

Matthew 22-08-14a

You are sharing the services of Grace and Truth Bible Church on this 14th day of August 2022. We're in the Gospel of Matthew and we are looking at the parable of the talents, which is sandwiched between the parable of the wise and foolish virgins and the depiction of the sheep and goats judgment, which is not so much a parable as a metaphorical description of a future judgment. We'll take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and we'll begin.

Father, we're grateful for this opportunity to spend time together in fellowship and in the study of your word. We pray that as we look at these verses of scripture together, that the Holy Spirit will find our ground plowable and free of rocks, that the seed of the word can be planted deeply and produce its fruit so that our lives will reflect your glory and draw others to ask the reason for the hope that is in us and grant us the opportunity to share the message of grace and love that is represented in the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen. You will remember last time that the parable of the talents, which the content is pretty familiar to us, but it is often compared and even conflated with a very similar parable in Luke chapter 19. Ours begins in Matthew 25, verse 14, and extends all the way through verse 30.

This is a fair size chunk of scripture. I think the space dedicated to it tells us that the message contained therein is important. Keep your finger here and turn over to Luke chapter 19.

And as a challenge, as we read this parable, try to catch what you note as differences and similarities between the one that we have had under our gaze in Matthew chapter 25. This is Luke 19, beginning at verse 11. If you glance up above at the first 10 verses of chapter 19, this is the shortest story in the Bible, perhaps, except maybe the shoehide over in Job.

But it is Zacchaeus, you come down for I'm going to your house today. And Zacchaeus, as a tax collector, says in verse 8, look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor. And if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.

Jesus said to him today, salvation has come to this house because he also is a son of Abraham for the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. So the repentance, the reformation, the restitution of Zacchaeus is the immediately preceding context that brings us now to verse 11 of Luke 19. Now, as they heard these things, that is not an accidental phrase.

If you engage in personal Bible study, and I hope fervently and I pray constantly that you do. There are so many opportunities for illumination and understanding by not reading

past important information. Verse 11 says, as they heard these things, what things? The conversation, the statement of Zacchaeus, his intention for restoring that which he might have taken under the unfounded pretenses, his desire to help the poor with a very generous personal donation, so to speak.

As they heard these things and Jesus' statement about deliverance has come to this house. He is a son of Abraham. You know, the reputation that tax collectors had, but Jesus declares to those who recognize Jesus' authority that nobody needs to look down on or despise Zacchaeus for his occupation because his heart has been changed and repentance and restoration have become manifest.

He is a son of Abraham. What does Paul have to say about being a child of Abraham? We are children of Abraham by faith, right? It is the active faith. So, as they heard these things, this is the context.

He spoke another parable because, more very important information, because he was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. This parable addresses two things. As they are hearing Jesus' words about Zacchaeus, as they are hearing and seeing the transformation in Zacchaeus as a result of his faith in Jesus Christ, two things.

They are near Jerusalem. Why is that significant? If there is going to be a king ruling the kingdom, where is he going to rule from? Jerusalem. They are nearing Jerusalem.

They are nearing the time when they think the kingdom is about to appear and they are traveling toward the capital city. So, what would be their expectation? Well, when we get there, I think Jesus is probably going to set up the kingdom. We see many signs today of the potential proximity of the rapture, our rising to be with the Lord and with our departed loved ones and so on.

And with that expectation of the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory, something we look forward to, something these disciples and followers and hearers look forward to, Jesus tells this parable. He is parablizing into the expectation of the immediate implementation of the kingdom. We'll come back to contrast and compare that to the context of our parable of the talents.

Similar, but different. So, verse 12. Therefore, you cannot underestimate the importance of verse 11 here.

Because, because, therefore. As they heard these things, because, because, therefore. The key to interpreting the parable of the minas, the parable of the pounds, is in verse 11.

Therefore he said, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas,

and said to them, Do business until I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, We will not have this to reign over us.

Notice man is in italics. They can't even bring themselves to describe him by anything other than this. We will not have this rule over us.

And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much each man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Master, your mina has earned ten minas. And he said to him, Well, well, good servant, because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.

And the second came, saying, Master, your mina has earned five minas. Likewise he said to him, You also be over five cities. Then another came, saying, Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief.

For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow. And he said to him, Out of your own mouth I will judge you, wicked servant.

You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that 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 him who has ten minas. They said to him, Master, he has ten minas. For I say to you that to everyone who has will be given, and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

But bring here those enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them, and slay before me." Slaughter before me. Okay, so just on a quick survey here, what do you notice? You can begin, and my points here alliterate, just because I thought it would be fun to you know, make them memorable. So what is the setting? These are going to start with us at least for a while.

What is the setting? How do they compare, and how are they different? We've already talked about the Zacchaeus context. They are near Jerusalem, and they are expecting the kingdom immediately. You can see that the parable indicates that the nobleman is going to go away to receive his kingdom, and then return.

And return is specifically mentioned in verse 12. He goes to a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. His intention is to return.

He says, if I go away, I will come again. Right? You can flip back and forth a little bit to check your memory of the parable of the talents, but it is not a nobleman in our Matthew 25 context. It is just a man traveling.

In both cases, it is a far country. It is at a distance. Why is this important that it's a far country, and he's not just taking a trip to town, or to a neighboring municipality, or to the authorities nearby? It's a far country.

What does this tell us? It's going to be a while before he returns. There's going to be something probably measured in weeks. If it's a far country, traveling at the pace that they do, he's going to be gone enough time that investments can mature, that business can be transacted.

The expectation is, I see him now, but not near, as Balaam said about the star that would arise from Jacob and smite the brow of Moab. I know he's returning, but there's going to be enough time that I need to plan. I need to execute.

I need to fulfill an assigned responsibility. I have a period of some time. The return is certain, but there's a significant amount of time.

Far country in both cases. When you come to Luke 19, again, he's going to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called 10 of his servants.

This is a double S, the summons of the servants. He summons his servants, and he is going to commission them. He's going to task them.

They are his own servants. They belong to him. He doesn't post a proclamation in the public square.

He doesn't say anyone who would like to invest on my behalf, come and apply, go into the highways and byways and gather whomever you find and tell them I'll give them a mina if they would like to invest. This is specifically a commission to his own servants. These aren't even field hands.

These are servants who have some sort of administrative role. They already have some experience in dealing with his goods. They dwell in his household.

And in both cases, he called his own servants in Matthew. This nobleman called 10 of his servants. Of course, in the Matthew context, he calls three of them.

And he's only going to describe the results with three servants in Luke 19. But he calls 10 of them, interestingly, and delivers to them 10 minas. Now a mina is one sixtieth of a talent.

It takes 60 minas to make one talent. The easiest way to think of this is a mina is a hundred of your denarius denomination. Remember, a denarius would pay you for a day's work.

So a mina is equivalent to the pay for 100 days work. If you worked six days a week and were off on the Sabbath, this would be about four months. What you could earn in four

months working eight hours a day, six days a week, let's say eight or 10 hours.

So I would estimate this to be about \$1,600. If you figure you make \$400 a month in four months, you're not a high paid laborer. \$1,600, \$2,000, something like that.

It's nowhere near the two million that a talent represents. So he calls them and gives them this relatively small sum. You could afford to lose.

I mean, none of us can afford to lose very much, if anything, but it's nowhere near winding up like the servant who owed his master 10,000 talents. You remember that story, the parable of the unforgiving servant? He owes his master 10,000 talents. This is an astronomically unbelievable sum.

The total taxes collected in Israel during the days of the Romans did not exceed 10,000 talents. It's just to the moon and back. But this is a reasonable sum, a minor, \$1,500, \$2,000, somewhere in that range.

And he gives the same amount to each. What did we see in the parable of the talents? How were the talents distributed? Remember, it was according to their ability. He preloaded them.

The ones he thought had the most ability got the most talents. The one he didn't have high expectations of, he just gave one talent. Here, there is no indication of the ability of the servants.

And we'll see the significance of these. We're not just noting them for their own sake. The reason some elements are in one parable and not another drives us toward application.

So then after verse 13 in Luke 19, he called 10 of his servants, gave to them 10 minas. We assume this is one mina a piece. And in the results, we find out that that assumption is verified.

And he says, do business until I come. This do business is a really interesting word. It is pragmatuomai.

We talk about being pragmatic. And it had the specific idea. It's a hapoxilogama.

You don't find it anywhere else in the New Testament, except in this context. There are two different forms of it. But it means to seek a profit by trading.

It's just what you would expect. By some practical means, you look at an opportunity and say, this looks like a practical way to get a return on an investment. Pragmatuomai.

And so we're going to see this form again a little bit down below. So pragmatuomai and the omi, I've told you this many times, when you find a Greek verb that has omi on it, it

is kind of a middle voice idea, which means you are involved. There's a reflexive element when you have an omi.

Erkomai, which means to come in or to come. Well, it's the person, they are not brought in. They come in under their own power.

You walk in, you decide you're going to go in and you go in. You are called and you come. You are involved in the action of entering in or coming out.

Eiserkomai and so on. So the omi involves the subject or the actor in the action. And so they are to be involved in this.

They are to be actively managing this investment in seeking a return. You get the idea that if they put it one place and it doesn't do well, they should be keeping track and pull it out and put it somewhere else while they can. So there is an involvement idea in pragmatuomai.

Do business until I come. There is an ending point. This is not unlimited.

There is a period of time. There is a certain return that is in view until I come. Remember Jesus in the upper room says do this as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you show the Lord's death till he come.

Until he comes. But verse 14, now this is something that has no analog and no parallel at first glance in our Matthew context. Once the man leaves for the far country in chapter 25, he had received, we find out in verse 16 and 17 in Matthew 25, we get the results while he is gone.

We have a view of the servant with the five talents making five more. The man immediately went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them and made another five talents.

Likewise, he who had two gained two more also. He who received one went and dug in the ground and hid his Lord's money. And not until verse 19, after a long time, the Lord of those servants came and settled accounts.

Here, do business until I come and implied is he then left, but his citizens hated him. Why is he traveling to a far country? To receive a kingdom. The kingdom is in view.

The reason this parable is being told is that people were expecting the kingdom right away. His citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him saying, we will not have this to reign over us. And we don't find out what effect that had.

That's just a detail that is inserted between verse 13 and verse 15. His citizens hated him. It doesn't say his servants hated him, but his citizens.

What is interesting about this is something that took place in 4 BC in Judea related to us by Josephus. Josephus details in antiquities of the Jews that during the time of the Herods, during the time of around the time of the birth of Christ, Archelaus left the region to go to Rome to have his kingship confirmed. And the people of Judea sent a delegation as he was traveling to Rome to object and to say, we do not want this man to rule over us.

Archelaus had his kingship confirmed. He returned to Judea and he rounded up 3,000 of his political enemies and executed them at the temple. You can imagine that not since the time of Antiochus Epiphanes with the pig's blood and mingling the executed and defiling the sanctuary and so on, had there been quite such a memorable 9-11 scale event in the minds of people.

Many of Jesus' hearers would have heard this story from their parents if they were not themselves old enough to remember it. This would have only been 30 years earlier. Anybody here that remembers circa 1990, things that happened in 1990, that's about the distance of the memory of this very close description that would be shocking.

People who remember 9-11 remember the shockwaves. Those of us that are older and remember the assassination or remember the various episodes if you were in the military and remember disasters that took the lives of military individuals and so on. This seems to hook into the social-political memory of Jesus' hearers when he adds this detail in the parable of the minas.

He is going away to receive a kingdom and return. People don't want him. Send a delegation to express their very bitter hatred and they don't want him to rule over them.

But his kingship is confirmed and they should have taken into account the consequences if their petition was denied, if their wishes were not those that prevailed. So this story may have already started to resurface from people's memory as Jesus is telling the parable. So that is new and different in Luke for sure.

We will not have this to reign over us. So it was, verse 15 of Luke 19, when he returned having received the kingdom. He then commanded these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

And that by trading, this is *dia pragma tuamai*. You just tack something on through the unique word that we saw up above, to do business, through doing business. So they have a specific assignment and the assignment has to do with a deposition in trust that comes with responsibility to do something with what the master has given.

So interestingly, there's a slight difference. The king commands these servants to be called to him. There is an intermediary.

The king gives a command to a servant who goes and summons these. Remember when Pharaoh wanted Joseph hailed out of prison because he heard that he could interpret dreams. And so Pharaoh doesn't come to the prison and say, Joseph, come here.

This emphasizes his kingly authority. The king isn't going to name these servants anymore. He's been promoted.

And so the king has intermediate servants who are going to bring these servants before him. And there is an implication of promotion, elevation, new glory. Initially, this nobleman talks to his servants directly and commands them directly.

But now he is in a new and higher status and he has minions and functionaries who will do his bidding and bring these servants before him. But the accountability is still face to face. So it reminds me and those of you that have been in the military understand that you might be of equal rank with someone.

But the further along you get, the more someone in your vicinity that formerly was the same rank as you might have some seniority. And now they're a captain and you're still a first lieutenant or they're a major and you're still a captain. And although you've known them, you might've been with them for years in similar duty stations and know them well, when they get rank, there is a little bit of distance.

And especially when you are around other people, even though you know them by their first name and you've been very familiar, when they get promoted, there is an inevitable distance and concentration on respect and remembering that, well, there is a rank here that supersedes and defines this relationship in a new way. And that is all wrapped up in this. He commanded that they be brought for him.

Jesus never wastes a detail. It's never an idle observation or situation. He commanded these to whom he had given the money, be called to him.

You get the idea that he is now seated on his kingly throne. Call them to me for an audience and an evaluation that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. This is a judgment and he has not forgotten in all of his kingly accouterments and new responsibilities and wider concerns, these relatively small sums that were entrusted to the servants, the investments are going to be evaluated.

Why? Is he just petty and saying, I want to be sure my every whim was honored? What is his purpose in bringing these servants before himself and calling them to account? You see it in the results, right? Because the first came saying, master, your mina has earned 10 minas. What do you notice in that verse? Verse 16, your mina has earned 10 minas. By contrast, in the parable of the talents, after a long time, the Lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents saying, Lord,

you delivered to me five talents. Look, I have gained five more talents beside them. What is the emphasis? I have made these five talents into five more talents and they are brought and exhibited before the master.

This is the evidence of my personal obedience, faithfulness, goodness, dedication to the mission I was given. And there is a great personal element here. Look, I am in my hands showing you.

And be aware, a silver talent weighed about 75 pounds. So you have to think that this servant has underservants who are lugging these things in wheelbarrows or slung on poles between two bearers or something. 75 pounds.

This would be 750 pounds of silver that he's trucking in to show the master. But wouldn't that be fun to bring the trove of faithful service in and look at it together with the master and enter into his joy. The joy is in looking at the fruit of this labor on behalf of the master in dedication and service.

And in Matthew, you have that EU, well, good and faithful servant. You were faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things.

The master has bigger endeavors, many things he's going to work on. And this servant is going to be involved and implicated and given opportunities for even greater manifestation of those qualities that are in evidence in these multiplied talents. In Luke chapter 19, in verse 16, Master, your mina has earned 10 minas.

The servant doesn't implicate himself. He doesn't take any personal credit, nor does he seem to bring in the minas. He just says your mina has earned 10 minas.

That's a pretty good return on investment. He says the very same thing, well done, good servant, in this case, because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over 10 cities. The king here is not being petty.

He's not just trying to hold these servants feet to the fire. He's looking for those who will help him administrate his new kingdom, right? I need someone I can trust. And I can trust you a lot.

Look how faithful you were in investing. I'm going to make you ruler over 10 cities. New expanded responsibilities.

Ruling a city is way different than managing an investment. What is the quality that the king values? Loyalty, diligence, faithfulness, wisdom, and those qualities can be employed in a wide variety of activities. He's exhibited them in investment.

Now he's going to get a chance to exhibit them in ruling a city. Big difference. It's kind of like being a very good manager of money and looking for an account that has a good

percentage return on interest, and then suddenly being told, okay, you're now the mayor of Cleveland.

The king knows that those qualities are going to carry this servant into his assignment. The king understands what he is assigning to this servant, and the king knows that his qualities are sufficient. What we learn in this life will carry forward to things that we've never considered or imagined, but the same confidence and the same faithfulness and the same spiritual habits that we develop in this life will enable us to serve and to function in the future.

That's kind of anticipating the application. We were faithful in a very little, a very oligos, a very small amount. These minas, as I said, measured in hundreds of dollars, have authority over 10 cities.

The second came in verse 18 of Luke 19. Master, your mina has earned five minas. Likewise, he said to him, you also be over five cities.

How did that compare in Matthew 25 with the talents? He had received two talents in verse 22. It's interesting. It's verse 22.

There's two talents. Lord, you delivered me two talents. Look, I've gained two more.

There's a lot of twos in verse 22 of Matthew 25. But again, presentation, shared observation of the fruit. And his Lord said to him, well, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a few things.

I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord. There is joy in observing what the talents have done.

There is no distance introduced by promotion in the parable of the talents. The Lord and the servant, this is a facet. This is an aspect.

In some ways, the Lord and the servant are just as close as they ever were. And there is mutual joy, mutual enjoyment of observing these talents right there in view. And there is this response of celebration and entering into being promoted into the inner circle, the intimacy and the fellowship of the Lord.

That's in view in the talent. No indication of that in the parable of the minas. There's no indication of joy because rather than relationship and intimacy and fellowship and mutuality, enter into this with me, the Lord says.

I am gratified. I am proud of you. I am promoting you.

We will continue this intimate cooperation. And your service and my direction are going to reap these wonderful rewards. That is an aspect that is emphasized in the parable of the talents.

In the parable of the minas, this is functional, functional, pragma tuomai. It's a pragmatic view. There is going to be the need for rulership, need for authority, need for trustworthy execution of responsibility that has been assigned and authority that has been delegated.

Have authority. Notice, authority over ten cities, authority over five cities, be over five cities. Well, we're going to see that this is going to continue through to the end of these parables.

And there is much to be reaped here by way of fruitful meditation and application. But in concluding this first look this morning, remember that we tend to flatten and make shallow the deep truths of scripture. And we think, well, it is just as simple as believing in Jesus and I'm saved, Acts 16.31. I will go and come again and receive you to myself where I am.

There you may be also. The beauty of scripture is we have different perspectives and different facets and different aspects of the same situation, the same anticipation. And there is an element of just entering into joy and celebration, going into the feast where there is light and the five wise virgins and those who put the winning garments on.

And we love to think about that. But the three-dimensionality of it is that there are responsibilities to put on the garment, to have anticipated and laid by a store of oil, and that there are consequences, dire and lasting consequences, for only thinking about the joy and not thinking about the evaluation and the potential consequences of failing the grace, failing to exploit the opportunity, failing to fulfill the assigned mission because I'm only thinking about one part. One of the reasons we are human beings and we are sentient is we are complex.

We have the intellectual side, we have the emotional side, we have the thoughtful planning side, we have the impulsive reactive side, and we have to find a way to pull those together and function so that we can enjoy our emotions without being dictated to and led by them. We have to be intellectual but not be cold and indifferent when there is an emotional side that needs to be respected and to empathize and sympathize, pathos. Empathy is entering into with someone else.

Sympathizing is being alongside, sun patheo. And it is our responsibility, being made in the image of God, to balance. Let your moderation, let your balance be known to all.

Anything can be taken to excess, anything can be starved and suffer. It is balance that we strive for. We can weep with those who weep, we can rejoice with those who rejoice.

It's not constant weeping, it's not constant rejoicing. We can put a shoulder under someone else's load, but we each have to bear our own burdens. And it is a part of our assignment from God to strive for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom that

comes from the Word of God to achieve balance.

These servants who, if you wanted to extend the parable a little bit, they were in the service of the Master, but they didn't beat their fellow servants, they didn't starve their families, they didn't say, I'm all about the mission of multiplying these, I'm going to obsess on it, I'm watching the ticker day and night. Obviously, they would not be celebrated by the Master if some other detail or part of their life had been let go, and they had failed or executed crimes in fulfilling this mission. It has to be done goodly and faithfully, well and faithfully.

You are a good servant, you are a faithful servant. And part of that faithfulness is in fulfilling the mission without letting other things go. Jesus doesn't condemn the Pharisees for tithing their spices, he condemns them, he says you should have done these but not forgotten the greater part of the better part, and that was their condemnation.

Well, we'll see the outcome of this judgment when we come back from the break.