

The Parable of the Ten Minas

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[0 : 0 0] himself in case there's anybody who doesn't know me. I'm Gordon Reid and I'm a retired minister, not of the Episcopal Church, but the Church of Scotland. Delighted to have been worshipping here now for nine years. And occasionally I get asked to preach. And like the last time I was asked to preach, I've been asked to preach on a parable. And I probably said this the last time as well, I find a problem with preaching on a parable. And it's because of the nature of what these were originally. Because they were simply stories. They were great stories. If Jesus was not all the things that we know he was, we know he is, Redeemer, Savior, Son of God, one of the Trinity, he would still be a great teacher just because of his parables. Because they're wonderful and there's so much in them. So we're looking at this. Thanks, Katrina, for reading the parable to us.

But we're going to look at this again. And I want to try to look at it in a way that will help you to understand what it sounded like at the beginning, and then what it means in Luke's gospel, and now what it means to us. So we're going to be looking at it three times. So I want you to pretend I want you to pretend that you're a crowd in Jesus' time. So you've got to go back in time. And you're going to hear this story as if you have never heard it before. And I want you to think, what does this mean? What is this story about?

And then you can turn to someone around about you and share your thoughts. So I need to give you some background. First of all, you're in first century Israel, and you've just left Jericho. You're on your way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. So it's a very exciting time.

The Passover is a celebration of the independence of the people of Israel from Egypt. So you're really excited. But you're going along with this man, Jesus. Now you don't know who he is, because you don't know the rest of the story. But he's just done two amazing things that you probably witnessed or at least heard about, which is probably why you're accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem.

The first thing was in Jericho, where he gave sight to a blind man. Now that's wonderful in itself.

[2 : 5 1] But what's even more wonderful is that he picked out this man from other people who wanted to hear what he had to say? He stopped and listened to the man. The rest of the crowd were wanting just to push him away. You know, don't annoy the master. You know, he doesn't want to know about you. You're just a beggar. And Jesus stopped and he brought sight to the blind man. Amazing. The mark of a Messiah that he can bring healing. So you started to leave Jericho and you're en route. And then there's this wee guy that we heard about last week called Zacchaeus, who's not a very nice person, but he's rich. He's influential. He does what a rich, influential Jew would never do. He hoists up his skirts and runs and then climbs a tree. It's ridiculous. But that leads to him encountering Jesus and Jesus saying, today salvation has come to this man's house. Another messianic statement. So you're all thinking, is this the man? Is he the Messiah? Is Israel going to be freed once again, just like they were freed back in Egypt all these years ago. And you're excited. And Jesus stops and says, I want to tell you a story. And we've heard the story, but I'm going to go over it again because I want you really now to use your imagination and pretend that you're part of that crowd and not part of this sophisticated group in St. Silas. But way back 2,000 years almost to be part of that crowd. It's a strange story.

Oh, one other thing, one other piece of background for you. The story reflects another story, and that's of King Herod, roundly hated by everybody. But Herod went to Rome to become king and came back, and the people didn't like him. Now you can make what you like of that as you talk about the story later. But that is in the background because you would know that. So here we go. The story is about a nobleman, a rich nobleman. And this rich nobleman wants to become king. And evidently he can do this by going to a far country to become king. So he says to everybody, this is what I'm doing. I'm going off, and I'm going to become king. Immediately, some people don't like it, and they raise their objections. However, he's determined that he's going. He pulls in 10 of his servants, and he gives them very generous gift.

The mina is three months wages, so you can work out how much that would mean to you. Not very much if you're retired, but you know, if you're still in a really good job, loads of money.

And he says, put this to good use. And so off he goes. Before he goes, he says, put this to good use, because I will return.

And so these 10 servants then are left with this wealth, and they've put it to good use. And that is what they do, or what they try to do. And he does come back. And he does come back as king.

[6 : 38] And he calls the servants together and asks them how they've got on. The first one says, oh, you know, I've multiplied it by 10. And he says, that's wonderful. And he puts them in charge of five cities. And then there's another man. He's also increased the mina, and he gives him three cities.

And then there's a third one. That leaves seven that are missing that we just don't know about. And we know about this one. Because he says, oh, I thought you were a really hard man. I didn't want to upset you, you know, so by losing it. So I've just hidden it, and here it is. Have it back.

And he's annoyed. The king's annoyed about that. Says, so you think I'm a hard man? Well, you're left with that then. You have nothing. And the one mina is given to the man who's already at 10. Strange story. Strange. The ending of it. He then says, all these people who were opposing me, I want them brought, and I want them killed in front of me. That's your story. What do you make of it?

Feel free to turn to the person beside you, particularly if you're struggling, and get there wisdom on the story. But if you were part of that crowd 2,000 years ago, what would you make of this story?

Until later. So we've got to go on roughly 40 years, let's say. And Luke has now written his gospel. And he has included this story in his gospel. So it's meaningful to him.

[8 : 38] And therefore, it's meaningful to the people who are going to read it. So the second challenge for you is to be another congregation. In the first century, you've got to read it. And you've got to read it. You haven't got one each, obviously. But there's maybe one for your congregation. And the preacher, the speaker, the teacher has come to this part.

And you read this story. Now, what does it mean now? Well, let's see just what's happening, where you are now. It's about AD 70, maybe 75. Christianity has flourished. It has moved all throughout the Roman Empire into Asia. It's doing very well. There are congregations everywhere.

There are Christians meeting and worshiping, albeit in small groups. But it's also under threat. It's not good to be a Christian. So you being a Christian is very daring. And meeting together as Christians is very daring, as it has been for Christians down throughout the centuries, but not in our country. So you've got to imagine now that you're in this situation. Christianity is established, proposed. You also know now what happens on the rest of the world.

of this journey, because you know the story. You've become a Christian. You know that it's heading to the cross. You know that it's heading to the resurrection. You know that it's heading to the ascension. You know that the outcome is the coming of the Holy Spirit and the start of the church. You know all that. So what does the story mean now? Now, the Walleys were struggling to see that this was Jesus in this story. But I wonder now, as you think about it again, this time with the knowledge of 40 years of Christianity, what does it sound like to you?

There was a rich nobleman. And he went into a far country to become a king. The people opposed him and they didn't want him to become a king. But he was determined to go and determined also to return. He took his servants together and he said, I want to give you this. I want you to use it.

[11 : 16] This is my gift to you. And when I return, I'll find out what you've done with it, how you've used it. He does return. And the servants say, this is what we've done with it. This is what we've done with what you've given us. And he's delighted with that, except for one who said, well, I received your gift, but I didn't do anything with it. And in the background are these people who opposed him, the crowd who cheered as he came into Jerusalem and bade for his blood days later.

What does this story mean now? How has it changed for these first readers? What did they take from it? I'll give you another minute.

Now that the king is Jesus? No? No? No? No. No, there's not much grace.

You're right. But I think the focus changes this second time around. I think the focus is very much on the king in the original story. But now, isn't there another focus?

And that is on the servants. Because when the servants come back, the king doesn't say, how much money have you made? How successful have you been? He says, how faithful. How faithful have you been? Now, as we think about these servants, they were given that money in a hostile situation.

[13 : 14] And they had to use it. And the people would know, this is, that guy is off to be king. You know, this is money. And they used it in a hostile situation. And then were rewarded.

Now, in AD 70, Jesus is not giving out money to everyone and expecting them to use it. So it's not really any longer about money. But what is the king giving? What else has the king got to offer us?

And we start to think about Jesus' life and teaching and his offer of forgiveness through his death on the cross. He has given us forgiveness. How then do we use that? How faithful are we in this first century church in the face of the opposition, which can actually lead to death? The Latvian church was freed from communism. And a lot of people wanted to become ministers, pastors in the Latvian church.

And this European man was writing this up. And he was sitting in on the interviews. And the first question was, when were you baptized? And he asked later, why do you ask that question first? When were you baptized? And they said, well, if it's before we were free, then they're in. Because they were being baptized in a situation where it could be life and death. But if it was after, then they really wanted to know why they wanted to become pastors. Mother Teresa was asked about how she can cope, you know, when she may be successful, but there's so much more to do. How can you possibly live with that? And she said, I've never been called to be successful. I've been called to be faithful.

And these servants are called to be faithful. And these first century Christians are called to be faithful. Faithful to what? Faithful to Jesus primarily, so that they're prepared to call themselves Christian in the possible face of opposition and their life being threatened.

[15 : 44] And then faithful to his teaching. Faithful to his teaching about forgiveness by forgiving their enemies. Faithful to his teaching about love, about God's love for them, their love for God, their love for their neighbor. Faithful to his teaching about the kingdom that he has brought.

So the story changes. Is it easier to understand that the opposition gets penalized?

The Bible says that the blood of Jesus is on not just this generation, but the next generations of those who crucified him. There is a penalty for opposition. There's a penalty for lack of faithfulness, but there's a penalty for opposition that cannot be avoided. No, it's not people's head being chopped off here, but it is a penalty. And there always will be one. The wages of sin, said the Bible, is death.

Spiritual death, if not physical. Spiritual death, if not physical. So, the third crowd then is ourselves. As we take this story, we can do an awful lot more with it.

We can dissect it. We can look up commentaries. If you've got your phone with you and you've got the Bible app, you can look up related texts. I sometimes do that, my confession.

[17 : 26] But it's interesting what are other people saying about this text. You can find out even while the minister's preaching. Feel free. There's so much more that we can do with it.

But the impact of the story still has to be there for us. Let's take the king being Jesus. What country did he come from? Where did he come from? He came from heaven. He came from heaven's throne down to us to become king. Was there opposition? Yes, there was opposition. There was opposition right at his birth with King Herod, the other possible king, killing all the babies so that he would kill Jesus. There's opposition continuing right throughout his birth.

Early on in his ministry, they wanted to throw him off a cliff near to Nazareth because they didn't like what he was saying. There's opposition that leads to his crucifixion.

What journey was Jesus on when he came here to be king? It was a journey of salvation so that we can be saved. What was his crown? It was a crown of thorns. What was his victory?

It was a victory over death. What is his kingdom? It's a curious thing about the kingdom of God because it's here. It's here in the person of Jesus and yet it's not yet. It's not yet because there's still another event to come until the kingdom of God. The kingdom is fulfilled. The king will return.

[19 : 18] That's something that would have encouraged these first century Christians. That the king will return and therefore we're called to be faithful until that day.

What are our minas? what have we been given that we can use in this kingdom we've been blessed in so many ways we've been given faith we understand a God of love we understand forgiveness how important it is how we must forgive every person no matter what we've been given unity sometimes we might mess that up but there is a unity because Christ is the head of the body and it doesn't really matter whether you're in one denomination or another or one group or another that is what makes unity the unity of the spirit comes from Christ the head and we've been given grace for this is a kingdom of grace and despite the ending of the story it is a story of grace of the king who generously gives to his servants and God has generously given to us what we don't deserve he has poured out upon us and he asks will we be faithful with what he has given us it was lovely Katrina to hear about the success of that day it's one of the great things that we do when we're not keeping Christianity to ourselves but we're opening it up to the people around here and opening it up generously

I love the fact that we give away coffee and tea and biscuits it's great and people understand that this is how the kingdom moves into the world by the things the gifts that we've been given being used in that kind of way in fair trade another great example this morning I didn't know these two things were going to happen but they're absolutely perfect how we can use what God has given us how we can use hospitality friendship encouragement generosity and it is all of grace because the only way that we enter this kingdom is simply because God has poured his grace upon us Andrew's going to sing a song that I've requested that gives us a bit of time to think more about the story and about what it means to us today in St Silas as God and nell