

Luke 19:11-27 – “A Servant Who Wouldn’t Serve”

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Intro: Servants are supposed to serve. The *purpose* of a servant is *service*. Servants who won’t serve are “evil” because something in them is lacking that keeps them from fulfilling the purpose to which they are called. Servants who do not serve are not really servants at all. Tonight, in the last of our paradoxes from Luke 18 & 19 we have the “Parable of the Ten Minas,” in which Jesus taught truths concerning reward and judgment that will occur at His second coming. The big idea we’ll be looking at is:

Proposition: Jesus came to seek and to save the lost and His faithful servants carry on that work as they await His coming.

Billboard:	(vv.11-14)	A Time for Serving
	(vv.15-18)	A Time for Reward
	(vv.19-27)	A Time for Judgment

(vv.11-14) A Time for Serving – Jesus told the parable to correct a misunderstanding, as we’re told in the opening verse: **Luke 19:11 - 11** *As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.* Some among the crowd, especially His disciples, believed that He was going to Jerusalem to immediately establish His kingdom. He told the parable to teach that the kingdom would be delayed but that the work was to continue. His work, as he had just demonstrated and stated was, “*to seek and to save the lost.*” During the time of His absence His servants would be commissioned to serve. It would be a time for serving. The parable obviously indicated that He was going away to receive a kingdom, like the nobleman in the story, and that like the nobleman He would charge His servants to continue His work during His absence. **Luke 19:12–13 - 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.’* The future king gave to his servants a “mina,” about three-months wages for a working man and ordered them to “*Engage in business until I come.*” Their responsibility was to continue doing the master’s business during the time of his absence. Note that there were two classes of people in the parable: those who professed to be the master’s servants and those who rejected him as king: **Luke 19:14 - 14** *But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’* The parable would have caught the attention of everyone in the crowd simply because of where Jesus was standing when He told it. The new Jericho in which He stood had been built by Archelaus, Herod the Great’s son. Upon Herod’s death, Archelaus had gone to Rome to ask for the title of “King.” Herod had left the province to Archelaus to rule over but had no authority to grant him that title. Only Caesar could do that, so Archelaus journeyed to Rome seeking to be named “King.” However, the Jews sent a delegation of 50 citizens to Rome to oppose Archelaus receiving the title. Caesar Augustus split the decision, appointing Archelaus as Tetrarch (ruler) but withholding from him the title he sought. Everyone would have listened with attention as Jesus used this background to tell the parable and make His point: The kingdom Jesus would rule over would not be immediately established in Jerusalem; a delay would be expected, for He, like Archelaus would go away to receive His kingdom. Like Archelaus, Jesus’ citizens would reject Him as their king. During this delay Jesus’ servants were commissioned to carry on His business – seeking and saving the lost. Each of His professing

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servants were entrusted with a “mina” or a “pound” – a gift of equal value. In this way the parable differs from the similar Parable of the Talents found in Matthew 21:33-44 in which each servant received multiple gifts according to his abilities. The gift here is the same for each servant and represents the gospel – what Jesus would accomplish at Jerusalem through His death, burial, and resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

[DOCTRINAL POINT] As Christ’s second advent is awaited, every professing Christian is entrusted with the good news of the gospel and is charged to do Christ’s business – seeking and saving the lost – until He returns to establish His kingdom. Today is a time for serving.

[ILLUSTRATION] Chuck Yeager was a fighter pilot in the American Army Air Force during World War II. Yeager achieved a status of legendary proportion famous for shooting down five enemy aircraft in one day. The secret to Yeager’s success was that he was found to have an unusually keen sense of vision. Yeager could see the enemy approaching well before the enemy could see him. Yeager was victorious in battle because he had a clear sense of vision.

[APPLICATION] In like manner, if we would fight our King’s battle well while we await His return, we need a clear vision for what we are about. Our assignment is to carry on His work of seeking and saving the lost. Today we are surrounded by many distractions – *good* things we are tempted to put in place of the *best* thing. It might be helpful to make America great again, but that isn’t our mission. We should do what we can to heal environmental damage; but this isn’t our calling. Social justice beckons, but we’re not called to that fight either. Should we do what we can about these things? Certainly – but not at the cost of losing our focus on our true service to our King. Our one mission is “*to seek and to save the lost.*” Christian, amid all the competing voices calling us to join their campaign, remember what your King has assigned you to do. We have one task no one else is called to or willing to fulfill as we await the return of the King: to seek and to save the lost.

(vv.15-18) A Time for Reward – When Christ returns, He will call all professing Christians to account concerning how we have used the entrusted gift while awaiting His coming. **Luke 19:15–18 - 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.’* In these verses His faithful servants are in focus and are rewarded for their faithfulness. Note first that when He returns, He returns as King. Not that He wasn’t king at His first advent. In the Triumphal Entry He would accomplish when He arrived in Jerusalem, He openly declared His Messiahship and Kingship, but this was rejected by His citizens. Nevertheless, He was their king and at His second coming His kingship will be finally and forever recognized. Notice next that at His second advent His faithful servants will give an account of their fruitfulness. There are two servants mentioned in these verses. The first has ten minas to show His master; the second only five. Both have been *faithful* and *fruitful* in the king’s business. Observe the words they both use when they present their fruit before their king: “Your mina has made ten more.... Your mina has made five minas.” Neither servant is under any illusion; it is the king’s gift that has produced the fruit, not their abilities. The servant’s faithfulness simply released the gift’s fruitfulness in his service to the King. Note as well that the king was equally well-pleased with both His faithful servants and rewarded each according to his fruitfulness. Note too that the reward given for faithfully

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fulfilling responsibilities assigned was to be entrusted with even greater and more honorable responsibilities.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Faithful servants are fruitful servants and will be rewarded with greater responsibilities and honor in the coming Kingdom when Christ returns.

[ILLUSTRATION] I’ve just finished reading a book about the first month of World War I. France went into the war with an unrealistic war plan and was immediately confronted with a major collapse when the Germans invaded. The French generalissimo, Joffre, ruthlessly fired top general officers wherever he observed failure. He replaced general after general with more junior officers that had performed well under disastrous conditions, and in this way, defeat was avoided, and victorious performance rewarded.

[APPLICATION] *“Our title to heaven is all of grace. Our degree of glory in heaven will be proportioned to our works.”*¹ The proper reward for fulfilling a responsibility assigned is greater responsibility. I think it would be a shame if we were so poorly taught that we imagine the New Heaven and Earth as merely a place of banquets, baseball, and big mansions. Think about it! How boring would that be? No, dear ones, we will have important and satisfying responsibilities to fulfill in Glory. The Scriptures promise that we will reign with Christ in the Kingdom. We are preparing now for our heavenly reward then. One commentator put it his way: In heaven everyone’s glass will be full, but some will be given bigger glasses than others. How we conduct the Master’s business today determines the reward we’ll enjoy tomorrow. The Scripture says so, and it’s meant to be an incentive. A sound principle taught repeatedly in the Old Testament is that *“future blessing is contingent on present obedience.”*² Let’s get ready today, for our reward tomorrow. Jesus’ second coming will be a time for rewarding His fruitful servants.

(vv.20-27) A Time for Judgment – The so-called servant we encounter in these verses hasn’t served His master at all: **Luke 19:20 - 20** *Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief.* Though he received his master’s treasure, he has done nothing at all with what was entrusted to him. Servants who won’t serve are not true servants. Notice three evidences that this kind of professing Christian is no Christian in reality. First, he has no deeds of obedience to show for his faith. James 2:14-17 makes clear that **James 2:17 - 17** *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.* Obedience to the Lord always follows true faith in the Lord. Dead bodies do nothing because there is no life in them. In just that same way, professions of faith without obedience are proof positive of spiritual dead men. Secondly, he has no fruit for the master. The proof of this the master confronts him with is this: if he had really believed he would have at least done the minimum necessary to produce some fruit for his master: **Luke 19:22–23 - 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?’* Jesus said, *“By their fruits you will know them,”* speaking of *“false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing”* (cf. Matthew 7:15-20). Where there is no fruit, there is no root! Finally, this man professes to know his master, yet has a hard opinion of him: he does not love him; he only fears him: **Luke 19:21 - 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.’* J. C. Ryle observes that, *“Hard thoughts of God are a common mark of all unconverted people. They first misrepresent him, and then try to excuse themselves for not loving and serving him.”* It is characteristic of the unconverted heart to conceive of God in this manner. Remember

¹ J. C. Ryle.

² The Open Bible.

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Adam and Eve after the Fall, and unbelieving Israel in the Wilderness.³ The master passed judgment on the fruitless servant, taking away even what he had: **Luke 19:24–26 - 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. People who have the gospel, but do not believe the gospel, will in the end lose the gospel. Again, Ryle: “The turning point of the king’s address to the unfaithful servant is the expression ‘thou knewest.’ It is meant to teach us that those who are condemned at the last day will be found to have ‘known’ enough to guide them to salvation if they would have used their knowledge.... They have a mighty gift from God, and make no use of it. This will prove at last their eternal ruin.”* The passage ends with the king passing judgment on his rebellious citizens: **Luke 19:27 - 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.’ ”*

[DOCTRINAL POINT] To possess the gospel is not enough. One must believe the gospel fruitfully to be an authentic servant of the Master.

[ILLUSTRATION] There is a principle of emphasis revealed in the way Scripture passages are arranged. It is often the case that the thing the author most wants to emphasize comes at the end of the passage. Perhaps that is what is happening here. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Surely nothing would cause His gracious heart more pain than the eternal loss of some who professed to be His, but never really believed the gospel.

[APPLICATION] This last paragraph is a solemn warning to anyone playing at being a Christian. Unfortunately, we all know people who professed to be Christians for a while and then one day just seemed to disappear, or even worse – fouled their profession with lives that were obvious denials of the faith they said they believed. Those things break our heart. What must the heart of Jesus feel when this happens? We dare not preach a gospel denuded of warnings. The warnings in Scripture are there for a reason. God is not willing that any should perish, so Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost, warns some who say they are His that judgment day will reveal the secrets of all hearts. God forbid that anyone we know *“have a mighty gift from God and make no use of it.”* Jesus’ second coming will be a time for judgment.

Conclusion: “Our title to heaven is all of grace. Our degree of glory in heaven will be proportioned to our works.”⁴ Servants are supposed to serve. Let’s be sure we’re ready for His return by serving faithfully till He comes.

³ J. C. Ryle.

⁴ J. C. Ryle.