

Luke 19:11-27 (NIV) 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.’”

Dear friends in our Savior,

Ignorance is bliss. It can be, can’t it? If you don’t know what is going on, you have nothing to worry about. If I don’t know what my kids are doing while they are away at college, it won’t bother me. If I don’t know what is going on under the hood of my car, then I won’t have to pay anyone big money to fix it. If I don’t go to the doctor, then nothing will be wrong. If I play ignorant, then nothing will bother me. And this thought rules spiritually in the minds of many people today as well. If I pretend that God doesn’t exist, then my conscience won’t bother me. If I ignore the possibility of standing before God in judgment one day, then I can act however it is I want and I’ve got no problem

While ignorance may be bliss, it doesn’t change reality. Whether you go to the doctor or not, you may still have an illness that is terminal and take your life. Whether you believe in Judgment Day or not, Jesus tells us today (and in many other places of scripture) that this world is going to end one day and all people are going to have to stand before him in judgment. Not many in our world like to hear about this. Not many want to accept this and often that is because they have no answer ready for the time when they will stand before God. This is why we are thankful today. Today God shares with us the realities that will come on Judgment Day so that we can be informed and ready to stand face to face before our God. We can stand confidently before our Lord and know exactly what will happen on that day. We will be, **“Home, Where We are Perfectly Safe.”**

This parable is pretty straightforward in its interpretation. The “man of noble birth” is Jesus. The distant kingdom where he went to be crowned king is heaven. The servants that are left on this earth are believers. The treasure he left is the gospel message. And his return is Judgment Day. What is evident from the beginning is that the man who went away to be crowned king had every intention of returning to his kingdom. Before he left, he entrusted 10 of his servants with 10 minas. A mina equaled about three month’s wages. It is a smaller amount than other parables talk about, but it is still a substantial amount of money. And before he left, he gave them a command, *“Put this money to work until I come back.”* He wanted his servants to use the money that he gave to them in ways that would be prosperous. He didn’t want them to sit around and be lazy and wait for him to return. He wanted them to be busy and active until he returned. The will of the nobleman is clear—put the money to work until I get back.

And this, my friends is exactly what happened when Jesus left this earth. There were many who did not want to see him become king. But he did. And he achieved the victory that made him king by sacrificing his life and rising from the grave three days later. He left this world in a victory celebration at his Ascension into heaven. And the same Jesus promised that he would return again one day in all of his power and glory as the supreme Lord and King. But before he left, Jesus entrusted to us a mission. He left us a treasure and told us to put it to work. Matthew records Jesus saying, *“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizingand teaching...(Matthew 28:19-20).* Mark records Jesus saying, *“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.* (Mark 16:15.) John records Jesus saying, *“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”* And finally Luke records Jesus saying, *“You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.* (Acts 1:8)” The mission that Jesus has laid before us is rather clear: we are to be active in spreading and sharing the treasure of the Gospel until Jesus comes again! God does not want his people to be complacent in their faith. He does not want them to solely be consumers of his word. He does not want us to sit back and become lazy with his word. He wants us to recognize the great treasure we have in his word and to be active in hearing the word and sharing the word until he comes back to this earth.

For us as God’s people, it is essential that we evaluate ourselves to be certain that we are prepared to meet our Savior when he comes again. How are you doing with the treasure that God has given to you? Are you putting to work the things with which he has entrusted you for the furthering of his kingdom? Or are you hiding them in a handkerchief and keeping them all to yourself? There are many different ways and areas that God’s people can serve faithfully as they anticipate his return. We can serve God directly by actively hearing his word, following and obeying His word, and speaking this word of salvation to others. We do that by inviting friends, relatives, neighbors and acquaintances to come to God’s house and hear about their Savior. We do that by sitting down with them and sharing with them the hope that we have in our heart. We indirectly put this treasure to work with our giving to support the work of the church. We as God’s people are to use all our resources to carry out the work of the kingdom. It is essential that we as God’s people as we ponder the reality of Jesus’ second coming and the day of judgment take the time individually and collectively to evaluate. Are we putting to work the treasure which God has entrusted to us as we anticipate his return?

Here is why this is so important. Notice first what the king did when he returned to his servants. The first thing he did was to reckon with them concerning the trust he had given them. In today's language, he followed up with his servants to hold them accountable to the command that he had given them. When Jesus comes back he will hold people accountable for the trust that he has given to them. Scripture is very clear that Jesus will demand an accounting for what we have done and how we have used the gifts that he entrusted to us.

You will note there are only 2 results that will come from this. To those who had faithfully put to work the treasure entrusted to them, the master rewarded them well. I think what is interesting to note, especially in today's world where "the biggest is the best," is the standard that the king used to judge them. He did not say that the one who earned 10 was better than the one who earned 5. He rewarded them on faithfulness. We have said it many times and I am sure that we will say it many times more in the future. God does not judge us on the number of people we converted or kept in the faith. He judges us on how faithful we have been with the trust he gave us. This faithfulness can be measured in different ways. Are we being faithful to the message as it is proclaimed? In other words, are we proclaiming the exact message that God gave to us or are we adding our own thoughts and opinions of what is right? We also measure faithfulness as we look at our efforts to communicate this message. Are we making the most of every opportunity to share Jesus with others? Are we trying to find more ways to reach more people? Are we (and we here means not just the church as an organization but each one of us individually) actively trying to build more bridges with people and actively seeking more ways to make contact with them so that we can share Jesus with them? And when we make these contacts, are we actually sharing Jesus? When we are talking about sharing the treasure of the Gospel that God has given to us, we need to be reminded that the results are in God's hands. Sometimes, when his word is shared, it brings in 10 minas of interest, as it did on Pentecost day when God brought 3,000 to faith with the sermon Peter preached. Other times, it brings interest of 5 minas. God doesn't judge the effectiveness of his word. That is up to him. What he judges is the faithfulness of servants with the word that he has entrusted them. And to those who have faithfully followed the commands of God, he blesses them with the reward that he has promised, eternal life with him in heaven where we will be at home to live with him forever.

The other result of Jesus' accounting on the last day is quite a bit scarier. *He replied... '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.'*" This is not the only place where God shares with us the realities of what will happen to those who are not faithful with what he has given to them. He will send them to hell. This is hard for many people to come to grips with. Yet scripture is clear. Those who are not faithful to what God has entrusted them will be banished from his sight forever in hell. Those who reject his word, who are not faithful in hearing his word, who keep his word to themselves and who are complacent and lazy with his word will be removed from his sight, barred from entering into heaven, and will spend their eternities separated from him in hell. We can plead ignorance and pretend that Jesus doesn't say this or isn't serious about this, but that isn't going to help us on the last day. We do better to accept the reality it is and make the adjustments that are necessary to stand before God with confidence.

The scary part for each one of us is that when we evaluate ourselves against the standard God has set, we are forced to admit we have not been faithful to God at all times. We have neglected the hearing of God's Word. We don't have 100% attendance here today. We didn't last week and sad to say we won't next week. We have not been faithful in hearing God's word. We have not been faithful in following God's word and obeying what God says. We like to add our own twists or opinions to what God says. We like to pick and choose what to follow and what we don't want to follow. And at times we have blatantly told God we don't care what he says. We have not been faithful in sharing God's word with others. We leave God's house on Sunday happy and satisfied with what God has told us and promised to us. But we don't share that with others. We are eager to tell them about our trip to the north or the new flowers in our gardens. But we keep to ourselves what God has done for us in Jesus. We are afraid people might laugh or reject us. We fail to trust in God's power to do the impossible work of conversion. And so we keep that word deep inside of us. We sit on our backsides and tell ourselves that we are so busy in our own lives that there are enough other people to take care of these things. We are quick to criticize, grumble and complain about what should be getting done but isn't, yet we offer no solutions to the problem nor do we step forward to lead the way. We talk about what should be done, yet that never materializes into action.

With this recognition we are forced to cower in fear before our God who is coming back to this earth to demand an accounting of us. We are forced simply to cry out as the Apostle Paul, "*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death (Romans 7:24?)*" Yet the answer to that question is the same for us as it was for Paul. "*Thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:57).*" For these and all of our sins, Jesus offered himself to be punished in our place. Though wretched and despicable creatures, Jesus offers to us his holiness. He gives us the beautiful robe of his perfection and righteousness that we wear to stand before our God. This is our confidence as we look forward to the last day. We need not fear God's judgment. We need not be terrorized by the thought of Jesus returning. He has given to us all that we need to live with him forever. For us, Jesus' return will simply mean that we get to go home where we will be perfectly safe with him for all eternity. The one who earned salvation for us is the one who will be judging us. And as we stand before our judge, the answer is simple, "Jesus, you have done it for me." As Martin Luther said, "Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, I am your sin. You have become what you were not and have made me what I was not."

Ignorance is not bliss. It is far better to face the realities before us so that we can meet them head on. The best news we could hear is that Jesus has already dealt with our realities to make our future one of joy and delight. Because of this joy, we have every reason to serve our God with great zeal and enthusiasm as we anticipate his return to this earth. Judgment Day is coming my friends. Through Jesus we are prepared to meet our judge. Let us continue to work with the treasure of the Gospel while it is still daytime so that more might know the joy of our Savior, be prepared to meet him and go home to heaven where they will be perfectly safe. Amen.