

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 19:11-27

One of the challenges of going through Luke the way we are (passage by passage, over the course of a year and a half) is that it's easy to lose sight of the big picture, while we attempt to strain out "lessons" or "practical applications" from each weekly passage. With that in mind, it is important to keep this passage (the "parable of the 10 minas" as it is often called), linked to the following passage: the triumphal entry and cleansing of the temple.

These should all be seen as fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. A specific example would be Malachi 3:1b, *"Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, who you desire, will come, says the Lord Almighty."* Luke 19:11 prepares the reader for what is about to come, *"...because He was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once."* They were correct about that...but they were incorrect on how it was going to come and what it was going to be like.

Jesus' parable of the 10 minas can also be considered the parable of the returning king. In Jewish thought at the time, YHWH, their true King had left them when they went into exile centuries before. And even though the Jewish people had returned to the Promised Land, and had even rebuilt the temple, the King had not returned. Nevertheless, they held out hope that one day He would (thus the messianic expectations of Jesus' day). And many would-be messiahs had come and gone. And now this young miracle-working rabbi, who regularly confronted the religious leaders and establishment was on the scene. Could He be the long-awaited Messiah? Indeed, He was. Luke had gone through painstaking detail to build the case that this Jesus was that Messiah, highlighting both that Jesus understood Himself to be the Messiah, and that the Kingdom wouldn't be like anything they had imagined or assumed. The forthcoming Triumphal Entry, and cleansing of the Temple should be understood from this "return of the King" perspective as well. While this parable can be applied within a second-coming framework, it is important to understand it primarily within the context of what was going on during the time of its telling.

One of the interesting details of this parable is that Jesus said that not everyone wanted the appointed king to be their king. This was most certainly a jab at the religious leader who had been opposing Him.

Let's have N.T. Wright shed a little light on this passage:

"Jesus is telling a story about the king who comes back to see what his servants have been doing, and he tells it for the same reason as he told almost all his parables: to explain what he himself was doing, and what it meant. He was coming to Jerusalem, the end goal of his long journey. And he was challenging his hearers to see and understand this event as the long-awaited return of Israel's God, the sovereign one, the rightful king. This was the hidden meaning of his journey all along. This was what it would look like when the true God finally returned to Zion... Within the world of first-century Judaism, a story about a king and his servant would naturally be read as a story about God and Israel. How should one then interpret the period of

time between God's leaving Israel at the time of the exile and his eventual return? The answer of this parable is: as the time in which Israel has been given tasks to perform, which God on his return will investigate. Jesus has been warning, throughout the previous ten chapters, that judgment will fall on the nation, the city, and the temple itself if they do not finally heed his call."

So, historically, we need to keep 70 AD (when Jerusalem was destroyed) on the near horizon as the looming judgment that was about to befall Israel.

From a "practical application" stand point there are two main ways we can approach this passage. The first, and common way, is to wrestle with the question, "What are we doing with the resources (time, talents, treasures, skills, abilities, gifts, opportunities, etc.) God has entrusted to us?" Keeping well in mind that a time of accounting will come. With that approach, it might be helpful to also take a look at Matthew 25:14-30 to do a little compare/contrast (there are some key similarities and key differences).

A second approach could be to wrestle with the question, "Do we really want Jesus as our King?", which also implies embracing His way (teaching, values, priorities, etc.). Both approaches are worthy of discussion within community. But I do think that this second approach is more foundational. If the religious leaders of Jesus' day (Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, scribes, the Sanhedrin, etc.) were asked the question, "Do you want YHWH as your King?" that would have shouted a resounding YES! The problem, of course, was that their idea of what that would be like was vastly different than what YHWH had in mind. We know this because when YHWH came in the person of Jesus, and Jesus went about declaring the Kingdom had come, and described what it was like, the religious leaders weren't so excited about that. The reality was that they had their own notion of what life should be like, and basically just wanted God to fulfill their wants. Which really isn't all that different from people today...even good, church-going, Christian people.

Regardless of which approach we focus on, something this parable highlights is the varying attitudes that can exist regarding having authority over us. One attitude is to despise it and try to change the situation (verse 14). Another attitude is to take advantage of the opportunity and responsibility that comes with it (as seen by the two servants who put the king's money to work for him). A third possible attitude is to be fearful of the authority figure (as seen by the servant who hid the money). A basic, fundamental reality of life is that there is authority over us, and we really don't have much choice in the matter. What we do have all the choice over is our attitude toward authority. This is true regarding our attitude toward God, as well as our attitude toward lesser authorities.

An interesting omission in this parable (and I believe it was a very intentional omission) is if the third servant's conception of the king ("*a hard man who does not put in, and reaps where he does not sow*") was accurate or not. Keep in mind that he was the "fearful" servant. And fear has a way of skewing our perspective of reality. There are many people today who function from a very an inaccurate view of God. As A.W. Tozer said, "*What comes into our minds when*

we think about God is the most important thing about us.” This parable invites us to check our true view/understanding as well as heart/attitude toward King Jesus.

- Q. What comes to your mind when you think about God? Where does your view of God come from? How do you know if your view of God is accurate or not?**
- Q. What are you doing with what God has entrusted to you? (Keeping in mind, of course, that everything WE have is actually HIS, and has been given to us to advance His purposes.) How do you feel about this question? (Does it feel like a heavy burden? An opportunity? Does it inspire your imagination or does provoke guilt?)**
- Q. From the standpoint of “investment”, how, or in what ways, are you investing into the Kingdom of God? What sort of “returns” are you seeing?**
- Q. How do you feel about the responsibility to faithfully administer the resources God has entrusted to you? How do you think you’re doing at it? (How would we know if we’re doing a good job or not? Hint: community is a big part of the answer.)**
- Q. What have you had to change in order to allow Jesus to be King in your life? What do you think/feel may still need to be changed in order for His reign to be more fully realized in your life?**
- Q. We know what the motive of the third servant was (fear), but what do you think was the motive for the first two servants? (Obviously these were characters from a parable, so we’re simply using our imaginations on this question. But that can still lead us to thinking about our own motivations.)**
- Q. What questions does this parable bring to your mind? (For example: I often wonder about a servant who tried hard to put his master’s money to good use, but lost it, or it just didn’t pan out. He wasn’t lazy; he just wasn’t profitable. What happens to that guy? The parable, obviously, doesn’t mention that...but that’s what I wonder. Parables are meant to get us thinking...so what/how does this parable get you thinking?)**
- Q. What is your attitude toward the authority figures over you in your life? (There are 2 ways to take this question: How do we feel the authority figures over us are doing at their job and whether we like them or not? Or, how well are doing at being people under authority; what’s our general attitude toward having people over us?**