

Last Judgment - First Sunday of End Time
November 7, 2010
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 19:11-27

***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. He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' "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. "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 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.' "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? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' "'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' "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. 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.'"* (NIV)**

A tourist traveling along the shores of Lake Como in Northern Italy noticed one especially beautiful castle that he wanted to visit. When the tourist reached the castle he was met by a friendly old gardener who opened the gate for him and began to show the tourist the grounds. The tourist was amazed at how everything was kept in such perfect order. "How long have you been here?" asked the tourist. "Twenty-four years," said the gardener. "And how often has the owner of the castle been here during that time?" the tourist wanted to know. "Four times," he replied. "When was the last time he was here?" "Twelve years ago." "Never again since then?" "Never." "Does he write to you?" "No," he replied, "I get my instructions from his agent at Milan." "Who then comes here?" he asked. "Only once in while tourists such as yourself come here," replied the friendly old gardener.

Shocked by this, the tourist exclaimed: "But you keep these gardens in such fine condition and take such excellent care of everything just as though you expected your master to come home tomorrow." "Today," the gardener promptly replied, "Today, sir, today!" This tourist never forgot the impression this gardener and his reply made on him. So faithful he was to his master and to his trust that day after day his thoughts were not tomorrow my master might come but "today, sir, today."

Is this not the same readiness we are directed from God's Word to have, especially during this season of end time, and specifically on this Sunday focused on the Last Judgment? Is not the work our Master left for us far more important than taking care of a beautiful garden and estate? Have we not been given a far greater trust? Are we not asked to show that same kind of faithfulness? Think of the superior impact of our Mater's return. As Jesus teaches us through another parable today, I pray our hearts are moved and our lives directed to: **Faithfully Do the Business of Our Gracious King Today!**

Jesus was in Jericho, a city only a little more than 15 miles from Jerusalem. As Jesus would soon ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday there is once again much confusion regarding Christ's kingdom. Some people expected an earthly kingdom and Jesus to bring freedom from the rule of Rome. Others didn't know quite what to expect. We are told the people here "*thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.*" So Jesus tells them a parable to teach them and us a bit more about the kingdom of God. As with all parables Jesus uses something they would know on earth to explain spiritual or heavenly truths.

The earthly story here is of a man of noble birth going to a distant country to be made king. We are not told how long he will be gone, just that it is certain he will return. He calls in ten servants and gives them each a mina which is about 100 days of wages. He tells them to put this money to work. Literally, it reads to carry on business, that of a trader or banker. In other words the soon to be king says carry on my work while I am gone. This man to be king is also hated and some do not want him as king. But he was made king and he returned home and the servants had to give an account.

We read: "*The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'* "*Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'* "*The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.'* "*His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'* "*Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 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.'* "*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? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'*

Simply put these first two servants were faithful and the king's money had been put to work and earned more. They are told well done and given even more responsibility. But the other servant did nothing but hand the mina back to the returning king. He calls him a hard man - an exacting business man whom he was afraid of so he hid the money in a piece of cloth. The word for that cloth is ironically that of a cloth used for wiping off perspiration, but this man did nothing to work up such a sweat. The king takes his mina from this wicked servant and gives it to the one who has ten. Then we have the king's final orders in this parable: "*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.'*"

So what do we learn from this parable. Like all parables we have to be careful about trying to explain all the details when Jesus doesn't reveal them to us. But there are some details that are clear in this lesson. The man to be made king is Jesus. After dying

for the sins of the world, He would rise victorious on the third day. Then Jesus will go, ascending to the right hand of God, just as He had been telling His disciples. All things in heaven and on earth are placed under His feet. But just as He goes, Jesus will certainly return one day as King of kings and Lord of lords. We do not know when but He will return.

Jesus also leaves servants behind to carry on His business. Here is where it is important to recognize that this is a completely different parable than the parable of the talents in Matthew's Gospel. There each person was given a different amount. Here everyone is given the same. What is the mina that Jesus gives to each person? What is the business that Jesus wants His servants to carry out? What else could it be other than His Word? Like in the parable where the mina was His mina, so is this word His Word, God's Word. The business Jesus has given to His servants is clear: ***"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation"*** (Mark 16). ***"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"*** (Matthew 28). Jesus wants His mina to be put to work and He promises us it will not return to Him empty.

We also know the day to put Jesus' Word to work, the time to do His business, will come to an end. Jesus will return. There will be an accounting. There will be a day of Judgment. All actions and attitudes will be revealed. Do you want Jesus as your King? Do you see God as a hard man who demands too much from you? Do you see doing Jesus' work as a hard business where you have to earn His favor? Are you one of His enemies? Or do you see Jesus for who Jesus is and how He wants to be seen? He is our gracious King. For the One who will return as King of kings and Lord of lords to judge both the living and the dead, first came to be our servant.

Let's get this out in the open right now. You and I are not always faithful servants. We do not use the Word of God like we always should. We don't study it, listen to it, put it to work on our own hearts faithfully, let alone faithfully proclaim His Word to others. But Jesus did. Even at age twelve Jesus was already in God's house faithfully carrying out His Father's business. Jesus never failed to gladly hear the Word and obey it. Jesus never once missed an opportunity to preach the good news to every person. Jesus was God's faithful servant and Jesus was God's faithful servant for us. He did it all in our place. Then taking our place Jesus suffered for all our unfaithfulness. Our neglect of God's Word, our keeping of His Word to ourselves, our sins of not doing all we can to serve the Gospel's cause, were all placed on Jesus. On the cross, Jesus suffered, was punished and killed as though He was the wicked and lazy servant. Jesus willingly did all this for us, so that all are sins are paid for, so that we may enjoy forgiveness, life, and heaven. Our not guilty verdict was declared on the third day when Jesus rose. Our judgment is certain.

How can we not want such a King? How can we see Jesus as anything other than what Jesus is - a gracious King! As Jesus now sits in a place of all power and authority, we know that one day our gracious King will return for us. Until that day, we have business to do, don't we? That is what this parable reminds us. Jesus has given you and I the privilege, yes the awesome privilege, of carrying out His work. We have been given the minas. We have His Word, His Gospel.

Let us no longer think or say why do today what we can put off until tomorrow. There is an urgency in Jesus' words for all who are Jesus' enemies, all who die in unbelief, will be cast off to hell forever. If you have been holding off inviting a friend to church, hold off no longer. If you have been shying away from witnessing to someone who doesn't know Jesus, it is time to find the courage. If you know someone who needs to be called to repentance, let the calling begin. If we have time, talents, and treasures to be used for the Gospel's cause, may we use them not tomorrow, but "*today, sir, today.*" The day is coming when we can no longer work. Our gracious King and Savior wants all to be saved and live forever with Him in His glorious heavenly kingdom. So as we wait for our Master to return and in His grace say to us "*well done, good servant,*" may our hearts be moved and our lives directed to faithfully do the business of our gracious King today! Amen.