

To Be A Good Steward

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When the boss takes a holiday he asks you to step up into his role, to take responsibility and a greater level of responsibility in your work for the duration of time that he is away, so it is for us as Christians, how God has left us with the responsibility that while our Lord is away, while he is not here with us, he has given us instructions, commandments, he's called us to be faithful, to be stewards of the gifts that he's given us. This morning I'd like to look through a parable from the Gospel of Luke. Luke 19, if you'd turn with me there, please. And I want to look at this concept here to see how as Christians, as servants of the living God, we are called to be faithful and to look at the responses that we see through this parable and for us to ask ourselves which of the characters in this parable best describes me and my walk with my Lord today.

So Luke 19 and we'll read from verse 11,

11 As they heard these things, he [that is Jesus] 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 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.' 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.' 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.'"

This parable occurs toward the end of Jesus' ministry. As a setting, Jesus has just come into the city of Jericho and he's making his way finally up to Jerusalem for the triumphal entry which follows directly here in Luke's account and then for the Passion Week, that week of his crucifixion. So in this time and leading into this point as we trace through the Gospel of Luke specifically here, what we've seen is an increasing focus from Jesus on the kingdom of God that is to come, what that looks like, what that means, what the disciples are to expect.

We see in verse 17 that the Pharisees come to him and ask Jesus, "When will the kingdom of God come?" And Jesus takes some time to explain to the Pharisees that it's not going to come in a way that they can see now, for the kingdom of God is already in their midst. You see, Jesus the King is already standing in their midst and the Pharisees, they rejected that. You see, as I mentioned on Good Friday, you see the Jews were looking for a Messiah who would come who would liberate them from the oppression of Rome. They were looking for the Messiah to come and bring the new exodus. Like the Jews had been taken out of Egypt from under the oppression of the Pharaohs, now they were looking for this freedom from the bondage that they were under from the Romans. So this is why not only the Pharisees but the disciples themselves are looking for this physical manifestation of the kingdom of God here on earth and are looking for it immediately. This is why in verse 11 Luke tells us that the reason that Jesus told this parable is because he was near to Jerusalem so Jericho is about 30 kilometers from Jerusalem, and that they supposed that the kingdom of God was to come immediately, to appear immediately.

So the purpose of the parable as we look through is to teach primarily the disciples but to the crowds listening, that the kingdom of God will not appear on earth in the way that they're thinking immediately. There will be a delay to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth and this is what we see here in verse 12. The nobleman goes out to receive authority to rule. The starting point is to look at the main characters that we see coming through this parable so we're speaking here of this nobleman, this noble born man, the Greek tells us. This is someone for the aristocracy, someone who is born into the right family, and as we see as we come into the parable, this is the man that goes away to receive for himself a kingdom, and as we go through the parable, this man represents Jesus. So like the nobleman goes away to an authority to receive the right to rule over the country, so too Jesus has returned to the Father and he waits in the presence of the Father until the Father says, "Now, my Son, you may go and claim your kingdom." He is gone and is awaiting the authority that will come for him to come and establish his kingdom here on earth.

So we come further through and we're going to see the servants. These are representative of the disciples. So the servants are those that have a close relationship, they are there with the nobleman. They have this relationship and within this relationship, there is an element of trust. This is why, as we see, that the nobleman will entrust them with this sum.

And then the third group of characters who we'll talk about very briefly today, we say we don't have time to get all the way into this parable. I could spend weeks in this parable, I think. It's the citizens. The citizens of the country and they're the ones who do not want this man to rule over them.

So as we're looking here in verse 12, the nobleman goes out to receive authority to rule. We look at that and we think that's kind of strange because you have a nobleman, he's born in the aristocracy, why would he need to go somewhere else to receive authority to rule? Well, to the Jewish mindset they understood this entirely. Remember, Israel is a vassal state of Rome so while Israel and Palestine at the time is its own province within Rome, Palestine has a king. Judea as we come to the crucifixion of Christ at this time has a Roman procurator, a Roman ruler over the province but up in Galilee where Jesus is from, we have Herod Antipas ruling up in Galilee and he is the king, but he is only king by the decree of the Roman Caesar. So what we have in 30 BC and then in 4 BC are the rulers of this area of Palestine having to go make a trip to Rome to petition Caesar to grant them the right to rule. So in 30 BC, Herod the Great goes to Rome and he petitions Mark Antony and says, "I want the kingship of Judea," and Mark Antony grants him that and so he returns then now with the stamp of approval from the Roman Caesar to say, "You may rule in this land." At the death of Herod the Great, in his will he divides his territory amongst his three sons and so in 4 BC the three sons themselves now have to make this journey to Rome in order to receive this authority to rule over these people, and at this time in 4 BC, one of the sons, Herod Archelaus, is the one who was given the rulership over Judea which includes Jerusalem and Jericho, and the first thing that Archelaus did upon his father dying was to slaughter 3,000 Jews.

So, needless to say, the Jews weren't particularly keen to have Archelaus ruling over them and so as Archelaus makes this trip up to Rome to go and petition the Caesar, Caesar Augustus, to say, "Can I, please, have the kingship that my father has left me in his will?" Mark Antony granted him the kingship in his life, now that's he's died, "May I have the kingship as well?" With him went a petition of Jews and so we see this here in verse 14 as we look through, the citizens of the land going with the petition to say, "We do not want this man to rule over us." And so this happened to Archelaus and so therefore both sides present their petition before Caesar and what Caesar does, he says, "Okay, I'm hearing both sides. Archelaus, I will give you rulership over the land but I will not give you the title of king. I will give you the title of ethnarch, ruler of the people." And that was done by Caesar as a probation for him. We think now in terms of work, we start a new job and we have a probationary period, this was the same for Archelaus. "If you can prove that you are a good ruler, I will bestow upon you the title of king." Now, Archelaus never rose to that and he only ruled for about 15 years before he was replaced and the

rulership was then taken into Rome which is why at this time now we have not a king over Judea but a Roman procurator, a ruler over Judea.

So this was familiar to the Jews to have someone have to go away to receive that stamp of authority to be able to rule, but the same applies to us here in Australia. We don't necessarily recognize it but at the end of an election, either in the state in Victoria or nationally in Australia, the leader of the winning party cannot set themselves up or herself up in the government. What they must do is they must go to the representative of the crown, that is the Governor or the Governor General, depending on state or federal level, and the role of the Governor and the Governor General is to appoint the Prime Minister of the country. So within Australia, Malcolm Turnbull has to go to the Governor General and say, "I have the majority in Parliament, I am the leader of the party that has the majority in Parliament, I request that you appoint me as the Prime Minister of Australia." The same in Victoria, Daniel Andrews when he was elected, again had to go to the Governor and say, "My party has received the most votes. I am the leader of the party. Please appoint me as Premier of the state of Victoria."

So this delegated authority is something we are all used to. It's something that we see and so it is for Jesus. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, does nothing apart from the will of the Father, and so therefore he has returned to heaven in his ascension to go to receive for himself the kingdom of earth that is his, and when he has been appointed King, when his Father says, "Now you may go and claim your kingdom," he will return. He will come back and establish his kingdom here on earth. So this is the key point of the parable. This kingdom will not be established immediately. There will be a delay in the establishment of the kingdom. There is a journey to a far country that must be done so the question becomes for the disciples, "How then am I to live in this intervening time until the kingdom of God comes upon the earth? What am I to do? How am I to honor the King while he is absent?"

So in verse 13 we see this nobleman setting in play what is to occur while he is gone. Verse 13, he calls ten of his servants to him and he gives them ten minas and says to them, "Engage in business until I come." Now, one thing to note, a lot of people look at this parable that we're looking at here in Luke 19 and then they look at the parable in Matthew 25 and say, "Well, aren't these the same story, the parable here of the minas, the parable in Matthew 25 is about talents?" The principle of the parable is the same but Jesus tells them on two separate occasions to let us not get them confused. There are subtly different perspectives that are drawn out of each. Here in Luke we're focused more about what is to occur here and now and then in the kingdom to come, Matthew looks more to the eternal state, to what comes in the final judgment.

So we're talking here about minas versus talents so a mina is a unit of money that represents about 100 days' wages, so about three months' worth of work for the average laborer. A talent, which is what Matthew refers to, is worth 60 times that. So the sum that is talked about here that Jesus speaks in this parable while not an insignificant amount of money is to some extent a trivial sum. Whereas in Matthew he talks about a very vast

sum, so while we can draw some parallels, we need to make sure we keep the two parables separate as well.

So from this parable, the master leaves the servants with a reasonable amount of money and he says, "Go. Engage in business until I come back. Take care of my affairs for me. Be faithful in what I've called you to do." And that's the question for us as Christians today is to say, "What has God entrusted us with, to do business with, to engage in business with until he returns? What is it that God has entrusted to his church that we must be about? What business? What of the Master's business must we be about?" You see, the focus of this, the key part of this, I believe, is the word of God. It's the light that comes from the word of God.

Now, it seems like sometimes an insignificant thing, the word of God, like ten minas is a reasonable amount but it's not extravagant, it's not the talents that Jesus speaks about another time. So the word of God to us can seem sometimes like something that while precious, while valuable, is it really that valuable? Well, yes it is because contained in the word is all the knowledge that we need for life and godliness. It contains in the word what we need for salvation and then as Christians it also contains for us the pattern of life that we are to follow so that we can be about our Master's business, so we can be about the business of God.

And this is reinforced by the passage in Luke 8 and in Luke 8 Jesus again tells a parable, this parable in Luke 8 is about the soils. And after the soils, the point of the soils is the word of God goes out and it falls onto different soils and then based upon the quality of the soil, we either gets weeds choking; we have people who show some level of fruit but yet fall away, or we have great fruitfulness. And at the end of that parable, from verse 16, he then tells another, "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light." Then in verse 18, the summary statement of this little parable is almost identical to the summary that we're going to get to here in Luke 19, "Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away." You see, this is talking about our truth, the truth that we have. It's talking about the witness that we have as Christians before the world.

So this is what we're to do in this intervening time before the kingdom of God comes upon this earth, is we are to be a light to the world. We are to proclaim the truth of God. We are to go out and make his kingdom known, to make the salvation that he offers freely to everyone know it. That is the business to which our Master has told us to go and engage and out of that, that also needs to affect our own lives. We can't go out and we'll see this as we come and we look at the response of the servants, is the work of the word needs to start in our own hearts because if this word does not impact our lives, if it does not change our lives as Jesus says, "By their fruit you shall know them," and we'll look at that in a moment as we come through.

Within this, first, we also need to note that the master when he calls the servants to him, does not ask them if they want this gift and whether they wish to go and transact this business for him. No, he expects them to do it. "Here is the money. Now go and engage in business."

He also gives them the same thing. Again, this is another difference between this parable and the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. In the talents, the servants are given different amounts of money: ten talents, five talents, one talent. Here all of the servants are given the same amount: one mina. This is why I think this is talking specifically about that truth that we've been given because we're all as Christians entrusted with the same word. We're all entrusted with the same Gospel message to proclaim and therefore that work is the same for all of us.

And fundamentally this gift that the master gives and this command is a test of the servants' loyalty. "Will you as my servant go out and do what I have told you to do? Will you be obedient to my command?" And this is what we see as we come into the response of the servants, the fundamental issue that separates the two types of servants that we see within this parable. Think of it this way: it's like moving into a new role in your job. I'm sure most of us have at some point in our working life, moved within the company and generally what doesn't happen is you go, "I would like to do that job," and the boss says, "Cool. Here you go." What normally happens is you put your hand up, "I'd like to do this job." And the boss says, "Fantastic. Let's find you a small something that's in that area and we'll test you out on it." How do you cope with this? If you're moving to project management, I don't throw you into a multimillion dollar project, I give you a little project to see how you handle it. If I want to go and look after a large number of staff, I don't get 300 staff under me, I might get one to start with. And based on my faithfulness, based on the way that I react, the way that we respond to that small amount that we are given, then the decision is made as to whether to actually promote and take you into that full role.

It's that probationary period and this is what God is looking for in us. He's saying, "I'm going to entrust you with a little now," because if you can't be faithful in the little, why would anyone entrust you true riches, eternal riches? But if you can be faithful in the small things, we see through Luke money, our possessions, we've also got our time, if we can be faithful in the little, then we can be entrusted with that which is greater.

Verse 14, we spoke briefly about the citizens and that as the nobleman goes out, these citizens follow after him, sending a delegation saying, "We do not want this man to reign over us." Now, directly in this parable, that's speaking of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, the religious leaders in Israel, because here was the man, he comes into Jericho, the end of Luke 18, and a blind man, he can't see, is sitting by the roadside and he hears this commotion. "What's going on?" "It's just Jesus of Nazareth." But what does Bartimaeus say? He doesn't go, "Oh, Jesus of Nazareth, hi." He's like, "No. Jesus, son of David." He knew who Jesus was though he could not see.

His spiritual eyes were open and salvation came to him but the Pharisees, they weren't. We see again in the triumphal entry which follows here in Luke, the crowds gather as Jesus rides on the donkey down into Jerusalem. They are throwing down the palm branches and they're crying out, "Hosanna to the son of David!" and the Pharisees say to Jesus, "Tell your disciples to be quiet. Here they are holding you up as Messiah. They're proclaiming you as King over Israel. You need to quiet them down because they've got it all wrong." And Jesus' response? "Even if I could make them quiet, the stones would sing out."

You see, the Pharisees would not recognize who Jesus was. They asked him all these questions, "Who are you?" Jesus responds, "Baptism of John, was it from God or from man? You want to know where I come from? Which one was John?" "Well, we don't want to get in trouble," the Pharisees said so, "We don't know." "Well, that's fine. I'm not going to tell you either because you know the answer. You know who I am." Jesus held the religious leaders responsible for knowing who he was. His whole ministry declared it. So these people go, they send this delegation to say, "We don't want him ruling over us," and their judgment will come.

So as we move through, we've now had the nobleman go to receive his kingdom. He's been granted the kingdom and now he returns. So this intervening period of time, so what we've spoken about up until now to an extent has been fulfilled. God has given us our commission as Christians. He's told us what he expects of us. He has told us that there will be an intervening period of time and here now from verse 15, we shift from a focus in the past now to a focus of what is to come. Having received his kingdom, Jesus will return and what will he do? He will call his servants to him and ask them to give an account, to tell him what they have done in doing business.

Now, most translations look here at the Greek word, here in the ESV we have it as "that he might know what they had gained by doing business." The concept here, the master is less inclined to know, "Did you make me money?" but "Did you actually faithfully go and do what I asked you to do?" The fact that money comes is expected from that. "If you go and transact business with the money that I've given you, I expect that I will get a return." But the focus here of the nobleman is less on, "How much did you return?" but more about "Did you actually go out and do what I asked you to do and thereby bring a return?" The return is incidental to the task. First and foremost it's, "Have you been faithful in doing what I commanded you to do."

So he calls them in and he says, "Give me an account of what you've done." And so the first comes to him and says, "Lord, your mina has made ten minas more." Now, a number of us here, business people, I'm sure most of you would be kind of happy with 1000% return. That's a pretty good return. Take one mina, make ten more of them. Take one gift and multiply it dramatically. Now, it's not unheard of in that time to get that kind of return but it wouldn't be normal. Like the parable of the soils, some produced fruit 30, 50 and 100 fold. Again, the primary purpose here is for the servant to go out and make ten minas more? The hand of God is in that. God has blessed him in his service, granting him ten in response.

But also notice that the servant doesn't say, "My mina has made ten minas more." Now, the servant still recognizes that he is simply stewarding the gift that the master has given him. It's not his money but is the master's money. "Your mina, Lord, has made ten minas more." And so in that humility, in that faithfulness to his call, this servant has done well.

And then something unexpected happens. Jesus' parables often turn on something unexpected happening. So the nobleman says, "Well done, good servant. Because you've been faithful in a very little," again we're coming back to this principle, if you're faithful in the little, then you can be trusted with the great. "Now that I've come back with my kingdom, I'm going to need help to rule and because you were faithful with something little, I'm going to put you in authority over ten cities." This is massive. I think it's hard for us to really think about this. This is akin to a new project manager, "I'm going to give you a project that's \$100,000." A tiny project in a lot of organizations. "You did that one so well, next time I'm putting you in charge of the billion dollar project. You're running the company now." This is a huge blessing that is given to this servant because he has shown his faithfulness.

So with the second. The second servant comes and says, "Lord, your mina," same again, "has made five minas." The nobleman again, "Good and faithful servant, be over five cities. You have been faithful, the blessing has come, now I will reward you with something much greater." And the reason that this is strange, we'll go back a couple of chapters into Luke 17 and this is also a parable that Jesus teaches to his disciples and in Luke 17, looking from verse 7, Jesus says to his disciples, "Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? You've been in the fields laboring all day, working hard. I can tell by the sweat, the dirt, the dust you've been faithful in working hard. You've been working hard, I've been lazing around all day because I'm the master, you're the servant. You work, I laze, but I'm going to reward you. You sit down and I'll serve you dinner." It doesn't happen. It doesn't happen in our work places today, does it? The boss doesn't call you in, "Thank you for all the work that you've been doing with that customer. You've done a fantastic job. The customer is so happy. You take three weeks off and I'm going to do your job." At least if it does happen in companies, I'm in the wrong company.

No, what does the master do? He says, will he not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me. You go and dress properly. You go and clean yourself up, come and make me my dinner because I'm master, you're slave. You do what you need to do and certainly while I eat and drink, and then you can go and eat and drink. So even though you've been slaving away out in the fields all day, parched, famished, you have to stand around and watch me eat before you're allowed to eat." This is the way of masters and slaves. The servant is obedient. The servant does what he needs to do.

Does he thank the servant because he does what he's commanded? Again, the master doesn't go, "Thank you for your service." No, that's what's expected of him. It's nice to get thanked when you do your job properly but that's not the way it normally works. You

do the job, that's what you're expected to do. A polite boss says thank you but it's still expected of you to do. And Jesus' summation of the parable is to say to his disciples, "So you also when you have done all that you were commanded say, 'We are unworthy servants. We have only done what was our duty.'" So this should be our motivation for service. While the parable here that we're looking at teaches that the faithful servant will be rewarded, our service is not done for the reward, our service is done because he is our Master. That is what he calls us to do.

We see in Revelation that as the elders are crowned with crowns, the first thing they do is they cast them back at the feet of Christ. You see, all our reward that comes from our service is only because God enables it. The servant who made ten minas, the only reason he made ten minas is because God enabled it. He was faithful, God gave the increase. In our Christian walk, we must be faithful. God will give the increase. This is what Rod's preaching through, John 15. Jesus is the vine, we are simply the branches. Outside of Jesus we cannot produce any fruit. The fruit comes from the root and not from the branch and so it is for us, but there are rewards. Rewards will come for faithfulness and those rewards will come sometimes here in our life on earth and definitely rewards when it comes to eternity but that is not our motivation.

So we have two servants come. They give an account. Then Luke records and he says in verse 20, "Then another came." Literally here in the Greek it's "the other." It's one of a different kind. So this is not a servant who is of the kind of the first two, this is a servant that is of a different kind. So we have two kinds, two types of servants, two responses that come through.

And so this servant, he comes and he says, "Lord, here's your mina." You see, he like the others recognizes that this gift is not his, it is the master's. But he's done something different. Instead of being obedient, instead of being faithful in taking what was given to him and doing what he was told, going and engaging in business, what did he do? "I kept it laid away in a handkerchief. I wrapped it up in a cloth and I stuck it in my pocket." Now, even in Judaism this is recognized as being bad. This is a bad steward. At least the wicked servant in Matthew with his talent buried it because you know where it's going to be when you come back to find it. If you put this in a handkerchief, you pull it out, it falls on the ground, you've lost it.

Then he starts to give excuses. He says, "The reason I put it away in the handkerchief is because I was afraid of you because you're a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, you reap what you did not sow." So this servant has a wrong view of the master. Up until this point in the parable there is nothing that indicates that the perspective that this servant has of his master is accurate. You see, this is a master who when servants have been faithful with minas, he's put them in charge of cities. That's not the attitude of a man who is severe or of a man who is stingy who steals and robs. That's the implication here of "you take what you did not deposit, you reap what you did not sow." The implication is that he makes his way by ill-gotten gain.

So the master responds to him and he says, "I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant." And he says, "If you genuinely thought that I was a severe man taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow, why then did you not at least take my money and go and put it in the bank because it's safe there, I'm going to get interest on it? If you really thought that that's who I was, that's what you should have gone and done. I'm seeing right through you," says the nobleman. "You were wicked. You were disobedient. You were lazy. You refused to be obedient to what I called you to do."

So what's his response? He says, "Take the mina from him, from this wicked servant, and give it to the one who has ten minas." Take what you had, what you thought you had, and give it to someone else. Why? Because this man is faithful. This man will take the truth, the gift that I've given him, and he will be faithful with it. He will take the truth of God's word and he will proclaim it. He will take the gifts that God has given him and he will use them for the glory of God. He will not sit back on his laurels. He will not hide away in the corner, put his light under a basket or under the bed. No, he will put the light on the lampstand so that it lights the house. Take from the wicked servant and give to the righteous.

Then the crowd comes in and they say, "But, Lord, he's already got ten. Why does he need another one? Doesn't that seem unfair to take from this poor man who he's kept it for you, he's not lost it, he's not squandered the resource. Why then would you take it from him and give it to the one who has ten? Give it to the one who has five, maybe." But this is grace. This is faithfulness. This proves the point that Jesus is about to make in the parable. "I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given."

If you are faithful in your application of the word, if you are faithful in your walk with Christ, if you are faithful with the gifts that God has given you, God will give you more. If you're faithful in your relationships with people in the world, witnessing, sharing the Gospel to them, proclaiming the name of Christ, what will God do? He will bring more people into your life, more people into your path, more people to proclaim the goodness of God to. But if you won't proclaim the goodness of God to somebody what will God do? Well, he will shut it out. He won't bring people into your life. If your life doesn't change, if you're not obedient to the word of Christ, then God will take away what you think you already have because it's about faithfulness, it's about glory to God, it's about serving him while the Master is away.

So how do we respond in that if we see God blessing other ministries? Are we grateful to God? Do we thank God for the growth and the prospering of solid biblical churches wherever they are in Melbourne? Or do we look up the road and go, "Why is that church twice the size of ours? What's wrong?" Sometimes it can be worth evaluating, "Are they doing something right or are they doing something wrong to get all those people in?" But if they're doing things faithfully and God is growing that church but doesn't seem to be growing this, are we happy? Are we trusting God that he knows what he's doing? That he is only honoring his servants to the level of their faithfulness?

As we look at one another in the church, as we encourage one another, do we look and get jealous because somebody seems to have so many opportunities to share their faith, to witness to people, the ability to proclaim the goodness of God to people? Do we get jealous? Do we desire to have that in a wrong way or does that drive us to God and say, "God, use me. Help me to be more faithful. Don't leave me sitting here in an unfaithful, unfruitful perspective. Use me for your glory." That's a hard prayer to say. It's easy to say, it's hard to live out because the more God starts to use you, the more God will start to break you, the more he will humble you, the more he will bring you to your knees so that you rely on him and him alone; so that you can say, "Your mina, Lord, not my mina, not the mina you gave me, but your mina, Lord, has done this. Your truth, your gifts, your word has done this and I am but a servant. I am only doing what you've called me to do, to be faithful to your word."

Because as we go today, we need to consider this passage. We need to consider the servants. The parable finishes in verse 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." We all get that. Those people out there who refuse the name of Christ, who do not wish to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we understand we may not like it but we understand they will be judged. The harsh passage like this is reality, at Jesus' return, there will be judgment and we can kind of live with that, that those people out there but we can fall into a trap of thinking that just because I'm in here, that I'm safe. No, inside the house, inside the servant body are two types of servants: the faithful and the unfaithful, and the fate of the unfaithful is the same as that of the wicked outside.

Luke doesn't draw it out specifically in this parable but if we look at Matthew 25 and the parable of the talents, Matthew draws it out very specifically and so Matthew 25, the end of the parable of the talents in verses 29 and 30, he again says, "For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." You see, this is a recurring theme. Three times in Luke, here again in Matthew, this theme of: if you have and you use it, God will bless you and give you more; if you think you have and you don't use it, it will be taken away from you. Then in verse 30 he says, "And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The fate of the worthless servant, of the unfaithful servant, is the same as the fate of those who have rejected explicitly the teachings of Christ.

You see, the problem with this unworthy servant is he did not have a right understanding of the Master. He did not understand the character of God. He presumed upon a close relationship with the Master simply because he was in the house. To use the old quote: being in church makes you a Christian just as much as being in a garage makes you a car. Just because you show up here faithfully week in, week out, that does not make you a Christian. It is the faithful response to the call of God's word, it is the faithful response and declaration of the Gospel, responding in faith to the call, submitting yourself humbly as a servant to God, trusting in him and him alone for your salvation, that is what makes you a Christian.

And out of that fruit will flow. As a Christian you do not have to work at producing fruit in the sense that it's a massive exertion. No, an apple tree doesn't sit there and go, "Apples!" It grows and the apples come because it is faithful to an apple tree and so it is for Christians. This is why Jesus says, "By their fruit you shall know them."

So as we go today, as we consider the word of God this morning, what kind of servant are you in the Master's house? Are you the obedient faithful servant? Or are you the disobedient faithless servant? Do you love the Master? Will you serve the Master? Or are you hoping that just because you're physically near, that will engender something, some form of favor for you? I always say I think the scariest verses in the Bible are in Matthew. "On that day of judgment, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not cast out demons in your name?' And I will say to them on that day, 'Depart from me, you workers of iniquity, for I never knew you.'"

Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you submitted to him humbly, trusting in him alone for your salvation? Trusting in the work that he did upon that tree to bear the punishment for your sin? If you are, be faithful. Be faithful to that call, to that word. And if not, be fearful for Jesus will return. His return is as certain as his death on the cross. We do not know when it will be which is why the writer of Hebrews says, "Today is the day of salvation." Not tomorrow, not next week, not on your deathbed because you don't know when that day will come.

We thank you, Father, for your word, your word that brings life to us, your word that declares your glory and your majesty, that shows us our heart, that shows the deepest need that we have and then provides for us a way to have that need met. As we consider this parable, as we consider your word this morning, Lord God, may it touch our hearts. May we be changed by your word. May you use us for your glory. May we be faithful to your word, proclaiming the glory of Christ, salvation by grace alone through faith alone, that free gift which you offer to us. For those who hear this that do not know you, Lord God, we ask that you'd convict them of their sin, you would work in their lives. Lord God, show them the depth of their need. Bring them humbly to you and save them for your glory. And for those of us for whom you have done that already, help us to always remember the depths from which you've brought us, to remember that grace and that it is all of you and not of us. In the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you, Father. Amen.