

The Jerusalem Road

4. A dire warning

19:11 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. 12 He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. 13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' 14 "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' 15 "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. 16 "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 17 "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' 18 "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' 19 "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' 20 "Then another servant came and said, 22 "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' 24 "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 25 "'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' 26 "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. 27 But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them--bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"

Text: I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.

President Franklin Roosevelt sometimes grew weary of long lines at White house receptions. He complained that no one paid any real attention to what was said. So one day he tried an experiment. To each person who passed down the line and shook his hand he murmured, "I murdered my grandmother this morning." The guests responded with phrases like "Marvellous!" "Keep up the good work!" "We're proud of you!" "God bless you sir!"

It was not until near the end of the line, while greeting the Ambassador from Bolivia, that his words were actually heard. Always the diplomat, the Ambassador leaned over and whispered: "I'm sure she had it coming!"

It is the preacher's nightmare - people hear what they want to hear and people see what they want to see. We have already seen how the way people viewed Jesus was quite different to the way he viewed Himself. The disciples heard what He said about dying, but only heard the bit about Him being exalted. The crowd saw Him as Jesus of Nazareth, the spectacular preacher and miracle worker and then we saw how He did not fit their mould in desiring to eat with sinners.

And here He is nearing Jerusalem and the expectation is that the kingdom was going to be revealed at once. Who was saying this - we are not told. It may well have been the disciples as we shall find next week that they were very enthusiastic about his entry to Jerusalem and there was an expectancy. It was expected from scripture - here are some examples:

You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" (Isaiah 40:9).

At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the Lord, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honour the name of the Lord. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts (Jeremiah 3:17).

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls (Joel 2:32).

But Jesus intentionally pours water on this notion of an immediate kingdom (but not on the idea of Him being king) by telling them this parable. It's sometimes called the Parable of the Pounds or the Parable of the Minas. The AV refers to the servants being given Pounds but the correct term was the Mina. It was for those days a substantial sum of money. Some compare this parable to the parable of the Talents in Matthew but this one is different and Jesus appears to have adapted the parable of the Talents to make a different point.

Jesus is emphasising again what is going to happen to Him and how his followers should therefore live.

He uses the story of a nobleman who inherits a kingdom but has to go away to receive it. It seems a bizarre thing but it seems to relate to a real event. When Herod the Great died in 4BC (he was the Herod which tried to kill Jesus), his son Archelaus had to go to Rome to arrange with the Roman Emperor to grant him his father's kingdom. The people hated Herod - hardly surprising if he committed genocide against small children for example and Archelaus was just as lousy. The Jews sent a delegation to Rome to stop this. They nearly succeeded too - Archaelus was given limited rule over part of the territory but Judea came under a Roman Procurator. Archaelus was incensed and came back and took his revenge on those who opposed him.

Jesus does not seem to be using this as a parallel because Archaelus was a wicked ruler - it seems to be an allusion to the process that He needed to go elsewhere to receive His authority in the way that the Jewish kings had to under Rome. Jesus never denied His right to kingship or that His kingship was divinely appointed (as was the principle of all Jewish kings - see the Royal Psalms).

Jesus uses the parable to suggest that He was going away to receive the kingdom and this indicates three things:

- He was coming back to physically reign in His kingdom
- He was going away and that implies He would be away some time
- He was hated by those who should have recognised Him - the Jews - because He threatened their authority and exposed their hypocrisy.

We see there are two types of people the nobleman left behind - the citizens who hated him and the servants He left with his money.

We know the story well. Two of the servants did well with their pounds and had 10 and 5 minas earned respectively. They got responsibility according to their productivity. What about the last servant. He did nothing with his mina. He put it away. He was supposed to use the money given to benefit the master. He disobeyed.

And his excuse? *‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21 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.’*

You’re a hard man, you have high standards. You are powerful, great and glorious. The implication was that he didn’t want to risk losing it.

It’s an excuse and the master sees right through it - *‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’*

Why didn’t he use the money. Because he was lazy, because he couldn’t be bothered. Maybe he enjoyed all the benefits of the master’s house without accepting the responsibility. Maybe as the master wasn’t too visible that he thought he could get away with it.

The message was one for the disciples. Jesus was going away. The kingdom was not going to be established right then - something else was going to happen as Jesus had said - and they still did not realise it by Acts 1!

But this message would be remembered. He has gone to be exalted in the highest place and He is coming back to claim that kingdom physically one day. We are His servants and we have responsibilities. He might not be bodily present right now - but the earth is still His and we have responsibilities to use what He has given us to His honour and glory.

It’s a challenge. We have been given our mina. Unlike the parable of the talents, we start with the same. It’s true, we all have the Holy Spirit, we all have the same potential and the same ability in God’s kingdom? What have we done with it? What are we doing with our mina now? Are we living in obedience to Him? Or are we enjoying all the benefits of the kingdom but are not living in obedience to Him.

What happened to the lazy servant - his mina was given to the one who could use it the most.

He was not thrown out of the master’s service but never got the blessing. That’s the saddest thing. I know some of you think that I continue on with sermons like this to guilt-

ride you into more service in the church. Not so. Apart from the fact this is in God's word so it's God speaking, my desire is to inform you that if you don't listen to the word of God, then you deprive yourself of the blessing. The Lord wants to bless you. Do we want to deprive ourselves of that because we want to walk our own way for a session.

There is coming a day when the Lord is going to examine our works. We sometimes call it the Judgement Seat of Christ and it's found better expounded in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 where we are going to have to give an account of what we have done with our Christian lives - and all our works will be examined.

1 Cor 3:10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

As with the servant there is no sense of loss of being in the Master's service, but there is loss in the sense in which we will see all the wasted, selfish acts which did not honour God be shown to be for their worthlessness.

I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.

God want us to be people that build gold, silver and precious stones? What are we building, how are we using our mina?

I believe the Lord has been challenging us as we have entered a new phase in our life as a Church to examine ourselves, examine our works. Are we living in obedience to Him - or are we suiting ourselves. His kingdom is coming, His Judgement Seat is coming. Are we going to hide our minas - or are we going to use them for His glory?

As for the citizens, there is another judgement set for them, it is different form that of the servants. It reminds us again of the real score. Our judgement is nothing compared to what they face. We are His servants - let's use what we have to extend His kingdom!