

“Which One Are You?”

March 14, 2021

Luke 19:11-27

I. Introduction

This is the last parable Jesus gave before entering Jerusalem. It is also the only one whose story is based in part on an actual historical event. It had happened some 30 years earlier. In the time of Christ, Israel was an occupied nation under the rule and authority of Roman. The Romans ruled their conquered lands through subordinate rulers, who had to be approved and granted the right to rule by Rome. Herod the Great, the Herod who had killed the babies after Jesus was born, had negotiated with Mark Antony to obtain the right to rule Israel and to be called *King Herod*. After Herod's death in 4 B.C., his kingdom was divided among his three sons, and Archelaus was made ruler over Judea.

At the Passover in 4 B.C., soon after Archelaus began ruling, a minor disturbance in the temple area had degenerated into a bloodbath, ending with 3000 Jews killed by Archelaus' soldiers. Because of this, Archelaus ordered the rest of the Jews to return home. They had to abandon the celebrations of the Passover feast and leave. Not surprisingly, the people hated him. When he went to Rome to have his rule officially confirmed, a delegation of 50 leaders from Jerusalem went to petition Caesar not to make Archelaus their ruler. By way of compromise, Caesar Augustus granted Archelaus the right to rule, but not to use the title of king until he had gained the favor of the people—which, of course, he never did.

When Archelaus returned to take possession of Judea, he handed out swift punishment. He removed the high priest from office because he supported the Jewish rebels, and he continued to treat the Jews and Samaritans with great brutality. His harsh rule created chaos, and the Romans removed him from power and banished him in A.D. 6. They replaced him with a series of governors, of which Pilate was the fifth. This incident, with which all of Jesus' hearers were familiar, provided the historical background to this story.

II. Setting

The opening phrase “while they were listening to this” refers to [verse 10](#) and Jesus’ comments after the salvation of Zaccheus. As they walked along the road on the 15-mile trip to Jerusalem, Jesus continued to teach the large crowd that was following Him, expanding on the meaning of His statement that He had come “to seek and to save what was lost.”

Luke wrote that “Because he was near Jerusalem ... the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.’ Their anticipation and their enthusiasm were growing with each passing mile. To correct their misguided assumptions, Jesus told this story to illustrate the delay in establishing His earthly kingdom. In this parable, the “man of noble birth who went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return” represents Jesus who, following His death and resurrection, was going to return to heaven and, as Peter preached in [Acts 2:33](#), be “exalted to the right hand of God.” Turn to a similar description, [turn to Philippians 2:9-11](#). But after a time, like the nobleman, Jesus will return. In [John 14:3](#), He said, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” But He also warned in [Mark 13:33](#) and others places to “Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.”

The ten servants who received ten minas or pounds represent those who profess to serve Christ. They claim Jesus is their Lord and Savior. Each of the servants received one mina—an amount of money equal to three months’ wages for a laboring man. The servants were to see what they could do with these resources until their master returned. This is a call to all so-called Christians to live a life that honors the absent nobleman, i.e., Jesus Christ, who will hold people accountable for their actions when He returns.

Despite their similarities, this parable is not the same as the Parable of the Talents found in [Matthew 25:14-30](#). 1) The settings are different: Luke has the parable in Jericho; Matthew has it in Jerusalem. 2) The audiences are different: Luke has a crowd; Matthew has only the disciples. 3) Luke has other details including the note about the citizens and the emissaries being sent to protest the king’s selection. 4) Matthew has a businessman; Luke has a king. 5) Matthew has 3 servants; Luke 10.

6) Matthew gives the servants different amounts of property and talents; Luke gives each servant the same amount. 7) The difference in the value of a talent in Matthew and a mina in Luke is significant. 8) The rewards in Matthew are the same for each servant; Luke has different rewards. In today's Scripture Luke describes three distinct groups: enemies, faithful servants, and wicked servants.

III. Three Groups

A. Enemies Just as in the real-life case of Archelaus, “the subjects hated him, i.e., Jesus, and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’” In John 19:15 we read that the Jews “shouted, ‘Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!’ ‘Shall I crucify your king?’ Pilate asked. ‘We have no king but Caesar,’ the chief priests answered.” Unlike Archelaus who gave his subjects cause to hate him, there is no indication that the “man of noble birth” had given his subjects any reason to hate him. Similarly, this is seen in Jesus’ case—John 15:25 says, “But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’”

Despite their hatred and rejection of him, the “man of noble birth’s” enemies were nevertheless his subjects. In like fashion, whether they accept Him, reject Him, or ignore Him, everyone is under the sovereign rule of the Lord Jesus Christ—Romans 14:9 says, “For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.” Colossians 1:16 says, “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.” Since He created the world and all that is in it, all people are His subjects.

Just as Archelaus’s enemies were unable to prevent him from taking the throne, so also Jesus’ foes will be unable to keep Him from taking His throne. He has been crowned and will one day return as the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:6). When the nobleman returned from being crowned king, he commanded his servants, “Those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them-- bring them here and kill them in front of me.” So, also when Jesus returns, He will judge and destroy His enemies—turn to Revelation 20:11-15.

B. The Faithful Servants Back in [Luke 19, verses 15-19](#) describe faithful servants who represent faithful believers and represent the future time when the saints will receive their heavenly rewards—[turn to 1 Corinthians 3:11-15](#). When the first servant came before the king, he didn't boast of his work; he humbly and respectfully said, “[Sir—master, your mina has earned ten more.](#)” He didn't claim credit but credited the increase to the money the nobleman had left him, “[Your mina.](#)” The king praised him and said, “[Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.](#)” This was a gracious reward—a reward that hadn't even been promised when the minas were passed out. The faithful servant was commended and promoted and given cities in proportion to his profit. Because of his faithfulness, the faithful servant was made a vice-regent ruling over a province or region under the king.

The second servant came with the same humility and, like the first servant, ascribed the increase of the money to the king's influence, “[Sir, your mina has earned five more.](#)” He, too, was commended and promoted. He was put in charge of 5 cities. Although the results were not the same as the first servant, this servant was no less faithful. Our gifts and abilities are different, but our job is the same: to share the Word of God so that it multiplies and fills the world—writing to the Thessalonians in [1 Thessalonians 1:8](#) Paul said, “[The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia-- your faith in God has become known everywhere.](#)” The important thing is not how much ability a person has but how faithful he or she is to use whatever he or she has for the Lord. The person with the least ability, if he or she is faithful, will receive commendation and promotion just like the most gifted person.

C. The Wicked Servant Only one more servant was dealt with; we are left to imagine what happened to the other seven. But this is sufficient, since in the end there are only two classes: those who make good use of the mina, i.e., their talents and abilities, and those who don't. The third servant, the wicked servant, was very different from the first two—“[Then another servant came.](#)” There are two different words in Greek for *another*.” One word, [ἄλλος](#) (allos), refers to *another of the same kind*. The other word, [ἕτερος](#) (heteros), describes *another of a different kind*. This is the word Jesus used. Unlike the first two servants, this lazy, indifferent servant took the mina the nobleman gave him and “[kept it laid away in](#)

a piece of cloth.” He had done absolutely nothing with his mina. This didn’t even comply with the minimum requirements as stipulated by the Talmud which required burial in the earth for safety.

This “*different kind of*” servant was careless, lazy, and thoughtless. He had no desire to honor or please his master. Instead of being motivated by love, he was driven by fear, and tried to defend himself by shifting the blame to the king. “I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man.” This servant accused the king of being severe, harsh, strict, and unfair. Taking his accusation one step further, he went on to say, “You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.” Basically, he was accusing his master of being a thief; of stealing crops that he did not plant. This servant had no love or respect for his master, and no real relationship with him. He only served him to get rich from the nobleman turned king.

The king used the servant’s words as the basis of his condemnation. If the servant really believed what he said about his master, he ought to have done something. If “you knew that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in and reaping what I did not sow,” you should have been wise enough to take some kind of action. Without risk he could have put the “money on deposit, so that when the nobleman came back, he could have collected it with interest?” Interestingly, the king’s response to the other servants showed him to be anything but a hard taskmaster, since he rewarded the other servants with more responsibility. This wicked servant didn’t even know the character of the king. The master’s remarks are not his confession that he is a hard taskmaster, but rather a condemnation of the third servant’s failure to follow through on how he viewed the master. The master was measuring the servant by the servant’s own standards, a measure he failed to live up to.

Then the king pronounced judgment on the wicked servant. “Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’” Surprised by the king’s decision, “they said, ‘Sir, he already has ten.’” Demonstrating his grace and love, “He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given.’” But judging the unfaithful servant, he said, “But as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away.”

The wicked servant represents the people who claim to be followers of Christ, are involved with church, surrounded by the privileges and truth of the Gospel, and perhaps, even make a profession of faith. But in reality, they serve the Lord for their own selfish purposes and goals and have no real relationship with Him. Despite their claims, they will hear from Jesus' own mouth the shocking pronouncement from [Luke 13:27](#), "I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!"—turn to [Matthew 7:21-23](#).

IV. Conclusion

There are a couple of applications in today Scripture. First, Jesus has gone away, but He is coming back. Turn to [1 Thessalonians 4:15-18](#). Soon the time God has set will be over, and then Christ will return and with Him will come judgment. In [Revelation 22:12](#) Jesus said, "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done."

The second application is that there will be rewards for Christ's faithful followers, rejection for the false followers, and judgment for His foes. Every person falls into one of those three categories. The faithful followers will be rewarded and lavished with spiritual graces and privileges forever. The false followers will be unmasked, and all their false pretenses will be striped away and discounted. The Lord will reject them. He will sentence them to perish eternally along with His enemies.

In [Luke 16:13](#) Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." In [Luke 11:23](#) Jesus said, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." There are really only two categories—those with Jesus and those against. In [Matt. 7:16](#) Jesus said, "By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?" What does your fruit say about you? Are you using your talents and abilities to bring glory to God? When you stand before the judgment seat are you going to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant? You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things." ([Matthew 25:21](#)).