

**I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. The story of our life is formed by thousands of small and seemingly insignificant decisions. When we observe the beauty of a flower, we may marvel at its vibrant color and exquisite shape; but what we are seeing is actually many millions of hidden, intricate parts working in cohesion to display its form.
- B. Every believer will stand before the Master and be evaluated by what they have done in this life. When we think of that moment, we often picture the *large or exciting things* that we may do in life and ministry. In this light, many of our life decisions, actions and attitudes can be entirely disregarded.
1. In our estimation, our victories that necessitate reward are *key events* that we deem as notable or extraordinary in our eyes: leading a successful business or ministry; having wealth; garnering the respect of the respectable; being around people that are noteworthy; seeing unbelievers come to salvation; seeing someone dramatically healed through our prayer; preaching on a stage and seeing people respond etc.
  2. However, *most* of the decisions that comprise our life are done in secret away from the prying eyes of others. Our life is largely hidden from others (even ourselves), yet not from the Lord.

**<sup>3</sup> *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:3)***

- C. The subject of eternal rewards is an incredibly relevant subject to the body of Christ. Throughout the New Testament we find the Lord frequently motivating His people through the promise of eternal rewards.
- D. But why? If you're new to the subject of eternal rewards it can almost feel counterintuitive to a life that necessitates *humility, meekness* and a *denial of self*. For some reason we imagine that serving Christ is a futile endeavor when it comes to us. We can become entrenched in thinking that there is *no joy* and *no reward* because the cost of discipleship is so high. In truth, the higher the cost, the higher the reward.
- E. Neglecting this topic can result in a *stagnant faith* devoid of hope and joy. The human heart thrives knowing that even in difficulty and pain there a day of redemption in sight. Somehow, we'll come out on the other end and it will all be worth it. This exact mindset motivated the saints of old that now gaze down upon us as a cloud of witnesses, earnestly contending for the greatness of their brethren.

**<sup>16</sup> *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, <sup>18</sup>while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)***

***...Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. (Heb. 11:35b)***

***<sup>12</sup> Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; <sup>13</sup> but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. (1 Peter 4:12, 13)***

## II. LUKE 19

- A. In Luke 19, Jesus tells a parable after his encounter and meal with Zacchaeus. After declaring that the, “*Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost,*” he tells this story to temper expectation that His kingdom would *appear immediately*. He possibly wants to shift their paradigm from one of zealous excitement to one of faithful obedience.
- B. As with most parables, Jesus begins with what is familiar and natural and moves the listeners into the unfamiliar and the spiritual. As we'll see in a moment, this parable would resonate with the people of Judea and Jericho (Lk. 19:1, 28).

***<sup>11</sup> Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.***

***<sup>12</sup> Therefore He said: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. <sup>13</sup> So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ <sup>14</sup> But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’***

***<sup>15</sup> “And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. <sup>16</sup> Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ <sup>17</sup> And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ <sup>18</sup> And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ <sup>19</sup> Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’***

***<sup>20</sup> “Then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. <sup>21</sup> For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ <sup>22</sup> And he said to him, ‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. <sup>23</sup> Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’***

***<sup>24</sup> “And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’ <sup>25</sup> (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) <sup>26</sup> ‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. <sup>27</sup> But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.’” (Luke 19:11-27)***

### **III. OVERVIEW OF THE LUKE 19 PARABLE**

- A. This is the only place in the bible where this story is recorded. It sounds very similar to the Matthew 25:14 parable of the talents; but because of the location (just outside of **Jericho**) and audience, it is distinct from it. Many of the themes and principles overlap between the two stories (*a master, entrusted servants, stewardship while the master is gone etc.*) but they are different.
- B. In this story a certain nobleman went to far country to receive a kingdom. It is implied that the nobleman is receiving a kingdom from a higher authority.
1. The kingdom is that he is going to **receive** is the very region in which he currently resides. So he will leave, receive authority and then return to rule.
  2. While he's gone, he **entrusts** servants with his money to steward in his absence. He expects his servants to *enlarge his business endeavors* while he is gone.
  3. After he receives his kingdom, he **returns** and asks the servants to *give an account* of their dealings in his absence.
  4. Each of the servants is **evaluated** and given either reward or reprimand in accordance with their faithfulness to obey the nobleman's previous desires.
  5. The faithful servants are given shared **authority** in the kingdom to rule with the nobleman (now king).
- C. There are 3 distinct groups that appear in this parable. What is striking is that every one of us hearing this message falls into one of these 3 groups.
1. The **faithful** servants – these are rewarded
  2. The **unfaithful** servants – these are rejected
  3. The **foes** – these are destroyed
- D. Verse 14 says that, **“...his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’”**

### **IV. HISTORICAL BACKDROP**

- A. Now this phrase, ***“We will not have this man to reign over us,”*** would have been very familiar to the audience. Jesus is using a very well known situation to illustrate the truths of this parable.
- B. Herod the Great (ruled 40-4 BC) having appealed to the higher Roman authority of Caesar, had established a monarchy in the land of Israel. Upon his death his kingdom was to be divided among his 3 sons.

- C. Herod's son Archelaus was given the region of Judea, which would have included both Jerusalem and Jericho. Upon Herod's death, Archelaus sought to establish his authority by pouring fear into the hearts of the people in that region. And so, to demonstrate his newfound power he had 3000 Jews killed.
- D. After that, the time came for Archelaus to travel to Rome to receive the official "license" to rule as king in Judea. No kings were allowed to rule under Caesar without Caesar's express consent. However, whenever Archelaus went, the people hated him so much, they sent a delegation after him to appeal to Caesar saying, "*We will not have this man to reign over us.*"
- E. Caesar, wanting to keep peace in the region, gave Archelaus a lesser title of **ethnarch** [pro. ethnark] until he could win the favor the people and become established as a king. Even though the people protested, they couldn't stop him from ruling. Archelaus came back and ruled in that region.
- F. So Jesus is building this parable on a similar framework. He would leave the earth to receive a kingdom (Dan. 7:13, 14; Heb. 10:12, 13) entrusting his servants with a mandate, and then return even though many of the citizens hate Him. Though many detest Christ, they cannot stop Him from receiving His kingdom that has been prepared (Ps. 2:7-8; 110:1-2; Mt. 25:34; Rev. 2:26-27).

***<sup>15</sup> ... And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" ... You have taken Your great power and reigned. <sup>18</sup>The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come...and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints... and should destroy those who destroy the earth." (Rev. 11:15-18)***

#### **V. REWARDED FOR FAITHFULNESS**

- A. In the parable the nobleman represents Jesus. The distant country is heaven, and the place to which he returns is the earth. Jesus ascended to heaven to receive a kingdom from His Father. Jesus announced a postponement of the full manifestation of His kingdom (Acts 1:6-7).
- B. The Lord has entrusted us with equal responsibility for *advancing His purposes and plans* while He is absent.
  - 1. Each servant received 10 minas. These were Greek coins that totaled about three months wages (maybe \$10,000). The Lord sees us as stewards and witnesses who are responsible to increase the glory of His name during His absence.
  - 2. In the Matthew 25 parable of the talents, each received a different sum representing the different gifts and talents of each person. Here, each received the same sum representing the one life that each has to invest for the Master. We only have one shot at being faithful.
  - 3. They are told to "do business" until he returned. The word for *business* in Greek is "*pragmateusasthe*," where we get the word *pragmatic*. He is saying, "I've given you something and I want you to do something pragmatic (practical) with it." There is a substantial and practical response to what the Lord has entrusted us.

- C. The faithfulness the Lord wants for our lives is seen when we produce the **internal** fruit of godly character (Mt. 5-7; Gal. 5:22-23), the **external** fruit in others through ministry and discipleship, and **increase the glory of Christ's name** through our witness to the lost.
- D. He will return having received authority to reign on earth from His Father (Dan. 7:13-14). After His return, His servants will give an accounting of their stewardship. Believers will give an account at the judgment seat of Christ before the Millennium (1000-year reign of Christ). The basis of the judgment is not salvation but the fruitfulness of our lives.
- E. The **first servant** reported a 1,000% return on the master's investment. This report earned the master's praise and reward for faithfully fulfilled his responsibility. This servant's reward was to have authority over ten cities. This was **great compared to what the servant had received to invest**. The reward applied to the messianic kingdom. He who is faithful in little will be faithful in much.

***<sup>17</sup> And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'* (Lk. 19:17)**

1. In life, most are given very little. For 99% the sphere of influence and impact is seemingly insignificant by earthly standards. But the Master doesn't reward in accordance with the size of the impact or the influence but by the *depth of faithfulness*.
  2. The most radical thing we can do as believers has more to do with *faithfulness in secret* than the outward impact upon others.
- F. The **second servant** was faithful gaining a 500% return on the master's investment. He did not receive as much commendation or reward as the first servant, but his reward was proportionate to his faithfulness. This tells us that in the age-to-come the rewards will not all be equal; a full reward is contingent upon a full expression of faithfulness.

***<sup>41</sup> There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. <sup>42</sup> So also is the resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor. 15:41, 42)***

- G. The **third servant** buried and hid the money given to him. Keeping money in a scarf (Gr. soudarion) was a common practice in that time, but it produced nothing. This represents someone who does nothing of eternal value with his life. It's a life wasted.
1. The servant's excuse was that he feared the Master because he believed Him to be a shrewd and demanding man. This is a sinful view of God. It is inaccurate and entirely the opposite of what God is actually like. This means that the unfaithful servant didn't do what was necessary to grow in relationship with God and discover His gentleness and generosity as a Father.
- H. The master judged the servant on the basis of his words, namely that the master was an exacting man (v. 21). Rather than commending him the master condemned him as worthless or unproductive (Jas 2:14, 16, 20, 26). He produced nothing of value for the master. Even by depositing his investment in a bank the servant could have earned some interest with little risk. (The bank may symbolize small effort with little risk)

**<sup>22</sup>‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant...’**

1. The unfaithful servant lost even what the master had given him. If the mina each servant received represents his life potential, this servant lost that. The master gave it to the most faithful servant. God's faithful servants will receive additional opportunities to glorify Him in the age-to-come.

**<sup>24</sup>‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’...<sup>26</sup>‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’**

- I. The master now dealt the enemies who opposed his rule (v. 14).

**<sup>27</sup> But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.’**

1. This judgment will come after Jesus rewards believers at the Second Coming. He will slay His enemies (Ps. 110:5-6; Jn. 5:32; Acts 17:31).
- J. **Both salvation and rewards come as a result of God's grace.** Many have confused teaching about salvation and rewards. Salvation does not depend on working for God but faith in what Christ has done. Rewards do not depend on resting in what Jesus has done but on agreeing with the grace of God in the labor of faithful obedience.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

1. Every believer is given an equal opportunity to be great in the Kingdom of God.
2. To be great in His kingdom means that we share in His authority when we comes again and claims all the kingdoms of this world.
3. We are rewarded in accordance with our faithful obedience to Him.
4. It is both Godly and biblical to desire heavenly reward.