

Luke 19:11-27

I almost **hesitate** to ask this question today, but have you started your **Christmas** shopping yet? The retail stores are doing their best to get us in the **mood** for shopping. The Christmas **trees** are already up. The Christmas **music** is playing. And the “once-in-a-lifetime-you-better-buy-it-now-because-you-will-never-see-it-at-this-special-price-again” **sales** have begun. For **most** of us, it’s just way too **early** to start thinking about things like that. But there are a **few** of us who might even have all of our Christmas presents **purchased** already. Either way, it’s more than likely that at **some** time in the coming **weeks** we will be buying a **gift** or two for a family member or friend. My question is, when you **do** purchase a gift, what is your **hope** for that gift? Certainly we want the gifts we give to be **liked**. But perhaps even **more** so, we want the gifts we give to be **used**. If we give someone a **sweater**, we hope they will **wear** it. If we give someone a **book**, we hope they will **read** it. Gifts are given with a **purpose** in mind. So this morning, we’re going to take a look at the gifts that **God** has given to **us**. As we look at the parable of the ten **minas**, we see that **God** gives **gifts** to us, with the expectation that **we** will **use** them. So with that in mind, **Let’s Get To Work**.

The first verse of our text gives us the **setting** for this parable. Jesus was on His way to **Jerusalem**, and this would be His **final** journey to that city, because Jesus was **going** there to **die**. The people of Jerusalem had an **idea** that something **big** was going to happen. Luke tells us, “*The people thought that the **kingdom of God** was going to appear **at once**.*” These words are a reference to the **mistaken** idea that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem to usher in a new and glorious **earthly** kingdom by means of a political **revolution**. It was a belief which was held by a great **majority** of the Jewish nation. So, as Jesus kept getting closer and closer to Jerusalem, the Jews were anticipating a big **spectacle**, with Jesus gathering an **army**, and leading a **rebellion** against the Roman authorities. But of course **we** know that **wasn’t** going to happen, and with this **parable**, Jesus attempted to give the people of His day a better **understanding** of what was about to take place, as well as what **their role** would be in the days to come.

The parable **begins** with these words, “*A man of noble birth went to a **distant** country to have himself appointed **king** and then to **return**.*” As we look at the **rest** of the parable, it becomes clear that the man of **noble birth** is a picture of Jesus **Himself**. In the parable, we’re told that the man was going to a **distant** country in order to be made a **king**. This was a practice which was very **common** in Jesus’ time. In fact, it’s **exactly** the way **Herod the Great** had come into power. He had gone to **Rome**, and **there** he was appointed as **king** of the Jews. But **Jesus**

was **also** going to receive a kingdom. He was going to become **our** king by **suffering** and **dying** to pay for the sins of the world, by **rising** from the dead, and by **ascending** to His throne in **heaven**. There - sitting at the right hand of God the Father - He would be appointed as **ruler** over **all** things. And, just like the man in our parable today, He will **return** again as our **king**. That **return** will happen on the **Last Day**. But the events which take place in today's parable take place **between** the time of the man's **departure** and his **return** as king. And **that** time is **right now**. We know that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God **right now**, and we are eagerly awaiting His **return** to the earth with great **glory**. So, it's important for us to pay close attention to the main point of today's **parable**, because we know it applies directly to **us, right now**.

So what happens in that time between the man's **departure** and his **return** as king? Jesus said, "*He called ten of his servants and gave them **ten minas**. 'Put this money to **work**,' he said, 'until I come back.'*" Before the man left, he entrusted each of his servants with a **gift** - a **mina**. A mina is a measure of **weight** used by the Jews, which is roughly equivalent to 1 **pound**. So this man left each of his servants a **pound** of treasure to take care of. It wasn't a **huge** amount, but that's not the **point**. The point is that the man expected his servants to put that pound to **work** until he returned.

Now, when the nobleman **returns** as a **king**, we see that each of the servants had **put** his mina to **work** in a different way. We're told that **one** of the servants earned **ten more** minas. That is **1,000%** increase. Obviously, the king was very **pleased** with that servant, and we're told that he put him in charge of **ten cities**. We're told that **another** one of the servants had earned **five more** minas - a **500%** increase. Again, the king was very **pleased**, and he put **that** man in charge of **5 cities**. Then we hear about a **third** servant. This man had done **nothing useful** with his mina. He had simply wrapped it up in a **cloth**, and waited for the king to **return**. Interestingly enough, he gave the following **excuse** for his actions, "*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.*" That **wasn't** what the king wanted to **hear**. He was very **upset** with that servant, and he proceeded to show how **foolish** the man's reasoning had been. If he truly believed the king was such a **harsh** man - always trying to make a **profit** - then he should have tried to **do** something with the mina that had been given to him, instead of directly **disobeying** the king's order. As a result, the man was **deprived** of the mina with which had been entrusted to him.

As I said earlier, it's important for us to understand what this parable **means**, because it applies to **us**. So, what do these minas have to do with you and me? The

man in the parable is **Jesus** and **we** are His servants. The **minas** are the **gifts** that He gives to us, and He expects us to be faithful in **using** those gifts **wisely**. How have we **done** with that? How do **we** compare to the servants in Jesus' **parable**? Are we like the **first** and **second** servants, who worked **faithfully** and who were richly **rewarded**? Or are we more like that **third** servant - the one who didn't bother to **use** his mina, but instead, wrapped it up in a cloth and **hid** it away for safe keeping?

I can't speak for each of **you**, but sadly enough, this is **often** how God's gifts are treated. People can find excuse after excuse **not** to wisely put God's gifts to **work** for the good of **His** kingdom. Sometimes they think God expects **too much** from them. Sometimes they think that their gifts are too **minimal** - and that **using** them really won't do much good anyway. Sometimes they think that there are too many **other** expectations which get in the **way**, and take away their **time** to serve the Lord - expectations which come from their **boss**, or their **family**, or their own **personal** interests. But these are only **excuses**. In the **end**, there is **no good reason** for **not** wisely using the gifts God has given us.

So instead of offering **excuses**, let's take a moment to remember exactly what our mina **is**. What **are** the gifts which we have received from our gracious God? In reality, everything we **are** and everything we **have** comes from the LORD. But obviously the **greatest** gift we've received from Him is God's own **Son**, our Savior Jesus Christ, and the message of **forgiveness** which we have received through Him. Jesus is the one who gave up His **life** to pay for our sins. But along with the gift of the **Gospel** we **also** received the gift of **Holy Spirit** who **lives** in us. What **incredible** gifts.

And here's the **best** part. Those gifts aren't based on what **we** do. They are based on God's undeserved love for us - His **grace**. As the Holy Spirit works in us, He first of all applies the message of the **Gospel** to **our** hearts, so we truly **treasure** the fact that our sins have been **forgiven** through **Jesus**. Everything we **have done**, and everything we **haven't done**, has all been washed **clean** by the blood of **Jesus**. That message of peace with God **changes** the way we **think**, and the way we **act**. That peace **overflows** in our lives, and affects the way we treat **others**. We put the gifts God has given to us to **use**, when we show the **fruits** of faith in our **lives** - the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. We also put the gifts of God to **use** when we **proclaim** the message of salvation to others. The Gospel is a **tremendous** gift - a gift which needs to be **shared**. And just as He gave us the **gift**, God has also given us many **opportunities** to put that gift to **work**. Of course, there's only a **limited** amount of

time for each of us to **do** that sharing. Our opportunities will **end** when we reach our **last day** here on the earth, or when the King **returns** again in all His glory. So, until that time, **Let's Get To Work**, and let's **thank** God for the **gifts** He has given to us, by wisely putting those gifts to **work** for His kingdom. Amen.