

### 3. The Parable of the Ten Minas

Luke 19:11-27

The Parables of Jesus

How many of you have heard of Ronald Gerald Wayne? Not many, I would think. He was a co-founder with Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak at the start of Apple Computers and provided critical administrative oversight over the whole new venture. He worked with Steve Jobs in Atari before the three men started Apple in 1976. Wayne drew the first Apple logo and wrote the partnership agreement and the Apple 1 manual. He had 10% ownership of the company but gave up his shares in the new company for 2,300 US dollars after being with Apple for only two weeks. Later that same year, he received a check for 1,500 US dollars for his agreement to forfeit any claim that he might have toward the company. In the first year of its operations, the company had an income of 174,000 dollars, and in the next year, 1977, the company had sales of 2.7 million US dollars. The following year it rose to 7.8 million, and in 1980 it had sales of 117 million. By 1982 Apple had a billion dollars in annual sales. By September 2012, Apple became the largest publicly traded corporation globally by market capitalization, with an estimated \$626 billion.

As of 2020, Wayne lives in a 2-bedroom house, 60 miles outside Las Vegas and barely worth 150,000 dollars, and he drives a 2002 Chevy Malibu. If Ronald Wayne had held on to his 10% share, it would be worth 35 Billion US dollars! I wonder how many times Ronald Wayne has looked back and wished that he had the foreknowledge to stay in the company and invest his share wisely. If he had remained with the company longer, I wonder how this would have changed his life.

If I were to give you \$100,000 in gold and you had a time machine to go back to any situation in history to invest to benefit yourself and your family for the present time, where would you go, and how would you invest the money?

#### The Expectation of the Disciples

The time drew close for the Passover celebration and the crucifixion of Christ. As Jesus approached Jerusalem from the East after the 17-mile climb from Jericho, a rise of 3,600 feet, those with him thought that the Kingdom of God would appear at any moment (v. 11). There must have been excitement among those accompanying Him because they were convinced, as we are, that Jesus was and is the prophesied One, the Messiah King who came to rescue His people. As they neared the Mount of Olives, they may have recalled the Old Testament prophecy of Zechariah:

<sup>4</sup>On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. <sup>5</sup>You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him (Zechariah 14:4-5).

Some of those with Him likely knew that the very day He was entering Jerusalem was the same date spoken of by the prophet (Daniel 9:24-25). Daniel foretold that, from the time of the commandment by the Persian king permitting the rebuild of Jerusalem, there would be 476 years or 173,880 days, and then the Messiah would come. Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey precisely to the day that Daniel had prophesied. The people thought that the Kingdom of God was going to appear at once (v. 11), that is why they hailed Him as the Messiah, crying out “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matthew 21:9) and spreading their coats before Him as He made His entrance to Jerusalem! (Matthew 21:4-11). Those who knew of the prophecy perhaps thought that the holy angels would appear to fight with the enemies of Israel as they approached the Mount of Olives across from Jerusalem. That prophecy will be fulfilled in the future, but the time was not yet. To bring the disciples down to reality, I picture Jesus taking a break from the climb, sitting down with the disciples, and focusing their attention on an essential truth that He wanted to convey to them in this Parable of the Ten Minas.

### **The Parable of the Ten Minas**

In this passage, we read a parable that tells the story of three people and their investments in the Kingdom of God. As we read the parable, I want us to focus on the eternal return from our investments in this life.

<sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. <sup>13</sup>So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' <sup>14</sup>"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' <sup>15</sup>"He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, to find out what they had gained with it. <sup>16</sup>"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' <sup>17</sup>"'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' <sup>18</sup>"The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' <sup>19</sup>"His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' <sup>20</sup>"Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. <sup>21</sup>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.' <sup>22</sup>"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? <sup>23</sup>Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' <sup>24</sup>"Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' <sup>25</sup>"'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' <sup>26</sup>"He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away. <sup>27</sup>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'" (Luke 19:11-27).

This parable is unique because Jesus refers to an actual historical event that was common knowledge at the time. Christ grabs the hearts of His hearers by telling them the story of

Archelaus, one of the sons of King Herod the Great, a subordinate king to the Romans who ruled over Judea. When King Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided up, and Archelaus was given half of the territory, but the title of king was not given to him. This lack of the title disturbed Archelaus.

The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that his ego demanded that the title of the king be conferred on him. Archelaus decided to go to Rome and ask Caesar Augustus for the title.<sup>1</sup> To his surprise, when he got to Rome, a delegation of his own family plus fifty Jews and Samaritans had traveled by a different route and opposed the request of Archelaus for the title of king. 8,000 expatriate Jews living in Rome also joined the fifty. Together they told Caesar of the time that Archelaus had killed 3,000 Jews during Passover, heaping up their bodies in the temple before torturing others. All that he did prove that he was a murderer like his father.

The Jews in Rome pleaded with Caesar not to have this man rule over them! After listening to both sides of the dispute, Caesar decided to give half the kingdom to Archelaus but gave him the title of Ethnarch instead of king, promising to make him king if he proved worthy of the title.

Jesus was talking on two levels. Without commending Archelaus, the Lord spoke of a noble person, Himself being the noble person, who is to go to a distant country, heaven, and receive His kingship from a superior power, His Father. The parable focuses on two sets of people, some who oppose Jesus' kingship and servants who are given resources to invest while He is away.

Indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of the title of the noble person. First of all, He is the Son of David, the noblest birth of a Jew. But His nobility is not earned so much by being a descendant of David but because of His character. He is the most reputable person we have ever met. Who is like Him? He is the kindest, most generous, gracious Man who has ever lived! Each of us who tries to live up to His standards of nobility falls far short. If you have ever studied and saturated yourself in the Gospel accounts, how can you not fall head over heels in love with this Man of noble birth?

Even though His servants immensely love this noble King, many hate Him and do not want Him to rule over them. They cried out to the procurator, Pontius Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar," thus rejecting His Messiahship. All of us who read these words are on one side or the other; there is no middle ground. Either you are against Him (Romans 5:10) or you are one of His servants. There is no other choice for each of us:

**Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters  
(Matthew 12:30).**

**What do you think the mina represents if we are all given the same amount? What is meant by the phrase, "Put this money to work?" (Luke 19:13).**

The Parable of the Ten Minas seems similar to the Parable of the Talents, but there is a difference. In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), one was given five talents, another two, and another one. In New Testament times, a talent was a unit of weight, usually of gold or

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod\\_Archelaus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_Archelaus)

silver, weighing around 130 pounds.<sup>2</sup> Later, a talent became about gifts, abilities, skills, knowledge, and finances—our total resources. Some are given more skills and abilities than others and are accountable to God for what they have received. The Parable of the Ten Minas is different. Each of the ten servants was given the same equal amount, one mina, equivalent to three months' wages.

### **Put This Money to Work**

There are two main theories about what the equal amount given to ten servants, the mina, represents in this parable. First, it could be that the mina symbolizes the fact that we have all been given the same number of hours in a day to invest in the kingdom of God. Time is a commodity we in the West seem to have less and less. Examining how we spend our time can reveal how much or how little of our time is invested in eternal things. The second possibility is that the mina represents what is given to all believers in an equal amount--the stewardship of the message of the gospel. Paul the apostle wrote:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile (Romans 1:16).

The apostle Paul calls the Gospel *the Power of God*; why? Because it is the most powerful thing on planet Earth. Nothing on earth transforms a life like the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual warfare and opposition break out wherever the gospel's message is preached. The opposition is because we have an enemy that does not like his slaves released from the slave market of sin. But no matter what opposition servants receive from the enemies of God, we are to spend ourselves in this holy endeavor—the stewardship of getting the gospel to all the earth. The Lord Jesus said, "**This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world and then the end shall come**" (Matthew 24:14). We are not to be servants who spend our mina on our comforts—our King has given us a job to do, a mission to glorify God and release men from servitude to Satan. The message of God's love, mercy, and grace toward all humanity is a sacred trust given to all who believe:

On the contrary, we speak as men **approved** by God to be **entrusted** with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts (1 Thessalonians 2:4 Emphasis mine).

The word *approved* in the above verse is the translation of the Greek word "*dokimazo*." It means to test something as to whether or not it is counted worthy or approved. God allows us to go through the fiery trial of testing so we may be counted worthy to carry the sacred trust of the gospel to others. Paul writes that God has entrusted the gospel to us, His servants. God tests our hearts to refine us so that we can be trusted truth-bearers.

### **Why didn't the master give specific directions on how to put the money to work?**

The Noble Master did not set one of them over another. They were left to sort out the details themselves as to how to put the money to work to bring the most significant return on their

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<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talent\\_\(measurement\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talent_(measurement))

Master's capital. The sacred trust does not rest on the pastor or the evangelist to get the gospel to all nations. All Christians will be held to account when the Master returns for what they did with His resources. The Nobleman entrusted the same amount to each servant and gave them complete freedom to do what they determined individually to invest His resources. The grant of money was a test by the Master. It would be wise to be aware of this test and realize that God is watching to see how faithful we are with what He has given to us.

**So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Romans 14:12).**

Every Christian has a responsibility to promote and spread the gospel in any way they can. We cannot keep it to ourselves. The Greek word translated by the phrase "put this money to work" (NIV) or "occupy" (KJV) is *pragmateuomai*. It means to do business, invest or trade intending to bring a return on the investment. Interestingly, we get the word *pragmatic* from this Greek word. To be pragmatic is to deal sensibly and realistically with something. We are responsible for sitting down and thinking through ways we can strategically invest our resources to get the maximum return for the kingdom of God.

Let me illustrate. When I worked with my father as a commercial fisherman on the East Coast of England, it was an all-consuming hunt to find the fish. When we saw the fish on our sonars, we maximized our catch by setting up the right net for the fish we were to catch. The faster we could tow the net through the water, the fewer fish would escape. Our hunt was for the most valuable fish, the delicious and prized Dover Sole. We put noisy chains in front of the mouth of the net to scare the Dover Soles out of hiding in the mud and sand. All of our faculties were involved in the pursuit of our goal.

It is no different to work with my Heavenly Father now that I work with His nets! His souls are so much more valuable, and to catch them requires all of our faculties to be involved. Every life is precious to our heavenly Father. Our task involves us sitting down and thinking pragmatically about how to catch the maximum amount of His precious ones. There is no more significant task on planet Earth than the catching of men. **"Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).** The thing that stands out in the Parable of the Ten Minas is that the Nobleman was looking for faithfulness. The way they went about investing what all three called "your mina" indicated what was in their hearts. The return on the investment by the first man showed how much he valued the trust given to him by his master. He went at it with all his heart—he denied himself of time and energy so that he could maximize the master's investment. Their usage of money equaling a quarter of a year's salary showed their priorities in life.

When we believe the gospel and receive the grace of Christ into our lives, we are obligated to employ our talents and abilities to share with others what has changed our lives. We are to do what we can to give it away to others. We are to invest our time, energy, and money in promoting the Kingdom of heaven wherever we can.

Think of when you invested time into someone's life and saw a difference? It can be a friend, family member, or someone you may have helped at some time in your life. How did it make you feel to know that you made a difference in a life?

In verse 24, one of the servants put his mina in a sweat cloth or handkerchief, saying he was afraid of the master. Why didn't he put it in the bank with the money changers if he was so scared? At least that would have earned a little interest. When called to account by the master, the mina was taken from him and given to the one who gained ten minas.

The Nobleman didn't need the money. It is clear from the text that each of the two men kept the increase of the master's investment along with the reward of cities. The one who did nothing had no prize and lost his investment seed money. There were no other penalties or punishment for his lack of investment. He probably regretted that he did nothing to increase his master's glory. The man who did nothing is an example of the believer who will get to heaven but has laid up little treasure for his "homecoming" (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

<sup>19</sup>Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup>But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19-21).

The noble master was not interested in the money itself; he calls it “**trustworthy in a very small matter**” in verse 17. To a King, what are three months' wages of an ordinary worker? The action was merely a test to see the level of their faithfulness. He wanted to find out who managed their Lord's money with prudence and trustworthiness among his servants. Those who are faithful in small matters can be trusted with the more significant responsibility when he returns.

To everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away (Matthew 25:29).

When we read these words, it does not seem fair that one can lose what is not used, undeveloped and not exercised. However, we see this principle demonstrated every day. Can you think of some examples of how this is true?

If you do not exercise your body, it will grow weak. A person cannot excel in a sport or activity without repetition and practice, whether it's a musical ability, dance, or writing. If one does not cultivate a craft, the ability and gift he has will wane and not be used to their fullest. Someone who speaks a foreign language but never uses it may even lose the ability to converse in that language. What they had but did not use will be taken away. However, if the skill is cultivated and exercised, it will grow and be used, perhaps in multiple ways.

Similarly, when we involve ourselves in pursuit of spiritual things, our spiritual senses are honed. Giving ourselves to worship and the Word of God, prayer, and service to others will create greater spiritual hunger and fruit. If we neglect our spiritual life, our desire for spiritual things withers, and we will not bear much fruit. So, it is our choice. God wants to see what we do with our desire and choices. He has placed His treasure in earthen vessels or jars of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7) and has no other "backup plan." We may be surprised in beautiful ways if we cultivate what He has given us and see what He will do. God's grace has a beautiful way of multiplying things far beyond what we could accomplish in our strength.

## The Servant's Reward

The master was delighted and full of praise for the one who brought a 1000% return on his investment. He said, "Well done, my good servant!" (Luke 19:17).

What are your thoughts concerning the reward? There is a vast difference between three months' wages and the worth of whole cities!

What would be the combined income of ten cities in America? It seems a vastly different amount to the value of ten minas. Perhaps, the use of a city is one way of showing the disproportionate amount rewarded for the energy, time, and money invested by the first two people. I believe that God is showing us that:

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

You may say, "It sure sounds like a lot of work! I would rather live in Bermuda or Hawaii. Taking charge of ten cities is not a reward that I would like!" I see this reward as a reward of trust and character. It speaks of the closeness of the relationship with the Master. To whom does the CEO of any significant company enjoy close fellowship? In any healthy organization, it would be his top executives.

In the same way, God's faithful ones will be working and relating close to our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. What a joy that will be! The idea of a city implies that there will be responsibility and authority as we have a share in His rulership in the Kingdom of Heaven. The concept of a city helps our understanding. The passage above says that our minds cannot conceive what God has planned for those who love Him. We may think of the word "reward" and immediately have our idea of what a reward would mean. God's reward will far surpass what we can imagine. His generosity comes forth from His abundance.

The one who gained tenfold on his investment went at it with all his heart. Many on that day will say, "Why didn't I invest more of myself into that which matters?" We will see, in retrospect, those things that are truly important in God's economy.

Click the link below to watch a five-minute scene from the movie Schindler's List. The movie is about how Schindler used his ingenuity and resources to bribe the Germans to rather than execute over 1100 Jews, to have them saved by working in his factory. The clip is at the end of the war when the Jews want to thank him for saving their lives:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9vj2Wf57rQ>

If the link doesn't work, search YouTube with the words: Schindler's List I Didn't Do Enough.

Let's learn that lesson now while there is still time to apply it! What is vital in God's economy? Look at the life of Jesus for that answer. He spent His life investing in people. We will not always see the results, the fruit of our labors in this life, but I am convinced we will one day see the impact of our lives on others from the vantage point of eternity.

I want to finish with the words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a famous English preacher, and theologian who once spoke on this passage. He said:

Jesus has made us kings and priests, and we are in training for our thrones. What if in this congregation, I am learning to proclaim my Master's glory to myriads of worlds! Possibly the preacher who is faithful here may yet be made to tell forth His Lord's glory to constellations at a later time. What if one might stand upon a central star and preach Christ to worlds on worlds instead of preaching Him to these two galleries and to this area! Why not?

At any rate, if I should ever gain a voice loud enough to be heard for millions of miles, I would speak none other than these glorious Truths of God, which the Lord has revealed in Christ Jesus! If we are faithful here, we may expect our Master to entrust us with higher service hereafter! Only let us see to it that we can endure the test and that we profit by the training. As our account comes out in the very little, so will it be with us on the grand scale of eternity. This view puts another face upon the work of this lower sphere. Rulers over ten cities! Rulers over five cities! Brothers and Sisters, you are not fit for such dignities if you cannot serve your Lord well in this world with the little He has entrusted to you. If you live wholly to Him here, you will be prepared for the glories unspeakable, which await all consecrated souls. Let us go in for a devoted life all at once! Time is so short, and the things we deal with are comparatively so small! We are soon coming out of the eggshell of time- and when we break loose into eternity and see the vastness of the Divine Purposes, we shall be altogether amazed at the service bestowed – which will be the reward of service done. O Lord, make us faithful!<sup>3</sup>

Prayer: Please, Lord, make me aware of Your soon-coming Kingdom. Grant me wisdom and grace to invest my life in the things that matter—the King and His people. Help me to live as Jesus did. Amen!

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<sup>3</sup> (Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307).