

Loyalty Revealed

Luke 19:1–27 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: One of the great difficulties we have in seeing a sweeping move of God across our country is very simply an epidemic of ignorance when it comes to understanding the Christian Scriptures.

It is true that the scriptures have never been more available and accessible. However, several factors make it challenging for the average person to interpret and apply the text accurately. The chief challenge is a failure to understand what the Bible is and how it is to be read.

You see, the Bible is a collection of 66 individual documents. In fact, that is what the word bible means: a collection of documents.

The two major divisions of the Bible are the 39 books of the Old Testament Canon and the 27 books of the New Testament Canon.

Remember, the documents that make up our NT were typically letters written to a congregation or an individual. The letter would be sent to the church it was addressed to, then copied and circulated to the other churches.

We see Paul encouraging this in **Colossians 4:16 (NASB95)** ¹⁶ When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter *that is coming* from Laodicea.

So you have this collection of apostolic documents coming together in each church.

Simultaneously, you had heretical teachers arising and writing letters of their own. It was also very common in that day for people to write letters and attach one of the Apostle's names to the letter in order to give it credibility.

So the question of which documents were legitimate became very important.

Well-known Pastors like **Irenaeus of Lyon** (175AD-195AD) began to call for a New Testament Canon similar to that of the Old Testament. Canon means standard. What standard had to be met in order for the Church to consider a document legitimate. He suggested that:

- First, the document had to be written by an Apostle or an understudy of an Apostle.
- Second, the document had to be already found in the collections of almost all the churches.

Irenaeus wrote out a list of letters that he deemed credible according to those standards. While there were minor details yet to be resolved through church counsels, the list that he proposed is basically what you hold in your hands today.

The Bible as a whole, is a collection of 66 individual documents. In fact, that is what the word bible means, a collection of documents.

The Bible has two major divisions: the 39 books of the Old Testament Canon and the 27 books of the New Testament Canon.

The Bible was written over the span of 1,600 years by over 40 authors on 3 different continents (*Asia, Africa, and Europe*) in 3 different languages (*Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic*)

The Bible reveals one unified, progressing, and unfolding message - which we call the Gospel.

Several different GENRES of literature are employed. We find historical narratives, like Genesis and Exodus; we find legal ease in Leviticus and Numbers, we find poetry in the Psalms, each of these genres have their own rules of interpretation.

ILLUSTRATION: When you are reading the newspaper, you don't read an editorial the same way you read the comics. You apply the proper interpretive lens.

Well, the same thing has to happen with the Bible's documents.

The Bible contains 4 GOSPELS. Now, a Gospel reads like a Historic Narrative. The major difference is that a Gospel is seeking to convince the reader of a particular truth or body of truths.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE IS NO EXCEPTION -

In the Bible, we have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Notice that in most Bibles, they will be entitled "the Gospel according to..." In other words, there is ONE Gospel, but there are four different vantage points.

Each of the four Gospels is written for a unique audience and emphasizes a particular aspect of Jesus's person and work.

- **Matthew** - written for a **Jewish** audience. So, he references the Mosaic law and rabbinic traditions they would be most familiar with. "As it is written" is a common phrase in Matthew.
- **Mark** - written for a **Roman** audience. So, Mark has to explain the Jewish traditions.
- **John** - was the final gospel written and he mostly covers events that aren't written about in the Synoptics. His is the Everyman Gospel.

- **Luke** - written for a **Greek** audience. The Greeks were highly educated. They were looking for the ideal man - so Luke emphasizes the *humanity* and *Kingly authority* of Jesus.

If you fail to recognize that, you will tend to see the various accounts as disjointed stories with some sort of moral application. Or worse, you will seek to make some mystical interpretation that cannot be subjectively validated - also known as heresy.

WHY AM I TELLING YOU ALL THIS? Because the text before us today is a good example, where the meaning can only be comprehended when you allow it to live within the greater context of the book.

CONTEXT: Two stories, the story of Zacchaeus, followed by a parable of the 10 Minas. For most of your life, you have heard those two stories preached or taught separately. But I want to show you how the context can unlock LUKE's intent. But you have to presume that Luke was not a poor fool just telling a bunch of stories, you have to presume that he had intention behind every word, as the ordering of the stories. Look with my at verse 1, remembering that Luke is seeking to convince the original Greek readers that Jesus Christ is the ultimate authority in the Universe.

TEXT: Luke 19:1–27 (ESV)

¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.

Jericho was the Miami of Israel. It was built upon the, "Elisha Spring", so it has ample supply of fresh water for which were distributed by aqueducts, to produce unsurpassed fertility to the rich soil along the 'plain' of Jericho, which is about twelve or fourteen miles wide.

- Josephus describes it as the richest part of the country, and calls it a little Paradise.
- Antony had bestowed the revenues of its balsam-plantations as an Imperial gift upon Cleopatra.
- Josephus tells us, even in winter the inhabitants could only bear the lightest clothing of linen.
- It was Herod's favorite summer home. He had erected in Jericho 4 forts, a theatre, and an Amphitheatre. A grand new palace and splendid gardens were developed by Archelaus.

So imagine something like Miami Beach. If you were tasked with finding the wealthiest Jew in Jericho, you would be wise to search for the **Arche-Telones** of Jericho... the chief tax collector. The Arche-Telones worked for Caesar, and he was responsible for taxing the entire region. Other tax collectors reported to him, and remember, he is a Jew. As such, he was hated by the populace. He was a traitor, a selfish, money-loving traitor. But nevertheless, he was quite wealthy.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, HE HAD MADE THE CONSCIOUS DECISION TO BE LOYAL TO CAESER RATHER THAN HIS OWN PEOPLE. That is very important for our purposes today, and I believe it is why Luke included him in his Gospel.

³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”

So, this Arche-Telones has a direct encounter with the King of Kings. How will he react or respond?

⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” ⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.”¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

See that - this man who had lived his life as a turncoat, loyal to the King of Rome, now suddenly and dramatically shifts his loyalties to show fidelity to a new King, King Jesus. Typically, that is where the story ends, and the preacher gives you three points and sends you home. But notice...Verse 11 occurs on the same occasion...

¹¹ As they heard these things,

The things said by the crowd about Zacchaeus, the things said by Zacchaeus to the Lord.... As they heard these things...

11b. 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.

So Luke is telling us about what just happened in the heart of Zacchaeus, and Luke tells us the people had a preconceived idea that if Jesus was the King, he would likely invade Jerusalem, attack the Roman garrisons, and set up his Kingdom immediately. So there is our context to interpret the parable...

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.’

This was a well-known story to the people of Jericho. We see this time and again in Jewish History. A superpower invades, like Babylon, Persia, or Rome..., and then locals begin to jockey for positions of power under the new Administration.

Something like this happened when Herod the Great was made King. Herod's father, ANTIPATER, was appointed as REGENT RULER in 63BC when Rome invaded, and his son HEROD was made Governor in Galilee. When war broke out between Rome and the Partinians... Herod's rule was challenged. So what did Herod do? He went to Rome and asked Caesar to give him the highest possible title, that of Basileus and he returned to Jerusalem with 2 legions of Roman Soldiers under his command.

Something like that happens in this parable. The nobleman goes to a faraway country to solidify his kingdom legally.

Meanwhile, he left his wealth in the hands of THREE SERVANTS and Charged them to do business with them until he returned. Meanwhile...

[14 But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'](#)

Again, this is very familiar to the hearers. They would suppose this is a story about Herod. He was a non-Jewish puppet king; the people hated him. So obviously, they would appeal to Rome, to not let this man reign over us.

NOW, imagine the predicament of the three servants. Whom would they side with? Their Master or the delegation that went to demand another King? How they behave will reveal how they believe things are going to go down...

- If they do what the Master had requested, it's safe to say they believed the Master would recieve the Kingdom.
- If they failed to do what the Master requested, it's safe to assume they were hedging their bets in case the delegation prevailed.

[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.'](#)

So, servant #1 did well! He remained good and faithful to the Master, and now the Master was King... and the King would make the Servant a Governor 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.'](#)

Servant 2 also did well! He remained good and faithful to the Master, and now the Master was King... and the King would make the Servant a Governor over five cities.

What about Servant 3?

- [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.'](#)

So there you see, Servant 3 agreed with the Delegation... he did not want this man to rule over him. He viewed the Master as a hard, unethical man; he accused him of reaping where he did not sow... that is, theft.

[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.' "](#)

- Let's remember that Luke's Gospel is emphasizing the Kingship and Authority of Christ.
- Let's consider these two stories together - Zaccheaus, the Chief Tax Collector, and this parable of a King going away to receive his Kingdom.
- Let's also recognize that Jesus told this parable because they were supposing that the Kingdom would come immediately.

What might a proper interpretation be? I suggest that Luke told these accounts as he did to show Zacchaeus as an example of true conversion, evidenced by his dramatic shift in loyalty. Then, the parable of the Minas shows us that when Christ would soon go away to a far country, Heaven, and would return to receive a visible Kingdom. In the meantime, our LOYALTY and Fidelity would be tested.

- Some will prove they never really liked Jesus anyway, and they do not wish for Him to rule over them.
- Others will live as if Jesus were already ruling and reigning; they will make decisions as if He had never left.
- When Jesus does return, the first group will suffer greatly, and the second will be rewarded with a tremendous promotion.

DOES THAT MAKE SENSE? NOW, let's make it personal... let's turn it from a lesson to a sermon. I see at least :

Three Things that Reveal our Loyalty:

1. **Eagerness Reveals Loyalty -**

Did you notice that when Jesus told Zacchaeus that he was coming to his house, Zacchaeus eagerly got down from that tree to properly host the Lord?

What about you? Do you eagerly pursue fellowship with Christ? Have you moved from HAVE TO obedience to GET TO obedience? What is the difference? Well, a lost person or a very immature believer might say... I have to have my time with God, and I am supposed to. But when one meets Christ, the disciplines of the faith are no longer burdensome requirements but rather joyful means of grace.

David understood this when he wrote, **Psalm 42:1–2 (ESV)**

¹ As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

Eagerness reveals Loyalty...

2. **Criticism Reveals Loyalty**

When Zacchaeus's reputation was damaging Jesus's reputation, he quickly made that pronouncement of repentance and restitution.

How do you respond when your reputation affects the reputation of Jesus? Do you consider that? Is your default position always fidelity to the King? Or do you tweak your message as if he weren't really the King at all?

3. **Distance Reveals Loyalty**

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

This is where it gets real. Let's suppose that Jesus returned tomorrow, touched down on the Mount of Olives, made his way onto the Temple Mount, and Declared His Kingship - ended the battle of Armageddon in about 2 seconds.

What would change for you? Would you quit your job? Would you change churches? Would your social media habits shift? Would you stop looking at some things? Would you start spending time in the Word?

If you say, "Pastor, I would literally change everything if that actually happened," then friend, I have bad news... that answer reveals you don't think it's going to happen. You are with that crowd that says I don't want this man ruling over us.

I also have some good news - Jesus is here, and he commands you to come down out of that tree; he wishes to stay at your place. He offers you an olive branch of peace. But remember how the story ends...

It ends in terrible judgment for those who disbelieved during the interim period and tremendous rewards for those who were faithful.