



When the King Returns, Part 1

Luke 19:11-14

April 16, 2023

I'd like to invite you to turn your Bibles to Luke 19 this morning. This is a very important text of Scripture and a very pivotal time in our Lord's ministry. And I'd like to add this could be a very pivotal time, pivotal portion of Scripture for our own church as well. We're looking at Luke 19, verses 11 and following. And as I mentioned a few moments earlier, on our church's calendar we have just come out of the Passion Week, where we celebrated together the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ just this past weekend.

For Jesus, Passion Week is still ahead of him. In fact, from this point in Scripture, it's right around the corner, literally up the hill and before leaving Jericho, an important city where so much has happened already. We've seen the healing of the blind men, the salvation of Zacchaeus. We've seen the

Messiah's mission statement there in Luke 19:10. Here in Jericho, Jesus has one more lesson to teach, in the form of an amazing and profound parable.

Let's read this parable together this morning as we begin starting in Luke 19 verse 11. "As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He said, 'Therefore a nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas and said to them, "Engage in business until I come." But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We do not want this man to reign over us."

"When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first came before him, saying, "Lord, your mina has made ten minas more." And he said to him, "Well done, good servant. Because you've been faithful in very little, you shall have

authority over ten cities." And the second came, saying, "Lord, your mina has made five minas, and he said to him, "And you are to be over five cities."

"Then another came, saying, "Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief, for I was afraid of you because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow." He said to him, "I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant. You knew that I was a severe man, taking 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?"

"He said to those who stood by, "Take the mina from him, give it to the one who has ten minas." They said to him, "Lord, he has ten minas." "I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here, and slaughter them before me.""

This is Luke's version of a story that maybe you recognize from another portion of Scripture as being somewhat similar, the parable of the talents, which is recorded over in Matthew 25:14-30. That is another version of this same story, and in that version in Matthew 25, that Jesus is going to tell once again in the coming week, we understand that Jesus has used this basic idea of a nobleman or a homeowner going away and entrusting something to his servants and then returning and getting an account. This is the basic idea. He uses it in two different ways, one here in Luke 19 and another time in Matthew 25.

They are different, quite different, and they have different, different purposes, different intents, different audiences, different settings, and much to, much we could say in that regard. But suffice it to say that the version here is unique to Luke's Gospel. Luke is the only one that delivers this parable in this form, and it has a unique purpose, as we are going to see.

And as usual, Luke starts into this parable by giving us, as the narrator, he gives us the context in verse 11. Verse 11 says, "As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately." So the opening phrase, "As they heard these things," that connects the parable back to the previous context, which means the setting is still Jericho.

It's right before Jesus ascends up to Jerusalem to complete the journey that he began back in Luke 9:51. This is the final act in the travel section of Luke's Gospel, that large section that goes from Luke 9:51 all the way up to the end of this parable in Luke 19:28. That's where this stops. So this is the final act in the travel section in Luke's Gospel, as he, Jesus, heads into Passion Week. Within a week, he'll be on the cross.

"As they heard these things." That phrase reminds us of Jesus' audience. The they, Zacchaeus, everyone at his house, that's the they. He's got his tax collector friends, associates, those people probably of ill repute, who are there at his home.

There are curious citizens of Jericho who have no doubt followed Jesus down the street, heard all this commotion, and Jesus' teaching and affirming Zacchaeus as a son of Abraham, they're there, too.

The Apostles are there as well, along with other disciples who've been traveling along with Jesus down the road into Jericho, and they intend to go up into Jerusalem for the Passover feast. So other disciples, pilgrims who are heading up to the feast as well, who see the band of disciples traveling with Jesus, and they join them and travel along the road with them. They're all there. "As they heard these things." That's the, they.

"These things." What were they hearing? "These things" that they were hearing refers to the teaching. It was prompted by Jesus' conversation with Zacchaeus. Most of that conversation, by the way, is not recorded here. You understand that there's a lot of conversation, a lot of talking, a lot of teaching going on that doesn't make it into the Gospel record. Otherwise, this book would be a lot bigger.

Luke has condensed what's necessary for us at the direction of the Holy Spirit, but we know what the teaching was about. We know what the conversation consisted of because the entire record of Luke's Gospel provides the background of Jesus' teaching ministry, so we can fill in whatever gaps there may be. Jesus is still at it. He's still preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, as it says over and over through Luke's Gospel. That's what he did everywhere. He preached the good news of the kingdom of God. He's still doing it.

And Luke gives two reasons that Jesus proceeded to tell the parable. So we're to understand that while they were all of them listening intently to Jesus' teaching, he's a captivating teacher, no one can turn away. And while they're all listening intently and probably quite excitedly at this point to what he's teaching about the kingdom of God, knowing what's coming, Jesus sees the need to set their expectations. He sees the need to re-orient their perspective, to help shift their thinking away from what it has been into what it needs to be.

Why? First, because he was near to Jerusalem. Actually, he's very near, only 18 miles away. That's a mere six-hour walk. For us, used to driving around in cars, that's quite a distance. If we have to walk 18 miles, that's like mostly a marathon, isn't it, for us? Can't imagine doing that. And it's even more severe of a walk because from Jericho, at 846 feet below sea level, it goes up, ascends up the hill up to Jerusalem at 2,474 feet above sea level. That's a rise of more than 3,300 feet in elevation. They'd be, we'd be, huffing and puffing. For them, just an afternoon's walk.

So they're very near to Jerusalem, and we have to remember that in the setting, the Apostles are there, Jesus' disciples, they are there, and they know what it means to arrive in Jerusalem. They know that the arrival in Jerusalem is very meaningful because Jesus has been telling them about this and the significance of getting to Jerusalem.

And we understand they don't fully get it, do they? They don't really understand the significance. They don't understand the rejection, suffering, death that he's about to endure; kind



of get a glimpse of it, that something significant is happening. But he's probably speaking in metaphors. He speaks in parables a lot. There's probably something I'm not getting here. So they postpone their misunderstandings, knowing that it'll be sorted out later.

But they do know that something very significant, something really important, is about to happen. You can imagine them talking excitedly about all these things with the citizens of Jericho. In fact, everywhere they go, whoever they talk to, whether it's along the road or in the towns, villages, cities, they are talking about everything that they have seen and heard: who Jesus is, what he's like. Is he really like this all the time? they say. Yes, yeah, he is, and you should hear. Listen, come in close. I'll tell you what I've seen in private.

They talk about what he's been doing over the past couple years, miracles he's performed, truths he's been teaching, how he confronted and exposed as frauds the Jewish leadership, and people loved those stories, right? So everything that they anticipate, including the fulfillment of messianic hope, that's

what the disciples and all the Apostles are talking with the people about. There's a messianic buzz electrifying this crowd of people. It's stimulated by the disciples of Jesus, who are telling everyone that he is about to finish his journey. He's about to reach his goal. He is so close to Jerusalem. And this closeness, the nearness to Jerusalem, acts as an accelerant on the fire of excitement among those who are eagerly anticipating all that they think is about to happen once he arrives.

Which is a second reason that Jesus tells the parable, according to verse 11, because of what they think is going to happen, because they supposed that the kingdom of God was about to appear immediately. They presumed it would happen at once, that the kingdom consummation, all the passages of the Old Testament, would be fulfilled in an instant upon his arrival. The verb there, *anaphaino*, it means "to come into view." It's "the goal comes into view." What they have sought, what they've been looking for, what they've been anticipating, that comes into full focus. That's the verb.

In this case, it's the kingdom of God. It becomes visible to the observer. *Anaphaino*, originally, it was a nautical term; it was the experience of sailors on the high seas after a long voyage. They've been traveling and seeing nothing but water in every direction, and as that ship rolls over the horizon, and as they come within the sight of land, they anticipate reaching their destination. Their eyes become focused; they're peeled for familiar, expected landmarks.

Same thing with these people. They think that they are looking over the horizon, seeing the familiar, expected landmarks to show up. They think they know what they're looking for. They think they know exactly what to anticipate. They have expectations about the shape of everything that's about to happen.

Lots of people like that today, right? Lots of people watching videos online, listening to podcasts, lectures about all those end-times gurus, feeding the love of sensationalism among people with tasty, apocalyptic morsels, cobbled-together prophecies woven together with headlines, and all mixed with

really bad theology. People swallow that stuff hook, line and sinker.

And people then and now, we're no different. All these people, they think they know what they're looking for. They have read their Bibles. They've studied the prophecies. They've been sitting at the feet of rabbis and end-times gurus themselves, and they've set their expectations about what the kingdom of the Messiah is going to look like. Not, not just the ignorant masses either, not people who are untaught, uneducated, but the disciples, the Apostles are like this, too. They're near Jerusalem. They think they know what's going to happen when they arrive, and they're wrong.

What they failed to see is what you and I can't help now but know for sure. They did not know that there would be two comings of the Messiah, two comings of the Christ, a first coming and a second coming. They didn't realize that. The first coming we know now is the coming of the Suffering Servant who came to die for his people, to purchase his people through the atoning work of the cross. Jesus came to save his people from

their sins. That's one coming, and everything that happens after that is to proclaim the work of Christ on the cross.

The second coming, as we understand from Scripture, is going to be to come in glory. When Jesus comes again, he will come to reward and recompense and execute justice on the earth. It is so clear to us now, on this side of the cross, with the New Testament delivered to us, everything explained to us, all the historical events narrated for us and, and interpreted for us, we understand this now.

In fact, it's so clear now, that this doctrine of the second coming of Jesus Christ is a test of Christian orthodoxy. Anyone who teaches that Christ has already come, that person is teaching heterodoxy. That person is a heretic. They violate orthodoxy, promote non-Christian doctrine. Such people, Paul said, are "deceivers and liars," 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. They're to be rebuked, called to repentance; and if they don't repent, they're to be rejected.

Prior to the cross, though, even Jesus' closest disciples didn't understand this. They didn't understand the two comings of Jesus Christ. They were unable to discern the gap in time when Jesus the King would be physically absent from them, his bodily absence from them, and that interval of time created between his first and second coming.

Even after his resurrection, we know the Apostles were still asking Jesus the same thing, right? Acts 1:6, "Lord, will you at this time?" I mean, we've got the death and the burial, resurrection, glory, yay, you're here. So it, will you at this time, restore the kingdom of Israel? How did Jesus answer? Patiently, got to say. "It's not for you to know the times or the seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority."

And then he sets their minds on the work that is yet to be done. He focuses their attention on the commission that he has given them, the work that's to be done and accomplished and pursued in the interim, in the gap-time. Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when my Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you

will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Same thing here in our text. It's pre-cross. It's prior to his death, burial, resurrection, prior to Passion Week. And so they have a misunderstanding that needs to be sorted out. They've misperceived things. They've misunderstood. So in order to correct the popular misconceptions about the coming kingdom, in order to mitigating against this, honestly, an overwhelming and indomitable messianic zeal on the part of the people, Jesus tells this parable, and he's going to set right expectations about the kingdom.

Now, looking more closely at the parable, let's take a look at the basic divisions that are there. The story's pretty straightforward, right? A nobleman takes a long trip to a faraway land to go receive a kingdom despite the hatred of his fellow citizens, and before leaving, he entrusts equal sums of money to ten of his slaves. He commands them to engage in business while he's away, and when he returns, having received the kingdom, he settles accounts. He rewards the faithful, he

recompenses the unfaithful, and, rather ruthlessly, he slays his foes.

So in verses 12-14, Jesus sets up the entire scenario, and that's what we're going to focus on today. In verses 15-19, Jesus shows the king returning and rewarding the faithful. Then in verses 20-27, the longest section, by the way, Jesus shows the king dealing with the unfaithful and eventually killing his enemies. So as I said, and you might have guessed walking in here, you could have predicted this, that we're not going to try to tackle all 17 verses today. You're not a prophet, you're just experienced, all right?

But we'll take the story in three parts, okay, three parts, and we'll do this over the next couple weeks. So the king and his resources we'll cover today, the king and his reward next time, and then following that, the king and his reckoning. So the king and his resources, the king and his reward, and the king and his reckoning. So here, today, the king and his resources.



Let's read verses 12-14 once again. "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas and said to them, "Engage in business until I come." But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We do not want this man to reign over us.""

Pretty straightforward, and for the first part, the set-up about the king and his resources, this is really, this set-up is really about how this nobleman-become-king, as Jesus shows him giving resources to his ten servants and then putting them to work while he's away, this reveals a lot about the character and the nature of this king. In fact, the king and his resources, you could also call that the king and his character because what he does with his resources tells us a whole lot about his character, what this king is like.

So let's get into our outline, and you can write this down as number one: the king and his noble birth, the king and his noble birth. Let's just make a, the obvious plain. Let me just say it, because you're all thinking it right from the start. We

know that as Jesus introduces this nobleman, we know right away that he is talking about whom? About himself. That's right. It is the inescapable conclusion of the story that this is really about Jesus going away and then returning and rewarding his servants, or recompensing his false servants, or dealing justice to his foes.

So the nobleman pictures Jesus as the Messiah in his role as the Messiah. This is Jesus the King, and he's setting expectations for his disciples in particular during the time that he is away. This parable should, I mean, it did it for me even as I'm reading, and I'm sure it's done it for all of you; it, it sobered me. Hopefully, it sobered you as well, to think like, Huh. I've been entrusted with something by my King who's gone away, and he's given me a, a mina to use, to invest, to work hard with, because there's going to be a reckoning. There's going to be an accounting, a time of accounting, when he returns. Huh. What is that mina, and what am I doing with it? I think we're all saying the same thing because we can all see this is about Jesus Christ. He's setting expectations for us, his disciples, during the time that he's away.

So as Jesus introduces the character, he refers to him as a nobleman. Says there, nobleman, the word *eugenes*. It literally means well-born. We get the word eugenics from that word *eugenes*. Good genetics. So basic meaning of *eugenes* refers to a family line; it refers to good breeding, being born into a good family, into, born into nobility. And most certainly that applies to Jesus, right? Is there anybody on the whole entire planet, in the entire history of mankind, that has been more nobly born than Jesus Christ?

Think about it this way. There's only one nation chosen on earth, the nation of Israel. There's only one tribe of that chosen nation that is chosen to rule, the tribe of Judah. Only one family in that chosen tribe and in that chosen nation; it's the family of David. And of the family of David, there's only one that can be the promised son that can succeed the eternal throne, as it says in 2 Samuel 7, the Davidic Covenant.

There's only one who can exercise that everlasting rule on an everlasting throne in an everlasting kingdom, and that is the Son of God, "the Son of the Most High," as Gabriel announced to

Mary in Luke 1:31. He told her, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus," the same name as Joshua. "He will be great, and he will be called Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." So the birth of Jesus, it is the most noble of any birth, of all human births at any time, in any place, any generation, anywhere in the world. He is nobility of nobility.

From that basic meaning, *eugenes* has another nuance of meaning because noble doesn't just refer to good breeding, but also to good character, good character. So second point: the king and his noble character, the king and his noble character. Proof of good breeding is good character, and the proof of good character is good and noble behavior. My grandmother used to say, Handsome is as handsome does, Travis. Usually she said that after I had done something not so handsome. Handsome is as handsome does and I guess nobility is as nobility does.

Again, it was Gabriel who predicted the nobility of Jesus, telling Mary in Luke 1:35, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God." Nobility of breeding, nobility of title, nobility of family, backed up by the nobility of holy character. The most noble, then, of all humanity, proven in the perfection of holiness, is Jesus Christ.

So Jesus is referring to himself, isn't he, when he refers to this nobleman, when he tells the tale of a nobleman who went to a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. He is the one of most noble birth who acts in accordance with his true nobility, submitting to the father's will to receive for himself a kingdom, after which he will eventually return. Jesus has been looking forward to the time when he will take on this task for a long time now, since the beginning, since before the beginning, of this travel section. He's been looking forward to this time when he is going to ascend into Heaven, when he's going to take that long journey to receive for himself the kingdom.

He started thinking about this before setting his face toward Jerusalem in Luke 9:51. He talked about it with, remember, on the Mount of Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared there with him in glory. Luke 9:31 says there, "They appeared in glory and they spoke of his departure," the word departure, literally, the word *exodus*. He is leaving. He is about to accomplish it at Jerusalem.

This is what he's thinking about in, comes to the Upper Room discourse, John 14:1-3. He told all of his Apostles, he said, "Let not your hearts be troubled." I mean, if they could only see as he sees at that point, right? "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and I will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also." Oh, don't be troubled. My going away is a good thing. I go to receive a kingdom. I go to prepare a place for you. I'm coming back.

So he is the nobleman who will go away, and in this time frame, here, he'll go away very soon, go away to a far country. He will ascend to heaven to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. He's going away, far away, and he's going for a long time, and he's going to come back.

There's more to see about the king's noble character. That's not all I have to say. There's a whole lot here, and you'll hear it coming out along the way. But let's consider a third point in an outline here: the king and his noble concern. So there's the king and his noble birth, noble character, and now the king and his noble concern, point three. While this nobleman is away, while the nobleman is away, he expects his servants, and it says ten of them, here. We presume them to be the closest to him. It's, it's unrealistic that a nobleman of this stature, who's going to go and receive a kingdom, would only have ten servants. Obviously, these are ten not only household servants, but ten close-in household servants. We would assume that they are closest to him, they are most trusted to him, favored by him. And the nobleman expects these ten servants to use the money that he's about to give them to make more money.

This is his noble concern, to make money. You say, What? To make money? Noble? Yeah, to make money, noble. That's what we see here. The verb is *pragmateuomai*. You can hear the word pragmatic in that verb. That's where it comes from. The meaning of the verb is to engage in business, or it could be translated to conduct trade, or make money, or gain and turn a profit. So he's saying, Go, be successful. Trade, invest, work, make money, be profitable. And he doesn't expect them to do this out of their own pocket. He provides the resources. He gives to each one of these ten servants a mina.

Now a mina, it's not an insignificant amount of money. It's not a, not a nothing sum, but it isn't a large sum of money. A mina was valued at about one-sixtieth of a talent of silver. A talent of silver is a large amount of money. So, but a mina was about, maybe three months' salary. So whatever your three months' salary is, kind of factor that, that's a mina. Different for all of us, I know, but three months is three months to all of us. So if a denarius, think of a denarius as one day's wage, a mina is worth about a hundred denarii or a hundred days' wages. That's about the sum of a mina.



If you put it into perspective, again, the parable of the talents over in Matthew 25:15 and following, it says, "To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one." What's a talent? A talent, one talent is worth about sixty minas, so about fifteen years' worth of salary. That's a talent. That's a, that's a pretty big chunk of change, right? A talent is a very significant amount of money. The mina? Not so much. It's a modest sum, but not insignificant. It's not nothing. Depending on exchange rates, a mina could purchase a couple of oxen, five calves. There's productivity to be made with a mina.

So when the nobleman becomes king, returns to his own country, we see his first order of business is to get an accounting from his servants, to find out what investments that they made, what trade they conducted, what profit they earned. He's eager to see how things went with those who are closest to him, with those who know him, those who are of his own household.

This nobleman-become-king, his concern for them, we should understand, it's heightened by the fact that, as we see in verse

14, that he left his ten servants to conduct their business, as it says in verse 14, in the climate of hostility, the opposition of all of his citizens; they hated him. That's going to affect these servants, isn't it? For sure. He is concerned, then, he has it on his heart to get back, find out. Hey, how did you guys do? How did you guys fare? Because he knows it's a tough field out there. It's a tough market, especially if they represent this nobleman.

Christian, keep that concern in mind, just a little footnote here, the concern of your Lord, who is the King, his concern while you conduct kingdom business and await his return. He loves you and cares for you. Like this nobleman, he knows that you live and work and do the work of the ministry in a hostile climate, that you conduct your ministry affairs and your kingdom business among a citizenship that is rebellious against your king.

I read a comment by one Jewish comedienne. She was blaspheming Jesus Christ, and she said, If he returns again, we'd kill him again. That's the attitude of the world against

Jesus Christ. They hate our Lord. They killed our Messiah, and they would kill him again if they get the chance. They won't. But our Lord knows that about our affairs here. He's not unaware. He knows that. He cares for you, and he's going to return soon.

This is what Jesus is thinking about as he tells this parable, even as he starts it out. As he's telling the story, he's thinking about his own departure, receiving the Kingdom, returning, and rewarding his people. He's, he's thinking about the environment that they're going to be left in when he leaves.

In fact, we can read his heart on his concern for his people in John 17, his high-priestly prayer, as he prays for his Apostles. He prays for all those who are going to listen to the Apostles' witness and testimony. He prays for all of us. You ever want to know the heart of your Lord for you, your King, for you? Read John 17. Read the book of Hebrews and see our great merciful High Priest who intercedes for us now before the throne of the Father in heaven.

This is what Jesus is thinking at the time, but I want to fill you in a little bit on what the people are thinking as they hear the story, even as it starts out. There is a historical background of the story. And it sheds light on verse 14. These citizens who hated him sent a delegation after him into, in order to undermine him and reject him.

Jesus' story, here, as he tells the story, we don't see it explicitly on the pages here, but as we read passages from Josephus, it's very, very clear to us that Jesus is alluding to a common practice of client-kings, especially those who served as vassals of Rome in the land of Judea. They journeyed to Rome to seek the authority to rule in Judea. It's common practice.

So all the people, as they're listening to this, they know exactly what Jesus is talking about, talking about the vassal kings. In particular, this is the Herodian dynasty. This is exactly what they've done for decades. They witnessed this most recently in the region, particularly under the Herods. And as client kings, the Herods served as vassals of Rome, and at the

pleasure of Rome, the pleasure of, the conference of authority and power from Rome upon them to rule in Judea.

All the Herodian kings had to go and seek, and then receive authority from Rome, from the senate early on, and then later on from the emperor. So it started with Herod the Great. I won't go into all the history of this because it would take too much time, but Herod the Great, you understand, was not a Jew. He was an Idumean; that is to say, he was a descendant of Esau. Therefore, Herod the Great was, as the King of the Jews as he liked to be known, he was always insecure about the lack of true Jewish nobility and identity that he had as a king. He didn't possess any.

And so he went about to make a name for himself, ingratiate himself to the people of the land, and when they didn't love him, he killed them. He was a ruthless, cruel, barbaric king. But Herod went to Rome several times to seek authority to rule in Judea. It was Julius Caesar who first appointed Herod procurator of Galilee in 47 BC. Mark Antony appointed him tetrarch in 41 BC. In the very next year, Herod went again to

Rome to oppose the claims of Antigonus. He did so successfully, and so the Roman Senate appointed Herod king of Judea, the title that he wanted, in 40 BC.

He ruled, very cruel, barbaric reign, but not without a lot of, you know, investment into the land and, and a lot of ingenuity and rule and skill and leadership. But he was still a cruel and barbaric king, and when he died, when Herod the Great died in 4 BC, this time of a transfer of power, it was an uncertain, tumultuous time, and not only because of the transfer of power and the succession of authority. That creates times of political upheaval and social turmoil. We see that everywhere around the world, and we're starting to see it more and more in our own country, aren't we? Transfer of power, very tenuous times.

But so this was happening around 4 BC when Herod died. The transfer of power created a very tumultuous time of upheaval in the land of Judea, in particular in Jerusalem. So because of this time of uncertainty and tumultuousness, it's not just because of the transfer of power; but because Herod's reign was

marked by cruelty and barbarity, the people did not want that kind of a ruler again. They weren't keen about having another Herod on the throne. That's all that they had to choose from. They really didn't have a choice, did they? They're underneath authority of Rome, and they're subject to whatever Rome decides.

So when Herod's son, one of his sons, a surviving one, there weren't very many of them left because Herod killed a lot of them, but when Archelaus, his son, was making his bid for the Judean throne, as he intended to succeed his father, the Judeans opposed him, and they started opposing him in a subtle way. They just started demanding favors, and they demanded more and more favors, more and more favors, until they reached a point where he could not cross. And then they revolted. So they started demanding favors and then revolted to outright rebellion and open opposition to him.

At the beginning, they knew that Archelaus would be inclined to curry favor with the people. It's a time of a transition of power, so they began by demanding lower taxes and demanding, that's what all of us demand, right? Lower taxes.

Lower taxes and you'll be our man; you'll be our king. They demanded that he would ease annual payments, tax payments.

So for time Archelaus acquiesced. He granted their request; he lightened their tax burdens. And then the Judean people took a step further. They demanded, again, a reduction on taxes, but this time, now, for the goods bought and sold publicly, which he also granted. So they're just taking step by step to see how far we can push, what kind of accommodations he'll make. Will he dance to our tune? Since Archelaus is moving in their direction, they keep up the pressure, and then they take one step too far.

As is always the case in times like this, there's a radical minority. Might call them, we'll use our term from our day, activists. They're, they're, too, seditious, disloyal, subversive, scoundrels, zealots politically, religiously. And these zealots, these activists, use the common people for their good, for their purposes. They stir up the common people who don't really know why they're being stirred up or what, to what purpose, in what direction. But they stir up the common people against the new king, and they demand that Archelaus make



reparations for some rebels that his father had punished, killed.

Archelaus couldn't do that. He had just given a seven-day celebration to honor his father in funeral services, and now to repudiate his father's decisions, it's just something he couldn't do and maintain his political credibility, maintain some modicum of his own authority. He drew the line there. He flatly refused. So the people, stirred up by these rebellious zealots, these common people, they were moved by them to rebel against Archelaus

As usual, it wasn't the activist minority that suffered, really. It was the ignorant masses who suffered big time. It was during the Feast of the Passover at 4 BC. That's the same year that Jesus was born, by the way; also the year that Herod the Great died. But this, in 4 BC, during the Feast of Passover, this subversive faction provoked a confrontation with Archelaus in the temple. People gathered there for the Feast of Passover and then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the gatherers, a mob, and they rioted against Archelaus.

He sent soldiers there to the temple environment to caution them, and the people started throwing rocks at them. Isolated, some of them stoned them, killed them, put them to death. And so he had a rebellion on his hands. He had a riot on his hands happening in the heart of Jerusalem. So Archelaus deployed soldiers and horsemen, and that's when things really got out of hand, 3,000 Jewish pilgrims slaughtered. Three thousand. Little, little bit of an overreaction. Some of them were foreigners. It's bad, bad press. The rest of the people fled into the surrounding Judean mountains. Festival over.

So it's shortly after this incident that Archelaus has to travel to Rome and try to secure his power. Tough sell. In fact, his half-, it was made more difficult because his half-brother Antipas, who was another of Herod's sons, Antipas wanted to make his own bid for the throne in Judea. He came waving a piece of paper, the will of his father. He sailed to Rome ahead of Archelaus, appealed to Caesar. He's there to undermine his half-brother Archelaus.

And so Archelaus, running a little late to Rome, he gets there coming in behind Antipas, and Antipas has already been making his speech before Caesar. He's made convenient use, believe me, of this temple uprising, and he's argued rather well. Slaughtering 3,000 of his future subjects while they innocently worshipped at the temple. Is this a leader? Is this your new leader? That's bad leadership. This is Herod the Great, part 2. O, Caesar, I just want to do your merciful and gracious bidding.

So to support Antipas in his bid for the throne, and it really wasn't more to support Antipas, it was more to undermine Archelaus, the Jews sent an official delegation to Rome. Fifty Jewish ambassadors, elders of the people, went to Rome. They gathered the most respected Jews in the city of Rome together, and they all came before Caesar, and they tried to decry Archelaus in the Royal Court. They attempted to depose him before Caesar.

The Jewish delegation, it was effective in shaking Roman confidence in Archelaus and reducing the power that Rome may

have conferred upon Archelaus, but they were unable to do exactly as they'd accomplished. They had hoped to not only get it rid of Archelaus, but any Herodian on the throne in Judea. They wanted Judea to be declared a Roman province, which would get rid of the Herods altogether and install, instead, a governor.

Other virtues, though, before Caesar commended Archelaus to him, he was a convenient option, he was a known quantity. So Caesar granted him a portion of his father's kingdom, but not all of it, and he withheld the title of King of Judea, King of the Jews, and made him an ethnarch instead until he could prove himself.

Archelaus never did prove himself. From 4 BC to 6 AD, he ruled, but ruled ineffectively. He was cruel. He was barbaric. He exacted enemies on these Jews who sent that delegation after him, and they hated him all the more. And so he was ultimately banished in 6 AD, and the Jews actually got what they originally asked for. Judea did become a Roman province, and it ultimately set up the situation that would fulfill all biblical prophecy,

that is, Jesus' crucifixion on a Roman cross under the power of Rome and under the governor, Pontius Pilate. That would have not happened had all this history not taken place.

And that's getting ahead of ourselves, isn't it? Let's get back to Jericho, the day that Jesus told this parable. Just all that to say, the Jews would have had this in mind. The citizens of Jericho would have had all of this in mind because the Herodian palace is still out there, a prominent, visible sight in Jericho. Its baths, its reflecting pools, decorative artwork, statues that lined a well-watered, well-groomed gardens. It was beautiful.

So everyone in Jericho, everyone living throughout Judea, they all knew the history of the region. These so-called noblemen who scurried off to Rome, vying for authority to rule over the Judean area so that they could legally rape, pillage, and plunder the land and its people. They all knew this story.

So as Jesus speaks in verse 14 about these people that hated him, sent a delegation after him, the minds of the people

would immediately remember the history of the region. They hated Archelaus, the Jewish delegation that followed him to Rome saying exactly this: "We do not want this man to reign over us." People may have been justified, may have been justified in rejecting Archelaus as their king, I mean, bloodthirsty, cruel, pragmatic, uncaring.

But what about this nobleman? What's he like? What about this king in the story? What about this king that the story is alluding to, referring to? If this king, i.e. the Messiah, if his birth, his character, his concerns, if this king is of the highest nobility, and if he acts with impeccable integrity, and if he manifests unquestioned goodness, then what can justify any rebellion from his citizens? Nothing, right?

In the context of Jesus' life, and in view of the coming rejection of the actual citizens of the actual Judea and the actual Jerusalem, man, this becomes a poignant indictment of the people as they are stirred up against the true King of the Jews, who's of noble birth and noble character, with noble concerns, stirred up against the true King by a power-hungry religious

political elite, a small faction of Jewish leaders who want to hold on to power in Jerusalem, want to hold power and authority and sway over the people. This condemns them. Why? Because of the nobility of the King.

The main point of the parable here, though, is to set expectations for Jesus' disciples, to let them see the environment that they live in, the kind of place that they're going to live in while the nobleman-become-king is away. He's trying to get them to think and prepare their minds for a longer period of waiting for the Lord's return and to teach them what faithful waiting looks like. So the expectations that the nobleman sets for his servants in the parable, the expectations that Jesus sets for his disciples here, they are the same expectations set for you and for me.

Now, let's get to a fourth point and make some observations about this parable, just the opening part of this parable which really revealed the designs of our Lord for his disciples. We'll call this point number four: the king and his noble designs, the king and his noble designs, or if you like, noble intentions.

And just to help you to keep some of these observations straight in your notes, I'll just refer to these as sub-points, and I'll use letters. So sub-point A, B, C, and, and following.

Sub-point A, and these aren't pithy statements, so stay with me, here. Sub-point A: The nobleman seeks the authority of the kingdom in order to exercise benevolent rule. The nobleman seeks the authority of the kingdom in order to exercise a benevolent rule. So he's unlike Archelaus. He's unlike any of the Herods, this king. He's unlike any worldly ruler, this nobleman in the parable and the one he represents unlike them, because the use of his authority is for benevolent rule in order to rightly represent the supreme sovereign, in this case not Rome, but God, to represent the supreme sovereign rightly, the one who gave him the authority. He wants to demonstrate what that sovereign is like.

He uses his, his authority accordingly. The nobleman takes a long journey, it says, to a distant country. And the verb tense, there, is showing purpose. It's for the purpose of receiving a kingdom for himself. The point is that he goes there



to gain authority, to get power for himself, in order to rule over his citizens.

Now is that a bad thing? You look around the public square today, look on social media, and those who seek power are condemned for seeking power. We understand why. As they say, "Power corrupts, and absolute power abso, corrupts absolutely." We understand that.

Is it a bad thing that he seeks power, that he seeks authority, that he goes to get this king? And the language, here, the syntax, is very clear. It's for himself, or a date of advantage, for his own advantage he's seeking this. So is it a bad thing that he goes for the purpose of getting authority for himself?

Well, the answer to the question hinges on whether his rule is beneficent or tyrannical, and it's a matter of beneficence or ty, tyranny based on what? His character. Is this man good, or is he evil? If tyrannical, it's another round of Herodian cruelty. If beneficent, all is well.

So how noble is this nobleman really, really? The issue of character becomes paramount. It really comes to the forefront in this parable. The further we read on, the more abundantly clear are this man's noble designs. Here's another subpoint, sub-point B: The nobleman's travel plans are fixed, firm, and set in stone. The nobleman's travel plans are fixed, firm, and set in stone.

Yeah, the nobleman's going to be gone for a while, but his return is absolutely certain. It's certain according to the text here, and Jesus telling the parable. It is firm, it is certain. He is taking the journey, it says, "for the purpose of receiving a kingdom for himself," and also for the purpose of returning. Both of those verbs, to receive and to return, both of those verbs are infinitives of purpose, so what's true of the one is true of the other. His return, just as his departure to receive the kingdom, his intention to get that authority and power for himself, just as certain as that intention is, so is the intention of his return. His return is guaranteed, his expectation guaranteed, just as his expectation of gaining the kingdom is certain.

The character of our King is unquestionably good, his reign perfectly righteous, benevolent. His word is true, it's trustworthy, it's certain. He went away just as he promised that he would, which means he will most certainly return, just as he promised that he would. How did he leave? Bodily, physically, literally he ascended into Heaven. What did the angels tell the the, the gaping, gazing Apostles as they watched him ascend into Heaven? "Why are you staring into the air? Go get to work. He'll return just as you saw him go." It is certain; his return is certain.

Sub-point C, sub-point C: The nobleman provides his servants with resources. And get this: The nobleman provides his servants with resources to test and to prove their character. Sub-point C, the nobleman provides his servants with resources to test and to prove their character.

Notice the nobleman provides these ten servants of his with resources, and it's not to enrich himself; it's to test these ten men, to test, you could say, the nobility of their

character, the loyalty of their character. Why? Because he has an eye on their fitness for future service. And so loyalty, nobility of character, that's his concern. That's his design in giving them the mina.

We pointed out earlier, to hand out only ten minas, one mina apiece, compared to this nobleman's vast resources relative to what he's actually good for financially, ten minas are hardly anything. So the modesty of this sum shows us making money for himself is hardly the point. It's not the point. He had plenty of money. What he wanted to discover is what money can't buy. He's testing the loyalty of these ten.

Remember the principle we saw back in Luke 16:10 at the end of the parable of the dishonest manager. Jesus said this, "One who is faithful in," what, "very little is also faithful in much. One who is dishonest in very little, also dishonest in much." So this nobleman gives his ten servants very little, to see what they will do with the little, to see if they will regard it or disregard it, to see, to test and see whether these men are faithful and honest, or unfaithful and dishonest. Will

they disregard and disrespect the money that he's put into their hand? Will they look upon it as of no account and say, "I'm not really required to do anything with this." Or will they take it seriously? Will they rejoice in the mina that they've received?

In the context of the parable, the story here, why would it be important for this nobleman to know the character of these ten closest slaves before he comes back? Because he's about to be a king, right? He's about to be a king. So when he returns, the servants of his household, these servants who are transacting business in his name and making investments in his name and carrying out orders in his name, what they do and what they don't do, how they speak and don't speak, how they act and refuse to act, the character that they demonstrate reflects upon their king, not just a nobleman, now he's elevated to a new position, and it's more consequential. The higher the authority, the higher the prominence; the higher the power, the more consequential the influence. How they act, how they represent him, it sets the tone for the entire kingdom.

Character is the issue, not only in the parable, but most importantly in the economy of Christ and his kingdom, most importantly in the economy of Christ and his church, right? The nobleman, he's rich. He is totally unconcerned about money. What he does care, care about is character. Tells us a lot about the nobleman, doesn't it? Shows nobility in his character because his concern about productivity, he does care about productivity, it's really a test of loyalty, a test about, he's, he's really testing for character. Character he seeks in his servants is patterned after his own character, patterned after his own goodness. He's looking for goodness in them that's like his own.

Consider his goodness in a few observations, here, that he didn't make the servants cough up a mina out of their own wages. He gave a mina to each one of them. He's good. He doesn't send them out of his household, cut them off from his name. They're his servants. He'd have them be involved in his work and conduct business in his name, invest with his credit on the line and his reputation on the line. He's happy to have them representing him while he's away. He's a good nobleman.

He didn't place an expectation, notice, on the results of their activity, but on the mere fact of their activity, their productivity. He simply says, "Engage in business until I come." What's going to please him is not what the result is or what the outcome is as much as their faithfulness in doing and being active in working, even if it comes to naught because of the rejection of the people.

Finally the goodness of the nobleman's character is revealed in that final verb in verse 13. It's not as apparent maybe in the English translation, but it's the verb, present-tense, verb, "I am coming, I am coming." He, this is his goodness in setting that hope before these ten servants. And what is the hope? The promise of his own return. They don't care about his stuff. They don't care about his money. They don't care about his titles. What they care about is him. And so he says, "Conduct, engage in business until," and then it's a verb, present-tense, "I am coming." The hope is in him, again reveals his goodness.

Here's another sub-point. I think it's my final one. Sub-point D: The nobleman is interested in the heart of his servants. He's interested in the heart of his servants, which is exposed by their working, not concerned in the outcome of their works. That's a mouthful. I don't know how you're going to jot it down, but sub-point D, the nobleman is interested in the heart of his servants, which is exposed by their working, by their activity, not concerned in the outcome of their works.

Again, this is his design. It's to expose the heart. It's to reveal the heart. The difference between loyalty and disloyalty, it is clear and evident in verse 14 by way of contrast. What marks the difference between loyalty and disloyalty? It's the presence or absence of love for the king. In verse 14, the citizens of his own country, they hated him, and their actions are consistent with their hatred. We'd expect, then, the actions, by contrast, of the servants who love the king are going to be marked by faithfulness in their work, by loyalty, by hard work, by productivity, by industry.



The citizens, *hoi polotai*, from which we get the word politics, these citizens, as citizens are in any country, they're endowed with rights. They have, they have privileges of citizenship, and it's in the nobleman's country. They're underneath his authority. They take advantage of all his goodness. They have rights and privileges, benefited from his goodness. They've conducted business and made a profit in a just, equitable society that he has set up, he regulates, he is enforcing. They benefit from his goodness.

The reference to citizenship here means freedom and privilege and opportunity, the ability to make money and build wealth. The citizenship that they have ought to produce gratitude and contentment and loyalty and love. But it obviously doesn't. In their own words, We do not want. What does, want, point to? Want points to a loveless, spiteful hatred. "We do not want this man," literally, it's this one, almost like spewing it out of their mouth. This guy. "We don't want this one to reign over us." They are refusing to submit to him, refusing to obey him, refusing to love him. That's their heart, dark toward him.

By contrast, as we see in the next section, verses 15-19, the faithful servants of this nobleman-become-king, marked by loving submission, humble gratitude, loyal affection, hard work, industry, and get this again, we, they conduct their business, they carry on trade, invest minas in a climate of bitter hatred toward their master, in the context of an unjustified animosity of rebellion among the citizenship against its king, against their king, against their lord, their master; and the nobleman knowingly leaves them behind, seemingly without any advantage in their own homeland.

Unlike the privileged, wealthy citizens, they're mere slaves. That's the word being used here. It's the word *doulos*. So they're owned. They're not owners. They're under authority. They have no authority and power of their own. They're not citizens. They're despised by the citizens of their own land rather than regarded, respected as they ought to be.

In fact, unlike the disloyal citizens who hate their king, these servants love their king and they conduct in business, they trade, they make investments, all under a cloud of

suspicion from the people around them. Rather than being an asset, their love for their nobleman is a liability in their own land; rather than being a credit, their love for their king being trouble to them and scorn, not praise and admiration as it should.

Well, it's not just a small sum, the single mina that tests the loyalty of these ten servants. It's also the context of the public animosity toward the, toward the master, the hatred of the citizens, that tests their loyalty. Living a life of loving, submissive service to the king, loyal to him when everyone else hates him, to continue doing that for the lifetime, that exposes the heart, doesn't it? Hard to invest in such a climate, right? Hard to see how anyone loyal to the hated nobleman-become-king can earn anything or make any kind of a profit if his true allegiance is known, if his love for the king is known. But as we're going to see, it's the nobleman's mina that seems to have its own supernatural power to earn.

Beloved, this is the plight of Jesus the Messiah, isn't it? It's the plight of his servants in the world right now, isn't

it? It's the plight of his church. It's the plight of every single Christian, every single one of us who names his name. We're not regarded as kings, but as slaves. We're not considered wealthy, noble, or wise, 1 Corinthians 1:26 and following. We're counted ignoble, foolish, poor, stupid. We're not counted worthy of any respect or regard in this world, are we? We're despised, rejected along with our Master. And this is all by the sovereign design of our good and wise King. It is the perfect test of our loyalty and love for him.

What will we do with what we have? That's the question for us in this parable. Just as we set it up, the king and his resources, this first main section, which we just covered, really sets up the other two, and we see that the king and his resources is really about the king's character. It's about his designs to test and prove and mature our own character, to expose our hearts and let us deal with our hearts before the Lord, that we would love him fully and serve him wholeheartedly.

In closing, I just want you to know how I and the other elders have been praying for all of you as we've kind of

anticipated this, coming into this teaching, this parable of our Lord. We've been praying about this parable and its effect on us as a church. The parable describes what our Lord wants us to do while he is away, what, what he wants us to be busy doing until he comes again.

And we believe our Lord's teaching has the power to set the direction for our church, set a tone for our church, to motivate us to reach higher and broader than we've ever done before. We want to see our church in fellowship and partnership with one another. We want to see us become increasingly fruitful as a church, rejoicing and doing the work of the Lord together, extending the ministry of Grace Church in our own community, which is our own Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

We want to rejoice together. We want to rejoice in maturing together and bearing fruit together, that we'd develop ministries of evangelism and outreach, and ministries of mercy and compassion, practical helps around our community, see the ministries, all these ministries not started and conducted by

official leaders, but by members who take these things that our Lord is teaching, take their mina and start in working with it.

We want all of this for, for you. We want it for all of Christ's disciples, wherever they may be, but particularly for each and every member of Grace Church, so that we, all of us, wholeheartedly turn away from useless, futile, wasteful distractions because we all want to render a good account with joy and confidence on that day before our Lord. As I said, the nobleman gave the same resource to each one of his ten servants, one mina per servant, right? One mina, same thing.

To each one of us as well, beloved, the Lord has given a mina, something that each and every Christian has in equal measure. Well, what is that? I can think of a few things, and I just wrote down a few things because there are actually more. But let me just mention a few things. First thing that we all have if we are Christians, is we all have the Gospel, don't we? If you're a Christian, you have the Gospel. If you don't have the Gospel and don't understand the Gospel and can't articulate



the Gospel, well, how can you believe in what you don't know and understand?

So obviously, if you're a Christian, you have the Gospel. That's your mina. It's the same Gospel for all of us. There's not one for this guy and another for that lady. No, it's the same Gospel, saves all of us, and it is treasure in jars of clay, isn't it? You know the pattern of Gospel teaching we've provided here: God, man, Christ, response, consequence? We go over that pattern all the time, talk about it everywhere. If you don't know, it could be because you're new to the church, but we would love to teach it to you. So just, if you don't know what I'm talking about and say, Hey, yeah, I need a little bit of brushing up, happy to do that with you. We'll help you.

The question, though, becomes are you using it? You use that mina by giving it away, giving it away. Spread the Gospel. Make sure you are Gospel, you are evangelistic people and use that mina. Are you evangelizing with that one mina, that Gospel?

The second thing we all have in common, we all have a gifting from the Lord by his Spirit. If you're a Christian, if you are united to Christ, then you've been baptized in his Spirit, and you've received a gift, at least one gift, some kind of a gifting. Peter said, "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as stewards, good stewards of God's varied grace or his manifold grace."

So are you using your gifting? Are you active in serving the church? Are you doing kingdom work in and through his church to extend this ministry? This isn't guilt-tripping. This is an opportunity for you to use the mina that God has given you, to use the gift, the, the skill, the talent, whatever it might be. And if you have trouble thinking that through, man, we'd love to help you with that. We'd love to get you involved, get you active, get you serving. There's no greater joy, no greater joy.

Here's a third thing, and like I said, I could add a whole bunch more, but I'm going to keep to these. Third thing we all have is the same amount of time. We all have the same amount of time. You say, Oh no, you don't know my schedule. Look at



everything stacked on my desk. Look at my calendar. My phone's going off all the time. You know what, your minutes pass at the same rate as my minutes. We all have the same amount of time.

So the question is, how are you using that most precious non-renewable resource? How are you using it? If you were to make an hour-by-hour assessment of your day, what would that look like? Would you be proud of how you're using the minutes and the hours of your day? Would you present that before your Lord and say, See what your mina is doing? Or are you squandering time? We can use time, the resource that God has given us, we can either use it well or not so well. We can use it for Christ and his church and for kingdom purposes, or we can use it for other things.

With the Gospel, with your gifting, with your time, we could add so many other things, with your imagination, with your planning, with your priorities, with your calendar, with your relationships, we could add so many other things. Think about the mina that we all have in common, and just ask what does your use of that mina demonstrate about your heart? What does it

demonstrate about what you love, what you don't love? What does it demonstrate about your loyalty or lack of loyalty? Where can you improve? Where can you grow?

Listen, beloved church, by God's grace, we're going to grow together because there is none of us who uses his mina or her mina perfectly well, right, I being first among them. So let's endeavor to grow together, and let's rejoice to do that together by God's grace and for His glory. Amen? Let's pray.

Our Father, we love you so much. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for this parable, again, once again, a brilliant, deep, complex, multilayered narrative that helps us to understand so much. We do pray that you would help us to use what you've given us well, use this mina well for the glory of the Father, for the exaltation of your name, for the spreading of your Gospel, in order that you might receive glory from saved souls, transformed lives, and renewed minds. We do all of this that it might redound in the glory of the Father, to the praise of your great name, Lord Jesus. We do it by the power of the Holy Spirit, not



in the power of the flesh. We pray that it would be so in your name. Amen.