

Sermon for November 6, 2016 - Final Judgement

Luke 19:11-27 (NIV84)

Theme: Be Faithful Stewards of the King's Mina

- I. The King commands faithful stewardship
- II. The King rewards faithful stewardship
- III. The King condemns unfaithful stewardship

¹¹ While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. ¹² He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. ¹³ So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' ¹⁴ "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' ¹⁵ "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. ¹⁶ "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' ¹⁷ "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' ¹⁸ "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' ¹⁹ "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' ²⁰ "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹ I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' ²² "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? ²³ Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' ²⁴ "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' ²⁵ "'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' ²⁶ "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. ²⁷ But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them-- bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"

What will you say when the almighty God asks you on Judgement Day what you did with the treasure He entrusted to your care? "Treasure?" you might ask, "What treasure?" Don't you know about the treasure God has given you? I'll give you a little hint as to what it is: it's the only thing that offers you true forgiveness, life and salvation. The treasure is His Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

Our sermon text for today is a parable Jesus once told, urging us to faithfully use his Gospel. Let's meditate on his instruction, under the theme: **Be faithful stewards of the**

King's mina because 1) *the king commands faithful stewardship*, 2) *he rewards faithful stewardship*, and 3) *he will condemn unfaithful stewardship*

Part One: The King commands faithful stewardship

¹² [Jesus] *said: A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.*

Jesus is the man of noble birth, who (at his ascension) went off to the far country of heaven to be appointed as king - ruling over everything on behalf of God the Father.

So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas.

A mina was the equivalent of what a common laborer would make in 3 months. Money, however, is not the point of the parable. In Scripture the number "10" usually represents completeness. The 10 minas and 10 servants, therefore, represent the complete treasure of the Gospel, which God has entrusted to all believers.

'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'

The king's command to put His money to work is similar to the command Jesus gave to all his disciples at his ascension regarding the Gospel: *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*" (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV84)

In other words, Jesus didn't just give us his Gospel so that we can feel good about our future and live our lives however we want. No, he entrusted the Gospel to us so that we might put it to work, so that it might earn more souls for heaven. Yes, our duty as servants of Jesus is to invest God's Word; but how do we do that? The answer is quite easy: we invest the Gospel by simply confessing it to others.

Now it stands to reason that we need to know what God's Word says before we can confess it. Our first priority, therefore, is to study the Bible: for both the strengthening of our own faith, and for the ability to call others to repent and believe in Jesus for salvation. You see, an amazing thing happens when we study God's Word: the Holy Spirit awakens a desire in us to tell others the good news of God's forgiving love. The more we meditate on the meaning of Christ's cross, the more courageous we become in sharing this life-saving Gospel. We don't want our family, friends and neighbors lost to hell when they could so easily be saved. And when we share the good news with them through our words and actions, we are putting to work the treasure Christ entrusted to our care.

¹⁴ *"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'*

Even though Jesus sacrificed himself to pay for the sins of all, the world still rejects him. Why? Some don't want to repent of their sins. Others don't want to believe that they need a Savior. The wicked world hates its Savior; and, since the Savior is not seen on this earth, the world often directs its hatred towards us: his servants. Because of this, we face the pressure to stop sharing the Gospel with others – afraid of how people might mock or reject us.

Yet, Christ encourages us to remain faithful stewards of His Gospel. Why? First and foremost because he commands it. And, as we will see next, the LORD promises to graciously reward our faithful stewardship.

Part Two: The King rewards faithful stewardship

He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

Jesus is coming back at the end of time as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to deliver and reward his faithful followers – just as he promised in Scripture. He will call each believer to give an account of what we did with His Gospel. The first two servants represent Christians, who faithfully put God's Word to work by sharing it with others. The results even astonished them.

¹⁶ *"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'*

It is important to interpret what "the earned minas" represent in the parable, in order to properly understand it. They are not the number of people who come to faith through our witness. No, rather they represent our faithfulness in studying and sharing the Gospel – regardless of whether or not people believe. God doesn't command us to convert people. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. The LORD simply wants us to be faithful in sharing his Gospel.

Notice that the servant doesn't claim to have done anything to earn the extra minas. No, he gives all glory to the king's mina. In a similar way, we too (if we remain faithful in studying and sharing the Gospel) will stand before God on the last day in awe over all the people God's Word touched through our witness of his grace! With Luther we will confess, "We did nothing LORD, your Word did everything!"

¹⁷ *"Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'*

Jesus will show his joy over believers on the last Day by graciously rewarding them for their faithful stewardship of His Gospel. We in no way deserve such a reward because the Word did all the work. Nevertheless, Jesus promises to give faithful Christians blessings and honor that far exceed our wildest imaginations. Why? Because that's the kind of God He is – merciful, loving and kind.

¹⁸ “The second [servant] came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’ ¹⁹ “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’

Even though the second servant's return was less (signifying that he wasn't quite as faithful as the first) notice that the King still rejoices over what his faithful witness accomplished and rewards him accordingly. And even though his reward is less than what the first servant received, it is still far greater than he could have ever imagined!

The point is this: Jesus is coming soon to graciously reward his followers who faithfully study his Gospel and confess it to the world. This amazing grace is sufficient enough to motivate faithful stewardship. However, since Jesus also knows that we all have a sinful nature that tries to keep us from using His Word, he gives us the following example of what a person's unfaithfulness will reap.

Part Three: King condemns unfaithful stewardship

“Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.’

This servant represents people who are Christians in name only: people who claim to be believers when it suits their purpose, but don't actually study, believe or share the Gospel. Even though they may claim otherwise, they don't really care what happens to the lost. They, in fact, don't even care about Jesus. All they really care about is themselves, and their actions prove it.

“His master replied, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’

The servant's excuse for hiding his mina was nothing but an insult. Regardless of how hard a boss is, any decent employee would at least do the minimum his employer asked him to do. This wicked servant didn't even do that, thereby revealing His absolute hatred towards the King.

But let's go back to the wicked servant's original claim: was the King a hard, evil man? Didn't he just graciously reward his servants with wealth and honor far beyond anything they could have ever earned or deserved? You see, the devil, world and our sinful nature are constantly trying to get us to think that God is evil and unjust. We may hear people say things like, "If your God is all powerful and good, why does He allow evil in the world?" or, "Your God says homosexuality is a sin? I don't want a God who doesn't accept people the way they are!" In saying such things, people are either trying to justify their sins or accuse God of being the author of human evil. They become like the 3rd servant in this parable: blaming God for the judgment their own sins brought upon themselves.

Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' 'He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.

The unfaithful servant is judged: his mina is taken away and given to the man with ten. This act not only shows God's justice, but also His grace. He was so pleased with the faithfulness of the first servant that He graciously kept on giving him more, thereby showing that those who faithfully use God's Word will receive more and more blessings!

At the same time, what a horrible judgement for the wicked servant! He lost the only thing that could save his soul from hell. He lost the Gospel.

But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"

Jesus is certainly a loving Savior, who died for the sins of the whole world. He truly takes no pleasure in the death of anyone. He wants all people to be saved by coming to a knowledge of the truth. At the same time, Jesus is also just. If a person refuses salvation by refusing to believe in Jesus, he will be condemned. Christ will judge such people – not because he takes pleasure in it, but because in their unbelief they refuse the forgiveness, life and salvation Jesus won for them by means of his cross. In doing so, such people choose to remain enemies of Christ – even though God offered them peace. As enemies of heaven, therefore, they will be condemned.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: as Christians, you bear the name of Christ. You have been washed clean from all sin in Holy Baptism. Through faith in the Gospel you have been clothed with Christ's righteousness. You belong to the LORD, because he mercifully saved you.

And he has also entrusted you with a great treasure. Don't be like the last servant in our text – hiding the Gospel from both ourselves and the world. No, be faithful steward of the King's Mina by faithfully studying and sharing the Gospel. Why? Because the LORD both commands it and promises to graciously reward our faithful use of his Word. Even though our witness of His Gospel might not seem like it's accomplishing much, the LORD promises that it is never in vain. His Word will accomplish what he desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it. All this will be revealed when He comes again at the end of time. Therefore we pray: "Come soon, Lord Jesus." Amen.