

Sermon for November 19, 2023 – 25th Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 19:11-27 (EHV)

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.

¹¹As they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. ¹²So he said, “A man of noble birth traveled to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then to return. ¹³He called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Conduct business until I return,’ he said to them.

¹⁴“But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to be king over us.’

¹⁵“When he returned after receiving the kingdom, he summoned the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to find out what they had gained by conducting business.

¹⁶“The first one came to him and said, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten more minas.’

¹⁷“He said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you were faithful in a very small matter, you will have authority over ten cities.’

¹⁸“The second one came and said, ‘Master, your mina has produced five more minas.’

¹⁹“So he said to him, ‘You will be over five cities.’

²⁰“And another one came and said, ‘Master, here is your mina that I laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹For I was afraid of you, since you are a demanding man. You take what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.’

²²“He said to him, ‘You wicked servant, I will judge you with your own words! You knew that I am a demanding man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. ²³Then why did you not put my money in the bank? Then, when I returned, I could have collected it with interest!’

²⁴“He said to those standing there, ‘Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’

²⁵“But they said to him, ‘Master, he already has ten minas!’

²⁶“I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ²⁷Now as for 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 LORD asks you what you did with the treasure He entrusted to your care? “Treasure?” you might wonder, “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 use his Gospel faithfully. 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 traveled to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then to return.

Jesus is the nobleman who (at his ascension) went off to the far country of heaven to be appointed as king and rule over creation on behalf of God the Father.

¹³*He called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas.*

A mina was the equivalent of what a common labourer would make in 3 months. Money, however, is not the point of the parable. In Scripture, the number “10” usually represents completeness. Therefore, the ten minas and ten servants represent God's complete treasure of the Gospel entrusted to all believers.

‘Conduct business until I return,’ he said to them.

The king's command to conduct business reminds us of the order Jesus gave his disciples before his ascension: *Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you.*ⁱ

In other words, Jesus didn't just give you his Gospel so you can feel confident about your future. No, he entrusted you with the Gospel to put it to work so it might earn more souls for heaven. But how do you do that? The answer is quite simple: use the gifts and talents with which God has uniquely gifted you to share the Gospel with those God puts in your path. Prayerfully speak the truth in love with gentleness and respect - always prepared to answer everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope in you.ⁱⁱ

Now, it stands to reason that you need to know what God's Word says before you can confess it. Therefore, you must study the Bible to strengthen your faith and knowledge of the Gospel. And the more you meditate on the meaning of Christ's cross for yourself, the more desirous and courageous you become in sharing it with others. You don't want your family, friends and neighbours lost to hell when you have the very message that saves them. And when you share the good news with them through your words and actions, you put the treasure to work that Jesus entrusted to your care.

¹⁴*“But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to be king over us.’*

Even though Jesus sacrificed himself to pay for everyone's sins, the unbelieving world still rejects him. Why? Like heroin addicts, many don't want to give up the sin they enjoy even though they

can perceive it's destroying them. Others, blinded by the devil's propaganda, consider Jesus the enemy that hinders human progress and liberty. Because of that, we feel pressure - from without and within – to stop sharing the Gospel, fearing how people – especially people we love – might reject us.

Nevertheless, Christ commands you to faithfully use the gifts and abilities he has graciously given you to share his Gospel with others. Why? Because only it can save souls from Satan's lies. On top of that, he also promises to graciously reward your faithful stewardship.

Part Two: The King rewards faithful stewardship

¹⁵*“When he returned after receiving the kingdom, he summoned the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to find out what they had gained by conducting business.”*

Jesus is returning 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. He will call each believer to give an account of what they did with His Gospel. The first two servants represent Christians, who faithfully put God's Word to work by sharing it with others. The “returns” are so positive that even the servants seem shocked at what the King's mina has accomplished.

¹⁶*“The first one came to him and said, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten more minas.’”*

It is important to understand precisely what “the earned minas” represent in this parable. They are not the number of people who come to faith through our witness. No, instead, they represent our faithfulness in studying and sharing the Gospel – regardless of whether people believe us or not. 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 gives the king's mina all glory for his success. The servant is shocked at the return – not expecting such a fantastic result. Similarly (if you remain faithful in studying and sharing the Gospel), you will stand before God on the last day in awe over all the people God's Word touched through your witness of his grace! With Luther, you will confess, “We did nothing, LORD, your Word did everything!”

¹⁷*“He said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you were faithful in a very small matter, you will have authority over 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 do not deserve such a reward because the Word did all the work. Nevertheless, Jesus promises to give Christians blessings and honour far exceeding our wildest imaginations. Why? Because that's the kind of God He is – merciful, loving and kind.

¹⁸*“The second [servant] came and said, ‘Master, your mina has produced five more minas.’”*

¹⁹*“So he said to him, ‘You will be over five cities.’”*

Even though the second servant's return was less (signifying that he wasn't quite as faithful as the first in sharing the Gospel), the King still rejoices over the fact that this Christian confessed Christ 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 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. That fact alone should move all of us to be faithful in our stewardship of the Gospel. However, because Jesus knows that we all have a sinful nature which tries to prevent us from sharing his salvation with others, he warns against unfaithfulness.

Part Three: King condemns unfaithful stewardship.

²⁰“And another one came and said, ‘Master, here is your mina that I laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹For I was afraid of you, since you are a demanding man. You take what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.’

This servant represents people who claim to be Christians when it suits their purposes but don't actually believe the Gospel. Even though they claim otherwise, they don't really care about Jesus. All they care about is themselves.

²²“He said to him, ‘You wicked servant, I will judge you with your own words! You knew that I am a demanding man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. ²³Then why did you not put my money in the bank? Then, when I returned, I could have collected it with interest!’

The servant's excuse for hiding his mina was nothing but an insult. Regardless of how demanding 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, revealing His absolute hatred towards the King.

But let's return to the wicked servant's original claim: was the King a demanding, evil man? Didn't he just graciously reward his servants with wealth and honour far beyond anything they could have ever earned or deserved? You see, the devil, the world and our sinful nature constantly try to convince 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, “If your God is so good, why won't he just let people do whatever they want to do instead of threatening to punish them?” 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 sins brought upon themselves.

²⁴“He said to those standing there, ‘Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’ ²⁵“But they said to him, ‘Master, he already has ten minas!’ ²⁶“ ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who does not have, 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 gave him more. In the same way, God will show you nothing but grace upon grace as you faithfully use what God has given you to share the Gospel with your family, friends, and neighbours.

At the same time, what a horrible judgement for the wicked servant! He lost the only thing that could save his soul from hell: the Gospel. He revealed himself as a traitor and enemy to the new king. And what happens to rebels and traitors? The new king tells us:

²⁷Now as for 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 undoubtedly a loving Saviour who died for the whole world's sins. As the Bible declares, He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone.ⁱⁱⁱ He wants all people to be saved by coming to a knowledge of the truth.^{iv} At the same time, Jesus is also just. If a person refuses to receive 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 through his cross. By doing that, such people chose to remain enemies of Christ – even though God offered them peace. Therefore, they will be condemned as God's enemies on Judgement Day.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: Jesus has redeemed you with his holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death. You have been washed clean from all sin in Holy Baptism. You have been clothed with Christ's righteousness through faith in the Gospel. You belong to the LORD.

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

ⁱ Matthew 28:19-20 EHV

ⁱⁱ Cf. Ephesians 4:15 & 1 Peter 3:15-16

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Ezekiel 18:32

^{iv} Cf. 1 Timothy 2:4

^v Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:58

^{vi} Cf. Isaiah 55:11