The King, His Servants and His Enemies
Luke 19:11-27

Now if you've been following along with us as we've been going through Luke, you'll know that Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. In fact, He's almost there. He's just 18 miles away in the city of Jericho. Now I don't know how fast you walk, but if Jesus walked at a comfortable pace, he could cover that distance in just 6 hours.

And the disciples and the crowd who are with him know that. They know that Jesus, this man who they have come to believe is the Messiah, is just 6 hours from Jerusalem. Six hours from liberating them from the power of the occupying Romans, 6 hours from removing the self-serving religious rulers from authority, just 6 hours from setting up the kingdom of God on earth, in Jerusalem. As Luke tells us in v11, 'they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.'

So, with them expecting Him to be crowned king in Jerusalem, it is perhaps not surprising that Jesus tells them a parable about a king. Except it's not what they, or anyone else would have expected, or even wanted to hear. It's a parable about a nobleman, who leaves his homeland on a long journey to a far country, to go and receive the authority to reign as king, and then returns. And it's a parable about stewardship and judgment. The stewardship of his servants who wait for him to return as king and the judgment that comes to those who don't want him as king.

So, we're going to look at the king, his servants and his enemies.

The King
Now, you may not know this, but Jesus takes a well-known story and puts a different kind of spin on it. You see when King Herod the Great died in 4BC, he left the kingdom of Judea to his son Archelaus. And just as his father had done before him, Archelaus made the journey to Rome, to be declared king of Judea by the emperor Augustus. Except, the Jewish people hated Archelaus, because he was as murderous a tyrant as his father had been before him. So the Jewish leaders sent a delegation to Rome, asking that Archelaus not be made king. Well, Augustus kind of did and didn't listen – he did give Archelaus the kingdom, but only with the title of Ethnarch – not king. He told him he had to earn the title of king by good behavior – which he never did.

And Jesus takes that story – and He uses it as the basis for His own story. You see, whilst the disciples and the crowd are expecting the kingdom of God to appear immediately, Jesus tells them, 'it's not going to happen the way you expect'. They are right – He is the King, but before they see that He will leave them, like a man going on a long journey to a far country. But He will return, and when He does, it will be to rule and reign as King and then His power will be displayed in all its fullness.

But until that time, there is this gap. And the disciples, and you and I, live in that gap. We live in the gap between Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension into heaven – where He has received the authority from God the Father to reign as king – and His return to rule and reign as king. We live in this gap when the King

is absent, but ready to return to reign. And the question is, how should you live in that gap? What are you supposed to do, how are you supposed to live your life while the king is gone?

Well, that's the point of the parable. Jesus is once again preparing the disciples for the fact that He is going to leave them, and here is how they are to live in His absence.

The King's Servants
V12-13: A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.''

The first thing we can say about the King's servants is that they don't waste their lives – they invest them.

Invest your life, don't waste it
It's interesting isn't it that Jesus says there were 10 servants, and not 12. If there were 12 you might sit there and think, well this only refers to the original 12 disciples, and therefore the one who fluffs it must be Judas, and so this really doesn't have much to do with me! But Jesus doesn't say 12 servants, He says 10, and that is a nice round, inclusive number, and it includes you. If you're a Christian, you are one of these servants.

But I want you to notice what the king gives to each servant. You see, Jesus told another parable, similar to this one, called the parable of the talents. And in that parable each servant was given different amounts to invest: one got 5 talents, another two and another one talent. And the emphasis there is – we've all been given different gifts by God and we each need to use them. But Jesus doesn't tell it like that here. He doesn't get these ten servants together and say, right you get ten minas, you get 6 and you get 3 and a half. No, every servant gets the same. One mina.

So this isn't about, 'we all have different gifts and abilities' – this is: we have all been given the same thing – one life. Everyone of us, from those first disciples down, has been entrusted with this one life to live for the king until He comes again. And the king says, v13, 'engage in business until I come.' Take you life and invest it. Don't squander it, don't waste it, don't fritter it away on that which has no meaning and no return. Put your life to work for that which increases the wealth of the king. Invest your life, until you die or He returns, in that which extends Jesus' kingdom.

Now, I want to apply this to two groups specifically. The first is to those of you mums with young kids. You see, when the king returns and commends the good servants he says that they have 'been faithful in *a very little'* (v17). And I suspect that there are times when it seems like what you are doing day in and day out is very little. And you're changing nappies, and feeding mouths and wiping noses and you can think: is this it? Did I really study for this? Does this have any value, any significance outside these four claustrophobic walls? And Jesus is saying can

I trust you with this? Will you care for them, for me? Will you take these little ones and love them and teach them and model what it means to be my disciple to them? Will you invest your life in their lives for me and my kingdom? Because what can seem so little and small and even mindless at times, is Jesus entrusting to us parents the task of watching over and tending the green shoots of His kingdom in their hearts and lives, and asking us to be faithful in that. And, you know, I am hard pressed to think of any callings that come higher than that.

But the second group I want to apply this to are those of you, men and women, who are involved in business in whatever form. Because whilst this parable is not about business and making profit per se, it sure speaks to it. Now, for some of you I suspect it's not that work and striving to make a profit – and engaging in business, is a *little* thing, but rather at times it is too big a thing in your life. But that's not the point here. Rather, the danger is in seeing what you are doing – your work - as somehow unholy, and unspiritual and unconnected from the task of seeing Jesus' kingdom extended. And even if you wouldn't express it quite like this, you at least feel this sacred – secular divide, and worship is on Sundays and work the rest of the week, and that is just plain wrong.

Don't you think it's interesting that Jesus chooses to use a business analogy here? He's preparing these disciples and you and me for this period when He is away, and He is telling us we each have one life to invest for His kingdom and He chooses 'engage in business' to describe what He wants us to do. He doesn't say – whilst I'm gone, I want you to withdraw into inactive piety, I just want you to gather round in a circle and all hold hands and sing kum by yah together! No he says, work, put your life to work, be faithful in that which God has entrusted to you. Make money and then use that money to grow Jesus' kingdom and increase His wealth in the lives of others.

I was speaking with a friend this week whose work includes investment and fund management. And he was telling me how he consciously sees the wealth he manages as the Lord's. God has given it to him to invest and he wants to do that in a way that brings God glory, sees the kingdom grow. And that is a great attitude. But you don't have to be handling wealth to do that – it's your life and everything else He has entrusted to you, that He asks you to steward, and invest and be faithful and fruitful in.

Because that's the lesson of these 3 servants. One of them is really fruitful – he takes his mina and he gets a 1000% return on it. The second, he's still faithful, even though he's a bit less fruitful and he's made 5 minas more from his one mina. But then there's the third servant. And he has done precisely nothing.

Well, maybe that's a bit harsh – he took his mina and he wrapped it in a handkerchief. Isn't that sweet?

The king told him to do business with it, but he didn't. The king entrusted his wealth to him and he just let it sit there. He does nothing. He's like the person who says they're a follower of Jesus, but there's precious little to show for it. You know, sometimes sin is not *doing something*, it's doing *nothing*. You don't have to

go out and actively do something wicked to sin – you can just sit there and do nothing. You don't give, you don't serve, you don't invest in the lives of others, you don't sacrifice yourself out of love, you don't pursue Jesus, you don't read the bible, you don't pray. Instead you wrap yourself in a nice, comfortable handkerchief.

Now, just imagine being given 3 months wages by Jesus - that's the value of a mina – let's just round that to 30,000CHF, which seems an incredible amount of money, and He told you to invest it and use it in such a way that his kingdom grew, and he told you he'd be back later to check up on how you were doing. And imagine that he came back and found you had done nothing with it. There are people who need feeding, homeless who need housing, the unreached who have never heard the gospel, children without parents, start up businesses that need funding, and you did nothing with the money he entrusted to you?

Well, our lives are that investment, they are that wealth he gives to everyone of us. And to be unfaithful and unfruitful you don't have to do anything bad, you just have to do nothing.

Now, why does this third servant behave the way he does? Why does he waste what has been entrusted to him, rather than invest it. The answer is that he simply does not know his king. And not knowing him, he cannot love him, or trust him, or have any desire to work to see his master's wealth grow.

Listen to what he says: v21, 'I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man' – literally, an austere man, 'you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'

Now firstly, it's fascinating isn't it, that he blames the king for his failure? It's your fault your majesty that I didn't do what you asked of me! And don't you find yourself doing that sometime – 'God, it's not my fault I reacted like that, it's not my fault I responded like that, it's because you allowed this to happen in my life, if you had only done this or that, I wouldn't have behaved like that.' You know, one of the key steps in maturity is taking responsibility for yourself, and for your sin and owning it as your own.

But secondly, this servant simply doesn't share His master's interest in seeing the kingdom thrive. He doesn't trust his master, he doesn't love his master, because he doesn't know him. Before we get to this unfaithful servant, we have watched as this king distributes and entrusts his wealth to his servants. Then when one comes back with ten minas he is rewarded with ten cities, and when one comes back with 5 minas, he gets given 5 cities. This king isn't austere, he is overwhelmingly generous. And the preceding generosity proves this guy just doesn't know his King. If he did, he would have served him with a glad heart. And if you are struggling to get a vision for generous, sacrificial living, and investing your life for Jesus and His kingdom, then get to know Jesus. Get to know the king, and your delight in serving him with follow on behind.

But the third error this unfaithful servant commits, is that he forgets that what has been entrusted to him is the King's. When the king confronts him with his failure he says in v23, 'why then did you not put MY money in the bank.' You see, it never was this servant's money to do with as he liked. He was just the steward. And you and I have been entrusted with this life, and all the stuff that comes with it – children, and wealth, and work and influence, and it isn't ours to do with as we like. It all belongs to the King, and we are to invest it and spend it for Him and His glory.

Well, if the first thing we can say about the king's servants is that they don't waste their lives, they invest them, the second thing we can say is that they will be rewarded.

You will be rewarded

Whilst Jesus is preparing His disciples for His going away, He also makes it really clear he's coming back. V15 – 'when he [the king] returned.' So, this life will come to an end. Either the king will return, or you and I will return to the king. And when the king comes back, as in the parable, it will be a day of reckoning, when we will give an account for what we have done with what has been entrusted to us. But whilst it will be a day of reckoning, the stunning thing about this parable is that it will also be a day of reward. And the scale of the reward is simply off the scale.

The King comes back and the first servant says to him, v16, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' This servant knows that what he has been given is the Lord's, and despite making a 1000% profit, he claims zero credit for it, there's not even a hint of 'haven't I done well, aren't I the fruitful one!' – his response is: it's yours Lord, what you gave me was yours and it's multiplied, and it's still all yours.

And yet despite the fact that it was the Lord's in the first place, He showers these faithful servants with reward. Firstly, there is the commendation: v17, 'And he said to him, 'well done, good servant.' Now I don't know what you are living for. I don't know what you are investing your life for. But in the light of eternity, there is nothing you can give your life for - no career, no wealth, no sporting success, no relationship, no nothing, that can come close to hearing those words from Jesus on the last day, when you breath your last and you are standing before him. Nothing can come close to the reward of those four, simple words – 'well done, good servant.' Everything else will fall away at that moment: all the pain, all the tears, all the cost, all the choices you have made, everything will come right, when those words ring in your ears.

Then there is the fact that the rewards of eternity will differ. The servant who invested in such a way that he saw 10 minas come back, got 10 cities, and the servant who got a return of 5 minas got 5 cities. And the one who squandered his opportunity lost everything. And the sobering but ultimately inspiring truth is, that the person who spends their life serving Jesus and others, investing in His kingdom in whatever field he calls you to, living humbly and for His glory will get

a greater reward than the Christian who is lazy or self centered and lives for his own glory.

But just look at the scale of the reward: Imagine that this first servant was given 30000 CHF, and by investing them he makes 300,000 – 10 x what he was given. Now that's a lot of money he's made. But it is nothing in comparison to the reward he gets – 10 cities. Here's 300,000 Lord. Well done, good servant. Here you can have London, and Paris, and Berne, and Geneva, and Zurich and New York, and Beijing and Prague and Rome, and Berlin. This is no austere King, this is a King abounding in generosity to those whom he has already been gracious to entrust His riches to. And this is the king you and I have the privilege to serve.

But not everyone sees it that way. And within this parable there are really two parallel stories. There are the servants who serve the King and there are some citizens who hate him. They don't want this King to rule over them. So, in closing let's look at the King's enemies.

The King's Enemies
V14, But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' V27, 'But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'

Now, those words: enemies, and slaughter, those are strong words. But the hard truth is, not everyone wants Jesus as their king. When Jesus told this parable, those enemies would have been the Jewish religious leaders, but ultimately it's anyone who doesn't want to acknowledge the claims of Jesus upon their life. They don't want God invading their personal space. When Jesus reaches Jerusalem He is put on trial for His life, and as He stands with Pilate before the crowd, the crowd are crying out, 'crucify him, crucify him'. And Pilate asks, 'what? Shall I crucify your king?' And the response of the crowd was 'we have no king but Caesar.' We don't want him as our king.

But here's the thing. The King who will one day judge His enemies and reject those who have rejected Him, is the same King who was himself slaughtered in front of His enemies and for His enemies. The prophet Isaiah, who saw it all coming 700 years before Jesus' death, wrote, 'All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned – every one - to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.' (Is 53:6-7).

And this King, Jesus, was slaughtered as a sacrificial lamb so that He might bear the punishment for the sins of His enemies. This king surrendered Himself to death on a cross so that you and I – His enemies - might become His friends and never face the judgment He speaks of. He was rejected that we might be accepted. He gave up His life, so that you might have life: a life to invest in His kingdom. And He calls every enemy to lay down his arms, and instead come and know Him and love Him and serve this generous, gracious King.