

INTRODUCTION:

One of my favorite movies of all-time is Lord of the Rings. In this story, as evil is about to conquer all, the royalty of men stop it in its track and good wins the day. However, through corruption, the line of these men dies out... or so the world thought. In the meantime, the steward of the kingdom took over the reign - until the true king returned to the throne. In the movie, this steward does a poor job with the responsibility given to him. He puts people in harms way, specifically one of his sons, and acts out in fits of madness throughout his time on the throne. He is power hungry, seeking to further his reign, and obsessive over his authority. In the end, his reigns ends... the true king returns to the throne and a new steward, the old stewards faithful son, is put in his place.

We all love a good story. Our hearts are captured when we hear of the hero conquering and good winning; and our hearts mourn when we hear of a leader doing a poor job and driving their people into a worse state than before. This speaks to our heart because we are a part of the great story! The story of our redemption through the hero Jesus Christ; unfortunately in this story, there are many bad stewards, which we can have a tendency of being. In the in-between, while we wait for the King to return, we are challenged to be good stewards of our time, our talents, and our treasure... and it will cost us. But the cost will, and is, well worth it - to be a vessel in the Kingdom of God for His glory!

Today, we are going to explore a parable that Jesus tells in Luke 19:11-27. This parable contains a hero (the king), stewards (the servants), and bystanders (the citizens). Knowing the Jesus is the King and the Hero, I wonder where you will see yourself in this story? We will be challenged today with what a life of faithful stewardship looks like while we wait for the King to return... and how it's worth every cost involved. Let's read this story - just a heads up, it's a little long!

Q: What is your gut reaction to this story? Let's look at the overall story, the three highlighted servants, the bystanders, and the Kings response to it.

The Overall Story:

Those listening to this story supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. As Dr. Darrell Bock points out,

"Luke has a two-stage view of the kingdom: it arrives now but comes in fullness later."

The Kingdom came be easily defined as God's rule over God's people. Many following Jesus believed that as the Messiah promised, that He would establish an earthly reign - while this would happen, it wouldn't be until Jesus' 2nd return. The King in the story left to receive a kingdom and then return. This is would have been a significant alluding to for the Jewish setting that Jesus was telling this story in because in 40 B.C., Herod the Great journeyed to Mark Antony to receive kingship; a journey that many would be familiar with a king journeying to a distant land to receive his kingdom. So this concept wasn't foreign.

While leaving, this king leaves ten of his servants with a minas each and tells them to "engage in business until I come". In this context, a minas was worth about four months wages. This was not a lot of money that was entrusted to the servants - but the point was that the King expected them to engage with it in business and be faithful with what was given to them. Once the King returns, three servants are highlighted out of the ten. Let's examine each one.

The First Servant:

The first servant comes to the King as says, "the minas you gave me made ten more" - this is an 1000% profit! The Kings reply is commendation of the servant, as well as being given authority over ten cities in the Kingdom. Why? Because he was faithful with very little.

The Second Servant:

The second servant comes to the King and says, "the minas you gave me made five more" -this is a 500% profit! The King once again honors faithfulness... and gives more authority to the second servant than he had before. Notice here that the key point is not how much is made, but the faithfulness in which is was invested. When we hear these two, our immediate reaction is to think that the first servant was more faithful than the second one - but the King doesn't make that distinction.

The "Other" Servant:

The other servant is a loaded case... first off, it is interesting that Jesus names this servant the "other" servant instead of the "third" servant. This is to distinguish this servant from the other two... there is no need to talk about the other seven servants not mentioned; this accomplishes the contrast between the faithful and the not so faithful. This "other" servant first comes to the King with information that he has done nothing with the minas; in fact, he simply hid it in a handkerchief. He then goes on to defend why he did this... because he perceives the King as a severe man. Based off what the King does, it would seem this perception could be accurate... but not in the way that the "other" servant thought. The perceived severity was fully justified by the King; the servant didn't see it as justified. The servant also thinks the things the King does are perverse. This shows many things:

1. The servant did not know the King
2. The servant did not trust the King
3. The servant did not listen to the King

And yet, he was associated with him and was one of the servant's given minas to do business with. This is a gross interpretation of the character of the King, who was seen as being just and commending towards the faithful servants moments before, even going so far as rewarding them what they hadn't been promised. The King would go on to to reprove the servant, condemning him for such a lack of misunderstanding about who the King is and not at the very least putting the minas in the bank to collect interest. Then the King would do something that would rouse those listening - He commands that the minas that the servant had would be taken from him and given to the servant who made ten minas! He then proceeds to say two intense things:

4. To everyone who has, more will be given; to those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.
5. Those who did not want the King to reign, who are His enemies, will be slaughtered.

Okay, wow. That's a lot. How are you feeling right now? Is this story invoking some emotion in you? What some of you have probably deduced is that the King in this story is Jesus... which makes us the servants or the bystanders. What can we learn from these examples?

FAITHFULNESS IN THE SMALL THINGS:

First, we see a commonality in the first and second servant: faithfulness in the small things. These men took what was given to them and they applied it faithfully. They listened to the King's imploring and

responded in the correct way. An important thing to note here - the King does not condemn the second servant because he made less than the first... rather, the King was focused on faithfulness.

In our own lives, our King, Jesus, has entrusted many things to us. He has given us time on this earth: time to be among family, time to engage with others at work, time to be involved in the church body... time to be faithful with the time we are given.

He has given us talents. Talents that are shown through our passions and our giftings. Talents that are encapsulated in our God-given purpose. Talents that are not meant to be wasted, but meant to be lived in to.

He has given us treasure. Did you know that if you own a car, you are among the top 5% of wealth in the world? I was moving on Friday and just thought... wow, how the Lord has provided for me. It almost feels like too much. We all know someone in our lives who is significantly wealthier than us, and people who are worse off financially than we are. The point is not about how much we have monetarily - the point is our faithfulness with those blessings. We see Jesus affirm this concept later on in Luke 21:1-4:

"Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

It's not the amount that is given that is commended, but her heart behind it. The King calls us to be faithful with blessing others through our finances in our personal life and in the church... and part of that faithfulness is responding with a joyful heart and pointing people through our stewardship towards the King. This makes me think of the time audit. As I have considered the ways I'm stewarding my time, I have been convicted of how many times I spend on entertainment. I've challenged myself to take 3-4 hours back of that every week through walking and praying, reading, or grabbing a meal with someone. I want to be a good steward of my time... not because I need to do enough to get to Jesus, but because my relationship to the King moves me to good stewardship.

Q: In what way is the King calling you to be faithful in the small things?

We are challenged to do this. In fact, we are doing this at Fellowship Dallas: we are calling each other to live out our God-given purpose in Christ every day. Maybe for you, the next step to that is to realize that a God-given purpose is not just one large moment... it's many small ones. It will cost you your time to serve and be present; it will cost you your talent to lean into to your giftings and use them; it will cost you your treasure to invest where you're planted. And it will be worth every cost. This life is meant to be abundant in Christ - this is part of how we do it. When we abide in Him, these things move to the forefront of our minds.

You might also know the King and be struggling right now. You might be in this room just trying to survive. Our King is generous, loving, and kind. He sees your heart. He knows your steps. As motivated as we are to be good stewards of our time, talents and treasure in the in-between, the King doesn't look down on us as we struggle through it and try to figure it out. When you know the King, you know this to be true. Take confidence today... and a step forward.

PROXIMITY DOESN'T EQUAL INTIMACY:

The "other" servant brings a convicting point: proximity doesn't equal intimacy. This servant represents those who are associated with the King and even have responsibility among His people... and yet don't know Him. This translates to a mistrust and misunderstanding of the King. It will end with those who fall in this category believing they know Him, but even the little they have be taken away from them.

We see this example of a servant circulating among the disciples in Judas Ischariot, who would journey with Jesus for years before betraying Him to the Jewish leaders and ultimately to His death. He, among others, saw him as related to Jesus and even engaging in responsibility from Him (Judas was the treasurer of the group), yet not knowing Jesus.

Those who fall in the category of this servant are good stewards in their own terms, but not the terms of the King.

I know the King's heart breaks thinking about those who don't truly know Him. He wants everyone to know Him... to come to Him... to understand that His love extends towards all who draw near to Him. Maybe you are in this room today and you realize that you don't know the King. You've been coming to the church, doing the "right things" but have never actually entered into a relationship with Jesus. This has skewed your vision of who He is and how He implores us to live. Come to Him. Spend some time with Him. One of the greatest gifts that we can give is being known by Him - and knowing Him intimately. I am so glad that you have decided to spend time with us at Fellowship Dallas today or online, and I hope you will continue to be a part of our church family.

THERE IS NO NEUTRAL GROUND:

Lastly, there is no neutral ground with Jesus. These enemies who have openly rejected Jesus represent the Jewish leadership and individuals who would send Jesus to His gruesome death: they would reject the very King that would rule over them. Dr. Darrell Bock makes an important statement here:

"There is no neutral position in relationship to Jesus: one chooses for him and see his gracious work as unique, or one aligns against him (whether in outright rebellion or by faithless association to him)."

We live in a world where the numbers are growing daily of those who don't believe in God or outright reject Him. This can come from not believing in anything at all, or even believing in a false God. And as I think back to Kurt's sermon from last week, I can't help but think... "If you were put on trial for your faith, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" There is no neutral ground with the King. Part of our role as stewards is to point people towards Him... to show His goodness, His mercy, His grace. He is a good King.

We are not called to pursue good stewardship because we are trying to impress the King or even earn a spot with Him - through His sacrifice we already have. That's how good He is... He extends an invitation for us to come to Him and be in His presence. Many in this world today actively reject the King. I implore you to not be one of them. May your life be an example that points people to Him as you are known by Him and know Him deeply. We don't live a life of good stewardship out of trying to get into Jesus' presence, but it's through our relationship with Jesus that we are motivated to good stewardship.

ENDING:

What will this relationship to the King cost you? Everything.

It will cost you daily moments of faithfulness through with your time. Sacrificed mornings where you would rather have another hour of sleep, an evening that you spend with someone in need instead of lounging on your couch, moments of hard conversations with friends who have been led astray.

It will cost you daily moments of faithfulness with your talents. Instances of you pushing yourself out of your comfort zone to engage in a gift that God has given you. Going through a Repurposed class to explore your God-given purpose. Energy to execute.

It will cost you daily moments of faithfulness with your treasure. Giving of your God-given resources to support the church you call home. Chipping in to help a friend who is going through a hard time. The use of your space to house and help others.

This relationship to the King will cost you everything. You will give up everything... and in return receive more than you could ask, think, or imagine. He who is faithful with little, will be entrusted with much.

I love what the Kings says towards the good stewards in a paralleled parable Matthew 25: "Enter into the joy of your Master." It's a joy to come to Him, be known by Him, and be used by Him. For His glory... not ours. I pray that you lean into that today.

And for those of you today who find yourself in the shoes of the other servant, or even those opening rejecting Him, let me tell you about my King. He is kind, compassionate, and loving; He is gentle and lowly in heart; He is just and righteous. He is a servant-king, who took my place on a cross I should have been on. What kind of King would do that? The King, Jesus Christ. He wants to know you today. He wants you to know Him. He wants to be your King, Master, and Lord. He wants to entrust to you what you will be faithful with. For what it costs... it is infinitely more so worth it.