

## Sermon notes - Luke 19:11-27

Think about a time in your life when you have decided, "Yes, I am going to commit my time and effort to doing this thing, because it is worth my time."

Maybe you invested in studying law so that you could get good marks and have people think you're smart - that's me. Maybe you invested in learning how to play guitar so that you can get the attention of cool people. Maybe you invested in playing chess over and over so that you're really good at it and you like how that makes you feel. Maybe you invested your time with someone to grow your relationship with them, so you would be better friends. Maybe you invested in reading a book series or watching a movie so that you could find out how it ended. Our time is valuable to us, and so we want to use it the way that matters to us.

Even when we're forced to do things, we still decide how much time and effort to invest in it - your parents make you go to school, but you might not work very hard, you might not do revision or homework. You might have a child, and you must look after it, but you go the extra mile: you give up your job and make lots of sacrifices to give it more than the bare minimum - so your child has everything you never had. When someone else needs your time, how much effort you put in shows how valuable that person is to you.

Today we're looking at Jesus's Parable of the 10 Minas. The king comes and gives each servant a mina - three months wages - not as a gift, but to invest on his behalf. They don't get a choice. Their job as servants is to do what their master says.

But even though the parable today is called the Parable of the 10 minas, it's not actually about the money.

This parable is all about what Jesus wants us to do while we wait for him to come back. We know this because this is one of the few parables where Luke specifically says beforehand what it's about, in verse 11: "Jesus 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."

Jerusalem was the capital city of God's people, the Jews. The people at the time are expecting Jesus to be like a king, and so they thought if he's heading to the capital, then surely that means he's about to take over the government. They think it will happen quickly, like a coup, and then all of God's promises will be fulfilled and they will live in God's kingdom and everything will be great. But they are wrong, and Jesus doesn't want them to just sit around waiting for God's kingdom to come like that. He also doesn't want them to act as if it is a political coup against the government when it's not. So he tells them this story to show them what they should do while they wait.

We are the servants waiting for our king, Jesus, to return. Jesus has gone to heaven to be crowned king of all things. He left a long time ago. We're still waiting for him to come back.

What did Jesus leave us all with? Did he give us all three months wage? No. When you become a Christian, you don't get \$15,000. Christians aren't all the same. They don't get the same money, the same opportunities, the same physical or mental health, the same skills or abilities or gifts. We don't all live the same length of time. Often when we hear this parable, we get it mixed up with a similar parable in Matthew 25 called the Parable of the Talents. They are not the same! That one is about God giving us different skills and talents; about using what you have for God. This one is different. Each of these servants gets given the same thing - one mina. What do we all get in equal measure when we become Christians?

We get the message of God's love for us. We call it the gospel, the good news. It's a good news that doesn't discriminate. It's a good news that says no matter who you are, no matter what separates you from God, Jesus has the answer - he has died, he has brought that separation to an end, and anyone, anyone, no matter who you are or what you've done, can be a part of God's family. This is a message for everyone, and it is given to us by God.

But it's not a gift for you. I'll repeat that: God's message of love for all people is not a gift he's given to you to keep to yourself. It's a mina. God has given us that message of love to invest on his behalf, because that's who God is, and that's what his love is like! He wants his love to spread all over everywhere. And when Jesus was raised from the dead, after having dealt with the sin of the world, he has gone to heaven to be crowned by God as the king of everything. And so now we're here, waiting for him, with this mina - with God's message of love - that we have to invest, that we have to grow.

How do we invest God's message of love and make it grow? The same way you make a muscle grow - by putting it to work! If we flex God's love in every part of our lives and in the lives of others, it will grow.

That means sharing the message with those who need to hear it directly when we meet them - friends, strangers, children, workmates, family. That's possibly the most obvious way, and sometimes the most challenging. But it's not

the only way. It means understanding God's love better ourselves, and letting that love transform our own lives so that it shines through us. That means not just reading the Bible, or listening to sermons, or joining a Bible study, but actually letting what you learn from doing those things impact and change how you live the rest of your life. That means changing how you view your family, your future, your possessions, your income, your church attendance and the world around you – they are all just means of investing God's love and making it grow.

The great thing about God's love is that there are no bad investments – God's love will always pay off. So long as you are seeking to see it grow, it will grow – it will grow through plenty or poverty, through health or sickness, through security or persecution. And in fact, God's love often grows more through poverty, sickness and persecution. That's how great it is.

So when Jesus returns - and oh yes, he's coming back all right, just like the king in the parable - when Jesus returns, he's going to come up to us and ask, "What did you do with the message of love I gave to you?" And when he asks you that, what are you going to say? What will he be looking for in your life?

Will you be like the first servant? He worked hard to get the best result possible for his king. He made his king's wishes his number one priority. He was prepared to sacrifice his own comfort, his own goals, his own desires, so that he could give the king what the king wanted. And the results are amazing! But what does the king praise him for - his choice of investment? No. His savvy skills? No. Verse 17 "Well done, my good servant!" his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'" The servant is praised for being trustworthy, for his loyalty. This is a servant the king can trust to put his royal goals first; that's what the king wants of his servants. That's what Jesus wants of us.

Will you be like the second servant? He works pretty hard to further the goals of his king. Maybe he doesn't make the kind of sacrifices the first servant made to put the king's wishes first, but he still wants to see those royal goals met. He might not be prepared to go quite as far out of his way to do the king's work - maybe he has limits, or he has some plans of his own that he'd like to pursue - but he is still loyal to the king in many areas of life, and he still invests the mina, and of course he still makes a profit. And to the king, this trustworthiness is still worthy of reward - half the reward for half the loyalty.

Because here's the thing we learn from these two servants - the reward is different. When Jesus returns, there will be an accounting, and the loyalty you have shown Jesus by how you've invested his message of love will matter. It won't affect your salvation – your position in God's kingdom is not the issue here, so long as you are actually loyal to Jesus at all - but the position you will fill in the new heaven and the new earth hinges on the relationship of loyalty you have with God: how important growing his gospel of love was in your life.

I really hope you are like one of those two servants. You might think that you just can't possibly be like the first servant, giving up everything else to make God's love grow. Maybe you think it's too late. We might know people who are like the first servant, or we might read about people like that and just think, "I don't know if I can make so many sacrifices." I am going to say that's actually okay. All of us should be aiming to be like the first servant, but if we end up being like the second servant, that's still great. Even if you can scrape together enough loyalty to God to stick his love in the equivalent of a bank account so it just pays interest – even if you just live a life like everyone else, but you go to church, and you give a few dollars now and then, because you have some sort of personal loyalty to God through occasional prayer and stuff – you could be so much more than that, but God will still call it a win, and so will I, because it means God's love is growing in you, and in others. Loyalty to God will mean his love will grow in us. If there is more of God's love in the world because of you, even just a little, that's a win.

But I want to give you a word of warning, because the key is not what you do. That's just something we can and find easy to measure. The key is your loyalty to Jesus, and your willingness to do what he wants. God's love is always a good investment, so you don't have to worry about the return. What you have to do is be loyal to Jesus. And if we are loyal to Jesus, then regardless of what our life looks like, we'll be aiming to look more like the first two servants. But if our aim is never higher than the life of phoning it in, coming to church on Sunday, chucking a few bucks in the bag, fitting in with church culture – you don't need loyalty to God to do that, and that's dangerous, because you do not want to end up like the third servant.

The third servant is not loyal. That's his problem. He does not want what his master, the king, wants. He feels like having to do stuff for a king is unfair. He says, "If Jesus wants his love to grow so much, why doesn't he do something about it?" But friends, Jesus DID do something about it - he died for it! That's why he's being crowned as king! God expects one thing from us - to be loyal to him by taking the gospel of love that he has given us through Jesus Christ and investing it in the lives of others, even just a little. If nothing in your life reflects that loyalty to God, then he will take that mina away and your hands will be empty. Empty because no matter how many dollars, how many children, how many years of healthy life you have, if you don't have God's love, then you have nothing. You are not a loyal servant of your king, Jesus, and everything you have will be taken away.

Look, if you don't know what the message of God's love is, then come and talk to me afterwards and let's sort that out, because it's my job as a servant of Jesus to invest his message of love into other people - not because I'm a preacher, not because I'm a missionary, but because I've been given the mina: I'm God's servant, and I'm loyal to him, and his love grows in me and makes me love you and want what's best for you. And a relationship with God and his love is what's best! I haven't had time to talk about what happens to the people who refuse the king's authority altogether, but let's just say it's not pretty – it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a God that you've ignored or been fighting against; whose son's blood is on your hands. But this same God makes his number one priority sending out his servants with the message of love that says he will forgive you if you are loyal to him. That God is a God worth your loyalty.

But if you already have that message of God's love, and you've buried it in the backyard of your life because you'd rather not deal with it, then let me tell you, that is not good enough. Having the message of God's love rattling around in your head but doing nothing about it is not loyalty to God. You need to be putting that message to work. Start with this: treat one person in your life differently because of what Jesus has done for you. From there, the message of God's love will grow. Then when Jesus comes back, he will say, "Well done, my good servant, because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter." And that's a win.