

“The Coming Kingdom”

Luke 19:11-28

There’s an old Yiddish tale that relates how “Once upon a time, Truth went about the streets as naked as the day he was born. As a result, no one would let him into their homes. Whenever people caught sight of him, they turned away and fled. One day when Truth was sadly wandering about, he came upon Parable. Parable was dressed in splendid clothes of beautiful colors. And Parable, seeing Truth, said, "Tell me, neighbor, what makes you look so sad?" Truth replied bitterly, "Ah, brother, things are bad -- very bad. I'm old -- very old, and no one wants to acknowledge me. No one wants anything to do with me."

Hearing that, Parable said, "People don't run away from you because you're old. I'm old too -- very old. But the older I get, the better people like me. I'll tell you a secret: Everyone likes things disguised and prettied up a bit. Let me lend you some splendid clothes like mine, and you'll see that the very people who ran away from you will invite you into their homes and be glad of your company." Truth took Parable's advice and put on the borrowed clothes. And from that time on, Truth and Parable have gone hand in hand. They make a happy pair.”

As you and I read the gospels we notice that Jesus told many parables. He rarely (maybe never) began teaching with scripture among the common people. It was only in the synagogue, among the scholars that he did so. Most of the time, Jesus told stories about everyday things in order to bring His message in a way that would keep His listeners attention!

And that’s what we find in our text today from Luke 19:11 to 28. Like some of the other parables recorded in Luke’s Gospel, we’re alerted to the reason for the parable before it’s given. This makes both interpretation and application simpler.

This parable relates to “The Coming Kingdom” of Christ. So let’s read our text, Luke 19:11 to 28, and then see what Jesus wants us to learn about “The Coming Kingdom.”

In this text Jesus spells out several *crucial* DETAILS of His coming kingdom.

The First DETAIL (of the coming kingdom) is,

Its Chronology

Every kingdom has a chronology, a timeline; either a history or a future or both. The kingdom of Jesus is no different. And our text states right up front that Jesus' audience didn't understand the timeline, the chronology, of His kingdom.

Verse 11 tells us He was near Jerusalem. If Jesus was born as "king of the Jews" (according to the magi in Matthew 2), it was only logical that he would inaugurate His kingdom in Jerusalem, right? And because of His nearness to the city and the events taking place the people assumed He would set up His kingdom without delay. They saw the kingdom as imminent, near at hand. And because they were children of Abraham by birth they assumed they automatically had a place in that coming kingdom. But they were mistaken; and Jesus told this parable to challenge their assumptions.

The first thing we learn from the parable about the chronology of Jesus' kingdom is that it will only be established in its fullness after He goes to the Father and then returns back to earth. Clearly, the nobleman represents Jesus, the far country is the presence of the Father, and the return is the second coming of Christ.

Let's unpack this a bit more. Jesus had been telling the disciples about his impending suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. But because it didn't fit their narrative about the kingdom, they couldn't understand. In the previous chapter, after Jesus told them about His imminent suffering and death, we read "*But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.*" It didn't compute!

The parable makes it clear that Jesus, the nobleman, must go away for a time. And where does He go? He goes to a far country to be invested with royalty. This reminds me of Psalm 110:1. "*The LORD (Jehovah) said to my Lord (Messiah), sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footrest.*" Notice, Jesus is told to sit at the right hand of His Father UNTIL His enemies are subdued. There's a length of time indicated by the word until. You and I, today, are still in that time; the kingdom is not here in its fullness yet!

After receiving the kingdom, Jesus said the nobleman would return; that is, return with the authority of the kingdom invested in him. At that time he will have the authority to pronounce judgment. Paul mentions this in Acts 17, addressing the philosophers in Athens. He said "*[God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man (Jesus) whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*"

Paul's point is; the resurrection is proof that Jesus will exercise the role of judge when His kingdom finally comes.

The chronology of the kingdom is this; Jesus would not immediately establish His kingdom but would go to heaven to receive the kingdom from His Father. He is there now at the right hand of the Father interceding for us according to Romans 8:34. At the time specified by the Father He will return and receive His kingdom.

The Second DETAIL (of the coming kingdom) is,

Its Constitution

A constitution is a governing document. It sets forth key principles of belief and specific guidelines for those functioning under that constitution. The actions of the citizens of the kingdom are prescribed by the details of the constitution. In our text, Jesus spells out some of the details of the constitution of His kingdom. Part of the constitution is the responsibility of the citizens, what they are to do.

It's important for us to notice the two groups of people mentioned in this parable; slaves and citizens. Both have obligations under the constitution.

As the nobleman (Jesus) prepares to leave for the far country He entrusts His slaves with responsibility in His absence. He calls ten of the slaves and gives each a fixed amount of money – a mina; about 3 month's wages for a rural laborer. The nobleman's instructions were short and succinct; "Beginning right now, trade with what I've given you while I am going and coming." It's understood that the goal of trading was to increase the original investment.

The role of the slave was to be faithful in using what He was given to gain more. You and I are voluntary slaves of Christ. After experiencing the love of our Master we have voluntarily committed ourselves to a covenant relationship with Jesus until the day of our death. He entrusts us with His resources and gives us the privilege of increasing them for His glory. At some point in the future we will give an account of our stewardship. How are we doing?

Notice with me verse 14. *"But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'" This can only be a reference to the unbelieving Jews of Jesus' day. Do you remember what the mob said to Pilate during Jesus' trial? "They cried out, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Shall I*

crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’” Their rejection of Jesus couldn’t have been clearer, could it?

As Jesus told this parable, most likely, the minds of the people immediately went to their own history. Archelaus, a son of Herod the Great, experienced the very things Jesus mentioned. Following an uprising in Judea in 4 AD where he slaughtered 3,000 people during Passover, Archelaus travelled to Rome to be crowned by the emperor Augustus as ruler over Judea and Samaria. But his rule was so despotic and so chaotic that the Jews and the Samaritans made a united appeal for his removal. In essence saying “we won’t have this man rule over us.” So the citizens or subjects, the ones who should’ve been loyal to him rejected his rule.

Today, these citizens may be represented by those who are part of organized religion but who’ve never surrendered their lives to the lordship of Christ. They think they’re going to be citizens of that heavenly kingdom, but like the people of Jesus’ day, they are adamant; “we will not have this man rule over us.” We’ll see in a few minutes the end result of their choices.

The Final DETAIL (of the coming kingdom) is,

Its Consummation

In verse 15 the time has elapsed for the nobleman. He has received his authority and his kingdom and is returning. At his return he calls his slaves to appear before him; to see how well they’ve followed his commands and how much they’d gained in trading. It is a time for reckoning and a time for rewards.

The first slave reported that the original mina he’d received had gained ten more! I’d say that was pretty good, wouldn’t you? He started with one and now he has eleven. So the king commended him and said “because you have been faithful in a very little, I give you authority over 10 cities.” This is the reward for faithful service. Isn’t it interesting that the reward for faithfulness is not rest? It is greater opportunities for service!

Can you imagine Zacchaeus standing there listening to Jesus present this teaching? How was he feeling? He had just promised to give half of his possessions to the poor and to reimburse anyone he had defrauded four-fold (v. 8). Jesus’ teaching here would have encouraged him to follow through on his commitment. He would have a great reward, much treasure in heaven, if he so served the Master faithfully.

The second slave reported that his mina had gained an additional five. Not as good as the first, but not bad. Again, the king commended him for his faithfulness and rewarded him with the rule over 5 cities.

Jesus story then skips over the other slaves to highlight the last one. This one said “Lord, here is your mina which I’ve kept wrapped up in a napkin while you were gone.” Interesting that the word translated napkin is really a cloth for wiping away sweat. This slave’s lack of activity meant he didn’t need the sweat cloth for its intended purpose, so he used it to cover his lord’s mina. Why did he do this?

Look at verse 21. He said “I was afraid of you because you have a harsh disposition. You gather up what you didn’t lay down and you harvest where you did not plant.” Did this slave really believe this or was it just an excuse? I believe it was just an excuse for unfaithfulness!

His master confronted him with his own words dripping with sarcasm. “You wicked slave. If you truly believed what you said about me, why didn’t you at least put my money in the bank where I could retrieve the principal and any accrued interest?”

Why was this slave described as wicked? First, he was negligent with what was entrusted to him; he didn’t use the resources to his best ability. He accepted the Master’s resources with no intention to use them. Second, he placed the blame for his negligence on his master; he unjustly accused him of being harsh and greedy. He refused to take responsibility for his own actions. His judgment would be severe.

Jesus said to those who were standing by “*take from him the mina and give it to the one with ten minas.*” Notice that verse 25 is a parenthetical aside. Those in the crowd who were listening (intently) interrupted Jesus to remind him that the first man already had 10 minas! Their sense of justice was offended. This wasn’t fair! But I remind you, Jesus doesn’t deal in fairness; at least as we humans understand fairness. He deals with everyone justly.

Jesus went on to tell them that “everyone who is already being faithful will be given more. But to those who are being (present tense) unfaithful, even the little bit that they have will be stripped away.” Remember Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:21. “*Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father.*”

I said earlier that you and I as followers of Jesus are His voluntary slaves. How well are we using the resources He’s given us in His absence? Each of us has time, gifts, abilities, skills,

or finances we can invest for His glory and the benefit of others. Like the slaves in this parable we will be called to account for how we use them.

Finally, Jesus addresses those who claimed to be citizens of His kingdom but rejected His rule. He said “...bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.”

Like many prophetic utterances this one has more than one fulfillment. Most likely Jesus was thinking about the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The word slay, in verse 27, is a particularly harsh word meaning, to slaughter, to butcher, or to cut down violently! That’s exactly what happened when Roman forces under Titus pierced the final wall around the Temple complex. Goaded by the fierce opposition to the very end, the Roman soldiers rampaged through the area sparing no one and burning the Temple.

But there’s also a reference here to a coming event; that Day of Judgment when all who are found in open rebellion against Christ will perish, consumed by the Word out of His mouth. That will be the consummation of the kingdom!

This parable clarifies that while salvation and entrance into the kingdom come by faith in Jesus, rewards for service rest on the believer's works. Both salvation and rewards come as a result of God's grace. Salvation does not depend on working for God but resting in what Jesus Christ has done. Rewards do not depend on resting in what Jesus Christ has done but on working for God. It is a misunderstanding of Scriptural revelation to conclude that because God has saved us by His grace we need do nothing but lie back and wait for heaven. Such behavior constitutes irresponsible stewardship that Jesus Christ will punish by withholding a reward. In view of what lies ahead for us we need to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

My friend, the kingdom is coming; it is in process. Right now we, as slaves of Christ, are called to exercise faithfulness. We have been entrusted with resources to use for His glory and the blessing of others. Our rewards will be based on our faithfulness. How are you doing?

And if you’re an “enemy” of Christ, I urge you to change that today – before it’s too late!