

The Return of the King

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[0 : 00] Father, you taught us to live by faith and not by sight. To live by what we know and believe to be true.

And to be governed by that truth. And not by our changing circumstances. Or our changing feelings. We want to be faithful servants that wait on you.

That steward the precious gospel that you've entrusted to us throughout our lives. And to that end, we need your help. So please, address us once again as you always do as your people.

Transform us by your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Luke 19, 11-27.

He said to them, Engage in business until I come. But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him saying, We do not want this man to reign over us.

[1 : 41] 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.

The first came before him saying, Lord, your mina has made ten minas more. 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. And the second came saying, Lord, your mina has made five minas.

And he said to him, And you are to be over five cities. Then another came saying, Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief.

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. He said to him, I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant.

[2 : 49] You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank?

And at my coming, I might have collected it with interest. And he said to those who stood by, Take the mina from him and give it to the one who has ten minas. And they said to him, Lord, he has ten minas.

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. But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. I once read a children's book for my daughters entitled Waiting is Not Easy. It's a famous one.

You guys might know about it. It's from the famous series by Mo Williams called Elephant and Piggy. And they're two friends who have very different personalities but get along well.

[3 : 55] And in this particular book, Piggy tells Elephant that he has a surprise for him. And Elephant, of course, is delighted to hear that his friend has a surprise for him. And then he says, I cannot wait because he's so excited.

And, of course, Piggy tells him, well, you will have to wait. And at which point Elephant responds in disbelief, wait? What? Why? Piggy tells him that the surprise is not here yet.

At which point Elephant groans loudly and then says, I'm waiting. Waiting is not easy. And then he grabs Piggy's collar and shakes him vigorously and then says, I'm done waiting.

I do not think your surprise is worth all this waiting. I will not wait anymore. And then he leaves briefly only to then return sheepishly and say, okay, I'll wait some more. This goes on and on and on.

And it's really cleverly written because as you're going through the book, with each page, you become more impatient. You're waiting for the resolution. What is this surprise?

[5 : 00] I want to see. And so it kind of makes the reader experience exactly what Elephant is feeling. Because waiting is not easy. And in the end, they wait so long that the sun goes down and the elephant yells in exasperation, And we have wasted the whole day.

We have waited and waited and waited and waited. And for what? And at that moment, Piggy points to the sky and says, for that. And there's a beautiful starlit sky.

And the elephant looks at that and says, that was worth the wait. Waiting isn't easy. And we feel this keenly, especially in our age of distraction and instant gratification.

And Jesus understands this. And waiting, even though it's hard for us, has never been easy for humanity to begin with. And Jesus, understanding this, wanted to leave his disciples with something as they are waiting for his return.

Because these disciples believed that Jesus would immediately establish the kingdom of God in fullness. But Jesus knew that the time for the fullness of the kingdom had not yet come. There would be a period of waiting after his death, resurrection, and ascension.

[6 : 12] And we see this intention of Jesus in verse 11. As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable. Because he was near to Jerusalem. And because they, the disciples, supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

They thought Jesus, upon going to Jerusalem, would establish the kingdom of God and overthrow the Roman oppressors. And establish a theocratic state again. And yet, Jesus wants to correct this misconception.

It's true that throughout the Gospel of Luke, in multiple occasions, that Jesus has said that the kingdom of God has already come upon you. It's already here. And that's true in the sense that the kingdom of God has already begun to break into our world through the life and work of Jesus Christ. But even though it's already here, it's not yet consummated. It has not been fulfilled. And there's a distance, a gap between his first coming and his second coming. And in order to be faithful in that waiting, this passage teaches us that we must expect his return and rule.

And so the main point of this passage really is that we should faithfully steward the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because when Christ returns, he will rule and he will repay his subjects accordingly.

[7 : 28] And the first, we'll see that the king will return to rule. And second, we see that the king will return to repay. Okay. Verses 12 to 14 set the scene for the parable and introduce us to all the main characters.

First, it says in verse 12, A noble man went to a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. So the word noble man, when it's used in the Greek word, it of course does refer as in the English to the fact that this person belongs to the landed gentry.

This person is of noble birth. But almost always, it also refers to the person's noble character. This person is of noble, of character. He has a good character.

He's a gentleman, a worthy man. But he journeys to a far country in order to receive a vassal kingship or a client kingship. A client king reigns over a region on behalf of kind of a controlling king, a suzerain king that's over the entire will.

And this is a concept that was very familiar to the Jews in Palestine at the time because Herod the Great, or Herod the First, also went on a similar journey to Rome before the beginning of his reign to receive this client kingship over Judea from the Roman emperor.

[8 : 45] And in this analogy, the noble man is Jesus and the one from whom he receives a kingdom is his father who rules over all. And Jesus is saying that he must depart from his disciples first to receive a kingdom and then return.

And this was spoken of earlier in Luke chapter 9 verse 31 when Jesus spoke of his departure that he was going to accomplish at Jerusalem. And that departure is a reference to his death and his resurrection and his ascension to heaven and after which he'll return.

And so he's going away to a far country and the disciples are to wait for him. The consummation of the kingdom is not going to be immediate. But before he departs, this noble man, he says that he's called his ten of his servants, verse 13, gave them ten minus and said to them, engage in business until I come.

The servants here are the second character in the parable. These are servants that belong to and are accountable to their master, the noble man. Interestingly, the noble man calls ten of his servants.

If Jesus intended to refer only to his apostles, there were twelve apostles, he could have easily said twelve servants. But he doesn't. He uses a more generic number that symbolizes a large number, a ten.

[10:06] Ten disciples. And that he does it intentionally, I think, to show that all of his disciples and future followers of Jesus Christ are intended. All the future followers of Christ that come after the twelve apostles.

All of us are in view here. We're his servants. And to these ten servants, the noble man distributes ten minas, meaning each one gets one mina. Mina is a Hebrew currency that's equivalent to about 100 Roman denarii.

Since the denarius was the standard daily wage of a common worker, one mina is worth about four months' wages. So whatever that is for you, you can think about kind of the average income.

And three to six months' worth of expenses is recommended for your emergency fund. So imagine receiving kind of what's worth your emergency fund from the noble man. And the charge of the noble man to the ten servants is engage in business until I come.

He wants them to put the mina that each of them has received to good use and to make a profit from it. And then in verse 14, we meet the final character in this parable. He says, These are citizens of the state that the noble man will come to rule over if he receives a kingship.

[11:29] But they don't want him to become king over them. And so they send a delegation after him to protest to the controlling king. This man is no good. He's not fit to rule. We don't want him as king over us.

There's a historical backdrop to this that happened, you know, less than 30, around 30 years, actually before Jesus' time. It was in the first century Palestine after Herod the Great died. His son, Herod Archelaus, was expected to succeed the throne over the client kingship in Judea. However, and this king is mentioned in Matthew 2.22.

However, because his soldiers had been irresponsible and had slaughtered during the Passover 3,000 Jewish worshippers in the temple, the Jews, for understandable reasons, didn't want King Archelaus to become king over Judea.

And so when King Archelaus went to Rome to receive his kingship, the Jews sent a delegation after him to protest and say that they don't want this guy to be king over them.

[12:31] And in order to balance the politics, the Roman emperor gave him kind of a kingship in terms of authority, but not the title. And of course, after returning, he swiftly eliminated all the opposition.

And so that's kind of in the background of this parable. Even though, obviously, Jesus is not the wicked king that King Herod Archelaus was. But it's very similar to what's going on.

Because these citizens hate him here without cause. They don't say, we do not want this noble man to reign over us. They use kind of a derogatory way of referring to him.

They say, we do not want this man to reign over us. Literally, it's, we do not want this one to rule over us. We don't want that one. This one.

And so they object to him without cause. There's nothing in the parable that suggests that this noble man was worthy of their hatred and ire.

[13:30] They despise the man. And since in the Gospel of Luke, the Jewish religious leaders are highlighted as people who consistently reject Jesus and oppose Jesus, there's probably a specific reference to them, even though it can be interpreted to mean all those who reject Jesus.

It says in John 1.11, Jesus says that he came, it says of Jesus that he came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

These Jewish leaders. These are the citizens of the kingdom that Jesus will come to ruin, come to rule. And as opposed to the servants who were mentioned earlier, these citizens have rights.

The servants are presumably slaves of perhaps foreign birth, as was typical in this age in Palestine in the Roman Empire. Citizens, on the other hand, had rights.

They belonged to the emperor. And they had more reputation. The slaves, the servants, on the other hand, were often marginalized and disenfranchised.

[14:37] And this is often the case for the Christian. Usually, throughout the world and throughout history, Christians belong to groups and parties that are marginalized, persecuted.

This is the case throughout the world even today. According to a review commissioned by the U.K. Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, as well as by the U.S. Commission on International Religious

Freedom, Christians are, to this day, the most persecuted religious group in the world. Open Doors USA, which compiles the World Watch List of 50 countries where Christians faced the heaviest persecution, writes that in 2018 alone, 245 million Christians faced high levels of persecution.

4,136 Christians were killed for their faith. 1,266 church buildings were attacked. All of them, only in those top 50 world watch list countries.

And this is to fulfill what Jesus taught his disciples in John 15, 18-19. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you are of the world, the world would love you as its own. [15:54] But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. And we see this happening in this parable. The citizens hated the nobleman, which means these citizens will also hate the servants who do the nobleman's bidding.

They will also become the objects of their hatred. And in that kind of climate, it's difficult to persevere. It's hard for the servants of the Lord to remain faithful when their Lord seems to be delayed in his coming.

And yet there's this powerful contingent of citizens that oppose their master's rule. The influential people, the citizens don't seem to support him.

Should I then switch allegiances to ensure that I'm a member of the party in power? However, it's easy to be disheartened and discouraged in a climate of opposition and persecution.

And that's exactly why Jesus tells his disciples this parable. Because when there's uncertainty about the master's return, when there's uncertainty about who's the true leader of a society, usually chaos ensues and people vie for power.

[17:08] However, if we do not have firm faith that Christ will return triumphantly as king, we will succumb to the pressures that we face in this world.

We will hedge our bets. We will not be completely sold out for the Lord. But if we know for sure that he will return, we will not worry about the judgments of men.

Because we care only about our master's judgment, his esteem of us. So we will not be swayed to and fro by the opinions of men because we care only about doing the will of our king.

That's why Jesus assures his disciples that he will certainly return to rule. He says in verse 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.

And later, verse 27, the king says, But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.

[18:13] Notice the transition. The people who were formerly called citizens are now called enemies. Disloyal subjects will ultimately become enemies of the state.

Those who reject Christ as their king will ultimately lose their citizenship in the kingdom of God. It will prove that they had no citizenship to begin with. This is a promise of justice and vindication. The enemies of God who taunted the people of God, who falsely accused the king, they will be silenced, be defeated.

It sounds harsh unless you're on the receiving end of injustice. That's kind of how our world functions.

Everybody cries for mercy unless they're the ones that have been wronged. And then now all of a sudden they want justice. Christians who suffer in this world, Christians who experience this kind of opposition, understand the vindication, the victory, the joy that this brings, this promises, that Christ is coming back and he will make all things right.

[19:28] This is a promise that no matter how life gets for the followers of Christ, no matter how many tears you shed in this life of following Christ, no matter how many difficult battles you fight against the sins of your life, against demons both figurative and literal, against the systems of evil and oppression in this world, even when you suffer and struggle and grieve because you see so much sin and wickedness in this world, when you persevere to the end, all of your sorrows will be healed.

All of your questions will be answered. And Jesus will make all things right again because Christ will come. He will return to rule. That's the promise. So will you submit to his lordship now?

That's the question. Will you serve him in this life because that's the only way you'll get to serve him in eternal life? Only those who pledge allegiance to Jesus in this life will be counted as citizens of the kingdom of God.

That's the first point. The king will return to rule. And not only will the king return to rule, when he returns, the king will also repay everyone according to their deeds.

We see this starting in verse 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.

[20 : 56] The noble man who went away to a far country has returned as king, and he now wants an accounting of what his servants have done in his absence. He wants to know if they put the money that he entrusted to them to good use and made some profit to show for it.

And we see several different responses to this accounting. It says in verse 16, The first came before him, the first servant, saying, Lord, your mina has made ten minas more. It's a very encouraging response.

With one mina, the servant has made ten minas more. A thousand percent profit. And the king responds, first by commending the servant, recognizing his hard work, and then he rewards a servant and then he gives the reason for this reward.

He says in verse 17, Well done, good servant. It's his recognition, his commendation. And then he says, Because you have been faithful in a very little, this is the reason for the reward. And this reason is very similar to Jesus, what he said in Luke 16, 10.

One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much. And one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. It's an illusion to think that lazy people will all of a sudden become diligent when they are entrusted with more important tasks.

[22 : 16] It's an illusion to think that people who lie about small, petty things will not lie about more important things. People who cut corners in small matters will also cut corners in big matters.

It's the people who are faithful in what is very little, who will also be faithful with much. It's people who manage, for example, their own households well that will manage the household of God well. It's people who are generous with their middle class income that will also be generous when they are rich. Likewise, our earthly stewardship is a test of our heavenly, test for our heavenly entrustment.

It determines what we are worthy of in the eternal kingdom of God. But what exactly is this mina that we're supposed to steward?

Often we assume that a mina is a reference to our talents and gifts. That was my initial reaction as well. And that's because we're so familiar with the parable of the talents, which is kind of a similar parable, a more familiar parable from Matthew 25.

[23 : 30] And related to that, one of my seminary professors used to always talk about the things that we're supposed to steward in our life. And he used alliteration to say, we're supposed to steward our time, our trust, our temple, our treasure, our talent.

All starting with T, even though it's not always obvious what they mean. We're supposed to steward a time that God has given us. We're supposed to make the best use of the time because the days are evil. We're supposed to steward our trust, the trust that we have from others, our relationships, relationships that God has given us, our neighbors, our friends, our relatives.

We're supposed to steward our temple, meaning the body of Christ, our body, physical bodies, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, according to 1 Corinthians 6.19. We're supposed to steward our treasure, literal treasure, our money, making heavenly friends, advancing a heavenly agenda using our earthly wealth, according to Luke 69.

We're also supposed to steward our talent, the gifts that God has given us, abilities, using them effectively for the glory of God. Now, these are all biblical ideas. They're true.

But I don't think that's the kind of stewardship that Luke has in mind. And the reason why is this. In the parable of talents, in Matthew 25, 14 to 30, the servants all receive different amounts of talents.

[24 : 56] The first talent is, the first servant is given five talents, second is given two, and then a third is given one. And it says, it was according to each one's ability.

In Matthew, this parable explicitly refers to the fact that the parables are proportionate to that person's ability. It represents their talents, their gifts, the opportunities that they have because of the gifts that they possess, that God has given them.

But in this parable, in Luke, every servant receives one minor. There's no distinction, no differentiation. What's more likely in view in this parable, it's the stewardship of the gospel.

It's the stewardship of the word of God that God has entrusted to us because to engage in God's business as God's servants is to be a disciple and to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

The minor then represents the entrustment of God's precious word, his message of salvation through Jesus Christ, that he lived, died, and was raised from the dead for the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of sinners.

[26 : 11] That's, I think, what this minor represents. Every believer then is called to be this steward, a servant of the message of Jesus Christ. Paul spoke often about this reality, that he's a steward of the gospel, that he's a servant of God to proclaim the word.

And I think this identification of the minor is confirmed by the metaphor of farming that is used later in verses 21 and 22. It mentions reaping and sowing. Jesus used the exact same language earlier in chapter 8 in the parable of the sower, and there he explicitly said, the seed is the word of God.

Now, that's not to say that the gospel of Jesus Christ is insignificant or very little. The gospel is the pearl of great price, of great value. Rather, our role of gospel stewardship in light of all of God's kingdom purposes is minuscule, relatively speaking.

What we are entrusted with in the entire complex of kingdom economy is very little. We're a small part of the whole picture. And this is actually very encouraging for me.

I hope it's encouraging for you as well because this means whether you're a lay member, just a regular member of a small village church of 20 people, or you're a pastor of a mega church of 100,000 people.

[27 : 38] Your role in gospel ministry and the advancement of the kingdom of God is very small in light of all that God is doing. What matters is whether or not you're faithful with that very little that you have.

are you engaging in kingdom business with your life? Are you putting the gospel of Jesus Christ to work, both in your life or your own sanctification and growth as a Christian, but also in the lives of others?

Are you sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, investing it, sowing those seeds to see if they will bear fruit among your neighbors and friends? If you are doing that, then God will reward you after His return and He will reward you with things that are far greater, far greater responsibilities than you can even dream of in this life.

Look at what the king says to this first servant in verse 17. You shall have authority over ten cities. One mina, it's worth about \$12,000 in our day.

It's not enough to buy a house. You can't even buy a trailer home with that. But because He was faithful in that role of stewarding one mina, the Master now gives Him ten cities to rule over.

[29 : 08] It's a staggering responsibility. This shows us that Jesus' ultimate plan is to have us, His people, share in His life the rule of His kingdom, to partake in His reign.

And this is so encouraging because maybe you feel at times that your current role in serving Christ is very small. Maybe you feel that you have little power or influence in your life.

Maybe you feel that your circle of friends, your neighbors, is very few. And that what you're doing for the Lord is insignificant, even negligible.

If that's you, let this truth encourage you. All that we do in light of God's eternal kingdom is very small indeed.

But if you are faithful in that little bit, if you share the gospel with your few friends and neighbors, God will entrust much to you in the coming kingdom, in the consummated kingdom.

[30 : 11] and what He entrusts to you will far exceed and transcend all of your wildest ambitions and desires in this life. So don't despise the smallness of your ministry.

Cherish it. Be faithful in it, knowing that it was given to you by the King who is coming back, the King who sees everything and reward faithfully according to our deeds.

The returning king's response to the second servant is very similar in verse 18 to 19. And the second came saying, Lord, your mina has made five minas.

And he said to him, and you are to be over five cities. Once again, very generous. This exchange is abbreviated. It doesn't have the commendation that was there in the first servant.

But the following reward, which is also proportionate to his labor and his profit, shows that this second servant also deserves commendation, praise, from the master.

[31 : 16] He too is a good servant. He made five additional minas and he's rewarded with authority over five cities. Now, this parable teaches us that some of us will make more of our gospel

stewardship than others.

And that there will be varying degrees of rewards in the kingdom of God. Sometimes, I think we're surprised by this fact, but the Bible consistently teaches that there are varying rewards in heaven. 1 Corinthians 3, 13 to 15, for example, says this, on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value.

If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.

There will be a difference in the final judgment of how we will be saved. Some servants of Christ will be saved, but just themselves without any lasting work labor onto the kingdom to show for it.

[32 : 21] Other servants of Christ will be saved and their work will survive the testing and they will be rewarded for the good work that they have done. I think we have a hard time coming to terms with this reality because we live in an egalitarian society and we imagine heaven to be a totally egalitarian place.

And I think we imagine heaven to be that kind of a place because we believe that only in such a place that people can all be perfectly happy. But that's actually not true.

Equality is necessary for happiness in this world because we are prideful people who believe that we deserve at least as much as everyone else and because we envy one another.

Where there is no pride, no envy, there's no strife between people regardless of differentiation of roles and station. We'll all be perfectly satisfied in our respective capacity to enjoy God and to rule in the kingdom of God.

And there will be no sin, so we will all be perfectly happy. There will be no envy, no pride, no quarreling among us. But these rewards are here to motivate us.

[33 : 44] Does it not motivate you to be faithful with the very little that you have been entrusted with? Don't you want to have greater responsibilities in the kingdom of God?

Don't you want to enjoy greater privileges in the kingdom of God? Don't you want to render greater service to our gracious king? Isn't that the heartbeat of every Christian?

Because we should faithfully steward the gospel of Jesus Christ because he will surely return to repay everyone according to their deeds. Now in verses 20 to 21 we see the response of the third servant.

And this servant has the leaf to report but he has made no profit and yet he talks the most. We already get a clue that it is not going to end well by the way he's called.

He's not called the third servant. He's simply referred to as another or the other one. There were ten servants to begin with. Jesus doesn't go through each one because he only needs three servants to make his point.

[34 : 51] But this last servant that is featured is of a different character than the first two. He's the other servant. And he says in verse 20 this servant says, Lord here is your mina which I have kept laid away in a handkerchief.

Now think about that for a moment. The word keep laid away means to put away for safe keeping. But think about something that's precious that you want to keep away.

Secure. And then look at where the servant's keeping the money. In a handkerchief. He makes it sound like it's virtuous of him to try to keep the mina safe.

But he was careless and irresponsible. It's like folding something away in a napkin. I wouldn't even put a hundred dollar bill away in a handkerchief. Let alone three months of wages. There was a saying among the Jews that if you want to keep your money safe, you should bury it in the ground instead of folding it away in a handkerchief.

This servant puts the money away in a handkerchief. What if someone tosses it into the laundry pile and throws away? Or if it gets lost, someone just throws it away, or it's to be tossing it like garbage.

[36 : 06] He was not being overly cautious with the master's money. He was actually being careless. But worse than that, he was being blatantly disobedient. His master had commanded him in verse 13, engage in business until I come.

And the servant engaged in no business. He didn't do what he was explicitly asked by his master to do. And he gives this excuse in verse 21, which is even more brazen.

He says, for, this is his reason, 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.

To paraphrase, you know what the real problem is, master? It's you. You're a severe man, a cutthroat businessman.

You're always wheeling and dealing. You exploit people and situations by taking advantage. You reap what you didn't even sow.

[37 : 18] So I had no choice. I was afraid of you. I had to keep the minus safe somewhere instead of risking it by engaging in business. Perhaps this servant thought to himself, well, if I make a profit, it would become my master's money anyway.

If I lose it, well, I'll be held accountable for it, so why bother? Might as well avoid all the trouble, just put it away for safe keeping. In defending his own virtue, this third servant is impugning the very character of his own master, but the truth is that this master doesn't fit this servant's description or characterization in any way.

First, he was described as being of noble character in verse 12, and in second, we see how he dealt with the first and second servants. He was exceedingly generous with them.

They were faithful with very little, and he gave them cities to rule over in his kingdom. He was not stingy, he was not harsh or berating. And as he comes to the five-minus servant, he doesn't compare him to the ten-minus servant, saying, well, is that the best you could do?

I mean, look at that guy, he got ten, he had the same minus. He doesn't belittle his servants. He's gracious, kind, generous.

[38 : 48] This third servant is slandering his master based on a misjudgment of his character. There's an important lesson here for us all. Do you see God as a harsh task master?

God as a hard man, a severe person, if you view God as a stingy, ungenerous, ungracious person, you will not be diligent in his service.

Who wants to serve that kind of Lord? I mean, several studies have noted that even in our workplaces, harsh, berating bosses reduce productivity of his employees.

If they get burned long enough instead of looking out for the interest of the company, they'll start looking out for themselves. But our king is good and gracious. He's slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He is merciful and compassionate and this truth should make us eager to serve God. It should make us look out for his interests and not for our selfish interests.

[39 : 58] He's eager to reward the faithfulness of his servants. So when you bumble your attempt to share the gospel with your neighbor, God's not going to berate you and say, is that the best you can do?

That was my one chance at saving that man's life and you blew it. Now you go sit in the corner and never open your mouth again. God's not going to treat his servants that way.

Brothers and sisters, if I saw God to be that kind of God, and as a pastor who preaches his word week in and week out, if I saw God that way, I would crumble under the pressure and I would never have the courage to step up to the pulpit if that's how God treats his servants.

But our God is gracious. Time and time again, he encourages his servants, he comforts me, he comforts all of us, lifts up our head and pushes us forward, reminds us that fruitfulness and growth they come from ultimately him, he's the one that provides.

As God says in his word in 1 Corinthians 3 and Mark 4, we sow the seed and we can water it, but only God gives the growth. That's why Christian pastor and author Mark Dever puts it this way in his book, Gospel and Personal Evangelism, he says, we don't fail in our evangelism if we faithfully tell the gospel to someone who is not on account of that converted.

[41 : 29] We fail only if we don't faithfully tell the gospel at all. Evangelism itself isn't converting people, it's telling them that they need to be converted and telling them how they can be.

No matter how eloquent or persuasive we are, we cannot take someone who is spiritually dead and make them alive again. Only God can do that. Only God can bring the dead to life.

But will you be faithful with the little he's given you? Invest that miner, sow that seed. This other servant was not faithful to obey his master and is roundly rebuked in verses 22 to 23.

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.

Why then did you not put my money in the bank and at my coming I might have collected it with interest? The king is turning the excuse of the servant and using it against him. Because if you really believe that I was this cutthroat businessman who makes unreasonable demands of his

servants, you should have at least put the mina in the bank and then he would have safely accrued interest in my absence without you having to raise a finger.

[42 : 50] Now this rebuke shows that this servant had not only misjudged his master, he was also lazy and foolish. If he feared God, he should have tried to produce something to show upon his master's return.

But he did nothing. Sometimes people say things like, well, the God of the Bible seems so harsh. I don't want to believe him. I don't want to believe in a God like that.

But let me ask you, if God really is harsh, well, then you better believe him and get to work. Right? When people say that, what they really mean is, well, I can't imagine that God is like that, so he must not be like that.

Which is just as foolish as a high schooler saying, well, I can't imagine a solution to this math problem, so there must not be a solution. That's a poor excuse for not doing your math homework. It's an even poorer excuse for doing nothing in the kingdom of God. Even if you have a wrong view of God, that should lead to some action. The servant's apathy shows that he really did not care about God and his kingdom at all.

[44 : 06] And we see that clearly in the king's punishment in verses 24 to 26. And he said to those who stood by, take the mina from him and give it to the one who has the ten minus.

And they said to him, Lord, he has ten minus. The third servant's one mina is given to the one who has made ten minus profits. So then he now has twelve. And they protest people around him, oh Lord, he already has ten minus profit.

Lord, it's unfair to take away this servant's money. He only has one mina to give it to this servant who has ten. Presumably the additional mina would also translate to additional kingdom or reward. And the master explains his rationality in verse 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.

There was an American philosopher and author named Albert Hubbard who once put it this way. He said, if you want anything done, ask a busy man to do it. This is a truism, it's not always true, but it's generally true because the busy man is usually busy because he has shown that he can get stuff done.

[45 : 17] That's why people have given him a lot of things to do. The idea is similar to what we find here. It's the servant that has proven most faithful that should be entrusted with the most responsibility.

Jesus said something very similar in Luke 8, 18. the parable of the sower, which I referenced earlier in that same context. Take care how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.

Jesus is warning us then to take care how we listen to and obey the word of God. Those who listen well and live obedience to God's word will be given more, but those who do not listen well will have even what they thought they had was an illusion taken away.

The fact that this servant loses his gospel stewardship shows that he is not ultimately saved. He thought he was a Christian. He thought he was a servant of Christ.

But the way it turns out he was not. That's why he's called the wicked servant in verse 22.

[46 : 32] And let me remind you that this is the reason why the servant didn't do his work, didn't really know God. This parable reveals that this servant never knew God because he didn't know how gracious and merciful he was.

He saw him instead as a harsh taskmaster. And so let me remind you also of how gracious and merciful God really is so you can believe in him rightly and follow him truly.

God entrusted the stewardship of the earth originally in Genesis 1.28. He created man and woman and then he blessed them and he commanded them be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

That was our original stewardship but we messed it up. We sinned against God. We betrayed his trust by choosing to live for our own glory rather than for his glory.

We were meant to be his representatives but instead we became rebels, his enemies. We ruined the earth. We trashed the environment.

[47 : 41] We marred the image of God in humanity by mistreating our fellow men, abusing them, stealing from them, lying to them and killing them.

That's what humanity did to their first entrustment from God. And yet amazingly, unbelievably, in the heart of God, his dream, there's a desire to make us once again rulers in his kingdom, to share in his reign, to have authority over these cities in the kingdom of God, to restore us to right relationship with God and to entrust us such grand things.

That's his design. That's his mercy. That's his generosity. generosity. And God gives proof of that by sending his son Jesus.

In his first coming, Jesus comes in grace to die for the sins of his people so that all those who believe in him are saved, made born again. And now we can live as faithful servants from that, empowered by the Holy Spirit, as stewards of the gospel.

Let me close with a quote from Charles Spurgeon. He writes, If he gave his all to me, which was much, should I not give my little all to him?

[49 : 21] Let's be faithful stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ because he will return to rule and repay.