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## Small Group Notes - Luke 19:11-27: Spiritual Stewardship

**Opening Discussion Question: Was there ever a time in life when you regretted the lack of effort you put into a specific task or relationship? What might have been different if you had put in your best effort?**

- Context: Jesus has predicted his death, ministered to a blind man and a tax collector along the way. He has been collecting a gaggle of people in his call to follow him, and he has just pledged to join Zaccheus (the tax collector) at his house for the evening, a “reckless” act of social and political sabotage.
  - This moment with Zaccheus was the backstory for the parable we will look at today. Here’s why:
    - It was a Roman official’s (censor’s) job to collect taxes but he would bid out the task to a publican, who would employ tax collectors. These guys might adjust amounts to cover the cost of collection, but it was perfectly legal and sanctioned by the censors.
    - Taxes during that day included but were not limited to: a 1% income tax, import/export taxes, crop taxes (1/10 of grain, 1/5 of wine, fruit and olive oil) to feed the occupying military, sales tax, property tax, and an emergency tax.<sup>1</sup>
- If the Jews wanted anything, it was to see their taxes stay in their own country, with their own king and their own religious system. Their desire was for Jesus to march up to Jerusalem and set up his kingdom and begin a revolution! Jesus was speaking to that inner desire when he told the next parable.

**Discussion Question: Have you ever felt frustrated by taxation? As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America, how deep does the hate for taxation run in our national DNA based on our history?**

- **Luke 19:11–27[11] As they heard these things, 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. [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**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unrv.com/economy/roman-taxes.php>

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.'

- A mina was equal to one hundred drachmas, or several months wages.<sup>2</sup> A drachma was the greek equivalent to the Roman denarius, which was about 1 days worth of wages.<sup>3</sup>
- This would have sounded so familiar to their feelings about tax collectors. Jesus wanted to conjure those feelings in an effort to help the people see what was in their own hearts about his own kingdom, the spiritual kingdom.
- [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.'
- All parables trace commonly understood ideas within the Jewish culture.
- When reading a parable, always connect it to the audience and situation for proper understanding. This parable is not primarily about: Using your abilities for God and getting heavenly rewards

**Discussion Question: How have you heard this parable used and explained in the past?**

- This parable is not solely about ministry or gift stewardship. It's not-not about that either. This parable is about relational or spiritual stewardship!
- **This parable is primarily about: How we approach our relationship with God. Your relationship with God will be as deep and rich as you are willing to allow.**

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<sup>2</sup> The ESV Reformation Study Bible (Ligonier Min: Lake Mary, FL. 2005) 1492

<sup>3</sup> ibid. 1485

- If your goal is to keep God off your back by meeting the lowest standard, then that is what you will experience with God. Not because God offers you less, but because you receive less. I hope you desire more, and invest more!
- Somewhere in the shadow of the crowd to whom Jesus was speaking lurked the religious leaders keeping an eye on things. These men had been entrusted to care for the souls of the nation, yet they had consistently proven to themselves to be focused on control, authority and personal gain. The religious leaders stood between the people and God, just like the tax collectors stood between the people and Rome. In the minds of the religious leaders, they saw themselves as the contract holders of God’s blessing, and this had caused their hearts to live in a contractual relationship with God. (I’ll explain what I mean by that in a moment.)
- Jeremy mentioned this passage last Sunday. It comes from another financial parable similar to this one in response to the criticism of a woman with a poor reputation washing Jesus’ feet! Let’s read it again: **Luke 7:44–48 [44] Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. [45] You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. [46] You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. [47] Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” [48] And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” (ESV)**
  - Ha! What an insult to Simon for Jesus to look at the woman while speaking to Simon. It was an open illustration of God’s regard for those who live contractually with God, instead of lovingly!
  - **A “contractual” relationship with God see’s our relationship as an input/output management of God’s expectations.**

**Discussion Questions: What are some other examples of “benign” contractual relationships? What are some examples of delightful relationships? What are some ways our relationships struggles not to be “contractual”? What does a relationship with God rooted in delight tend to look like?**

- A truly loving relationship with God means that we realize we can never “put in” enough effort to ever repay Jesus for what he did for us, therefore we live in a

perpetual declaration of gratefulness and desire to be even closer to the a God who would love us so deeply.

- A great illustration of this is when a husband gives his wife flowers on a regular Tuesday. It is not valentines day, or an anniversary or even her birthday. It's just a regular Tuesday without any dutiful obligations or expectations. The husband is telling his wife: "I just long to show you my love in delight, not duty!" The Gospel shows God's endless Tuesday flowers toward us, undeserving as we are. Are we loving God in return out of duty, or delight? They are much different.<sup>4</sup>
- Both duty and delight communicate love by the way. One of the things my wife thanks me for often is the reality of my efforts to provide faithfully, serve my family and take care of common every day needs. Many of these tasks are part of the duty of being a dad and husband, they also communicate love. But sometimes my wife just needs a random hug and to hear that I love her. I've heard stories of husbands not communicating love with words. Their attitude is "I told her I loved her when I married her. If something changes, I'll let her know!" A husband like that might have real love, but it doesn't communicate the feeling or desire of love.
- When we add a desire to communicate our love for God to the duty of loving God, we receive the benefit of experiencing a complete picture of what love looks and feels like.

**Discussion Questions: What are some tangible ways to show delight in someone you love? How can this translate into our relationship with showing our delight in God?**

- **[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.'"** (ESV)

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<sup>4</sup> I believe this illustration was probably gleaned from either a sermon or book by John Piper.

- Wow! Jesus went for the jugular in this parable. It is not unloving to give hard truth when your desire is to save someone's life! Jesus was strategically severe in this passage, because he wanted the hearer to understand that **there were (are) two types of people listening to his message:**
  - **1. Those who see God's investment in their life and respond by being fully invested in their relationship with Jesus which results in a deeply meaningful relationship him. (Vs 17, 19, 24)**
    - How do we steward this relationship? By loving God with our heart, soul, mind and strength and loving our neighbor the same way we love ourself. (Luke 10:27)
    - The only difference between the 10 mina guy and the 5 mina guy is the amount bestowed. We could read into this, but the point is that the 5 mina guy cared about the investment made into his life, and he responded faithfully.
    - Does God lay more weight of investment on some than others? Without splitting hairs and making too much of this part of the parable, there is a nuanced truth in Christ's teaching that God does expect more response from some. That's the very nature of his statement to Simon in Luke 7 that those who have been forgiven much love much. I believe there are two truths we can glean from this minute detail:
      - 1. Some of us recognize the depth of what we have been forgiven (a 10 mina debt as compared to a 5 mina debt) and we respond with deep gratefulness and dedication in response. The apostle Paul lived this way as he recognized how unworthy he was to be an Apostle.<sup>5</sup>
      - 2. Some of us have been given larger weights of investment in our lives to use for God's glory, and God is expecting us to be faithful with that investment. That investment might be financial, or influential or ministerial. This is the stewardship idea that so many people focus in on with this parable, and it is a very true and real part of this teaching. If God has blessed you with resources or ministry, it was always ever and only about him, not about you. The point of this detail is that God had the same expectation of the 5 mina guy as the 10 mina guy.
  - My view of the 10 mina guy is that Jesus was drawing a connection right back to the deeply indebted Zaccheus who was about to receive the blessing of

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<sup>5</sup> | Timothy 1:15

Jesus' presence at his house. I see the 10 mina guy as a guy who recognized the deep indebtedness of forgiveness. He was a guy who saw the delight of responding to the God's grace.

**- 2. Those living a strictly contractual relationship with Jesus, which will result in a dead and damned relationship with God. (Vs 20-27)**

- The reality is that when the Gospel is preached, there are always people who think the scales can be balanced in their behavior and dedication enough to keep God and others happy.
  - Without the understanding of our deep indebted reality that we can never truly repay Jesus for what he has done for us, then we will also never fully understand the delight of responding to God's mercy, grace and love with delight filled worship and obedience!
- In his book *The Pleasures of God*, John Piper states: "And this is the gospel: "The gospel of the glory of the happy God." It is good news that God is gloriously happy. No one would want to spend eternity with an unhappy God. If God is unhappy then the goal of the gospel is not a happy goal, and that means it would be no gospel at all. But, in fact, Jesus invites us to spend eternity with a happy God when he says, "Enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:23). Jesus lived and died that his joy —God's joy— might be in us and our joy might be full (John 15:11; 17:13). Therefore the gospel is "the gospel of the glory of the happy God."<sup>6</sup>

**Group Discussion: Talk about both of these implications from Christ's parable and why they are important to worship, evangelism and serving others.**

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<sup>6</sup> John Piper, *The Pleasures of God*. (Multnomah: Sisters, OR. 2000) 26