the master's authority and actively worked against him became the object of his wrath. While the unfaithful slave received no reward... he remained a citizen of the master's kingdom. ... He suffered disgrace... but his life was never in danger. Not so for the rebels. The master's order to slay the rebels in His presence foreshadows the final judgment in which Israel's political and religious leaders will suffer eternal death for their opposition of the Messiah. ... [P A U S E] ...

Luke 19:11–27 has many points of reflection. The parable of the minas is a warning that Jesus will be gone for some time and that on His return He will evaluate people's faithfulness to Him.

The Master has gone to receive authority to rule the earth and will return in power. He expects us to invest well rather than sit on the gospel that has been entrusted to us. ... This soon-to-be-realized truth... should shape our minute-by-minute decisions... as we passionately seek to invest in the coming kingdom. Time is very... very short!