**THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

**WAITING FOR THE KING**

**Luke 19:11-27**

**INTRODUCTION**

Have you ever had something really important to do that you didn’t do because you only had a limited amount of time to do it? I can’t count the number of times that I finally sat down to read, or reply to e-mails, or complete some other long-awaited task only to think, “Well, the kids are coming home in half an hour” or “Company’s coming over soon, so there’s no point. I’ll just sit around and look at my phone instead.”

I wonder how much time I’ve wasted because of that kind of thinking. Sure, it may be only 15 here and 15 minutes there, but those minutes add up over a lifetime. Think about how precious time is. It’s so valuable that no amount of money can buy even a single second. You only have so much of it. You can’t increase it. You can’t decrease it. And once you’ve spent the time that you have, there’s nothing you can do to get it back. Time is a precious resource that God has given us, and yet the ironic thing is that we waste so much of it because we don’t think we have enough of it.

This is a serious problem, and I’m just talking about reading and e-mails. What if we were talking about something more important, like driving your pregnant wife to the hospital, or rescuing a drowning child? If we waste our time and neglect to do more important things like that, the consequences are much larger.

That’s what was happening with the early church. They were neglecting the most important task of all – obeying God – because they didn’t think they had enough time. Jesus was coming back. He was coming back at any moment, and when he came back, he would bring the fullness of the Kingdom of God with him. So instead of obeying God, some of the first Christians waited idly, trying to pass the time until their Lord returned.

Jesus knew this would happen. He knew that his people would be tempted to believe that, since he would finish what he started when he returned, they didn’t have to do anything themselves.

But they were wrong. They were wrong in thinking that they had nothing to do. They were wrong in thinking that they could sit back and relax, because Jesus would take care of it all.

That’s what our text today is about. It’s about what life is supposed to look like for followers of Christ who are waiting for their king to return.

The title of this message is **Waiting for the King**. My aim today is to show you that **Obeying Christ While Waiting for Christ Comes Only From Knowing Christ.**

We will have three points today:

1. The King’s Journey
2. The King’s Generosity
3. The King’s Judgment

(1) **THE KING’S JOURNEY**

Our text today begins in verse 11: “As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem”. What things did they hear, and why does it matter that Jesus was near Jerusalem?

Remember what we read two week ago. Jesus has just been in Jericho, a tax collection center off the main road to Jerusalem which was only about 18 miles away. The average person walks about 3 miles per hour, so this meant that Jesus was only a six hour walk away from Jerusalem. This is significant because Jerusalem was Jesus’ ultimate destination. Everything Jesus said and did was preparing his disciples for this moment when he would arrive in the City of David, because it was in Jerusalem that Jesus would fulfill his role as the Son of David, the Messiah, God’s Chosen One.

What happened in Jericho confirmed that big things were happening. Jesus met a blind man who was begging on the side of the road. The blind man cried out, “Jesus, *Son of David*, have mercy on me!” Remember, this was the first public pronouncement in Luke’s Gospel that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus then heals him. He restores the blind man’s sight. Who makes the blind see? The Messiah! It was prophesied in Isaiah 61, a prophecy that Jesus said applied to him back in Luke 4:18:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and *recovering of sight to the blind*…”

So we see that Jesus is pronounced to be the Messiah immediately before Jesus does the work of the Messiah, all as he was headed towards the city of the Messiah.

It comes as no surprise, then, that as the disciples leave Jericho and begin their final approach to Jerusalem, they’re thinking, “We are *so* close to the end! The worst is over, and the best is yet to come. All the misery we feel, all the sadness of the world, it’s about to go away, because the Kingdom has finally arrived! The blind see, and the rich repent, because the Messiah has finally come!” And they were right, but not completely. You see, they believed that the Messiah’s arrival in Jerusalem meant that the seed of the Kingdom had already become the largest tree in the garden. The Kingdom was no longer now and not yet. It was now. Period. And because the Kingdom was here, they were free to sit back, relax, and watch Jesus do his thing.

That’s why Jesus tells this parable. He tells this parable to correct this kind of thinking. Yes, the Kingdom is here, but no, it’s not yet here completely. Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem doesn’t change that. Luke, who is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, really wants us to understand this, which is why he tells us the purpose of the parable himself in verse 11: “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.” This parable is meant to correct the kind of thinking that says, “Jesus is coming back soon. He’s bringing his Kingdom, and therefore there’s nothing left for us to do.”

I wonder if you’ve ever felt the same way. Perhaps you’ve said to yourself, “Jesus is going to fix everything one day, so I don’t need to do anything. I have my free ticket to heaven, and I’m just going to ride it out till I get there.” Or perhaps you’ve thought, “My time here on earth is so short. What could I possibly do for God in this lifetime? Not much. I may as well just wait until Jesus returns and let him do the work.”

If that describes you, then this parable is specifically for you. I think that this parable is for all of us, but it is aimed with laser focus on those who take a passive view of this life, thinking that Jesus is going to do everything one day so we don’t have to do anything.

So what is this parable about? Jesus says in verse 12 that it’s about “A nobleman (who) went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.” Right away it’s obvious that the nobleman in the parable is Jesus himself. Jesus is the King. The Kingdom belongs to him. So if the nobleman has gone to receive a kingdom, then he must represent Jesus.

Notice two things about verse 12. The first is that the nobleman “went into a far country”. Jesus is reminding his disciples that he’s about to leave them. It’s true that they’re approaching Jerusalem, and it’s true that Jesus would complete his mission in Jerusalem. But that doesn’t mean that he’s going stay. He’s going to leave them. Twice, in fact. The first time would be when he would die on the cross and was buried, leaving them feeling hopeless and lost. The second time would be after he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. These are things Jesus had told the disciples in the past, but they didn’t understand. They thought Jesus was here to stay, but he wasn’t. He was leaving them until the time was right for his return.

Here’s the second thing. The nobleman left “to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.” Notice that, at the time of his departure, the man in the parable is a nobleman, not a king. He may be of noble birth, but he doesn’t yet have the absolute authority of a king. But that’s about to change. He’s leaving for the far country to “receive for himself a kingdom”. This nobleman is about to be crowned as a king and receive all the rights and authority of kingship, and once he does, he will return to his people.

Jesus is actually borrowing form recent history by including this little detail in the parable. Both Herod the Great in 40 B.C. and his son Archelaus in 4 B.C. did what the nobleman in the parable did. They left their home country and travelled to Rome so that the Emperor could confirm their rule. Jesus models his parable on those historical events.

But how does this apply to Jesus? What does it mean for him to leave for a far country to receive the Kingdom? After all, Jesus is and always has been the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, so how can he receive the Kingdom?

This is when we need to remember that, when Jesus came into our world as a man, he appeared to us not as a king, but as a lowly servant. When he took on human flesh, the eternal Son of God who created the heavens and the earth and commands legions of angels concealed his divine glory and walked on the earth as a poor man. He was born in a manger in an obscure little town. He grew up as the poor son of a carpenter. As an adult, he was homeless, and as the Messiah, he was rejected and mocked. The Son of Man truly came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. That’s not what kingship looks like.

But once he accomplished all that the Father sent him to do by dying on the cross, rising from the dead, and ascending into heaven, Jesus returned to the Father and received all the rights of divine kingship once again. The Apostle Paul puts it this way in Philippians 2:8-11:

“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Jesus is leaving, and Jesus is coming back, and when he does, he will return with the full rights and the divine glory of the King of heaven and earth. Until he does, there’s work to be done. That’s what the rest of the parable is about.

Who are the other characters in the parable? There are the ten servants in verse 13, and there are the citizens in verse 14. The servants represent Jesus’ disciples, both the original ones who walked with him and those who follow Jesus today. The fact that Jesus chose “ten servants” rather than “twelve servants” to correspond with the twelve apostles strongly indicates that the servants represent all of Jesus’ disciples – past, present, and future – and not just the first twelve. So if you call yourself a Christian, a follower of Christ, then you are the servants in verse 13.

The citizens represent the Jewish people who rejected Jesus’ authority. They’re called “citizens” because they were God’s Chosen People. They were the people Jesus came to save. Ethnic Israel was chosen by God as the nation that would represent his ways and to do his will on the earth. But in verse 14, Jesus says that his citizens “hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, “We do not want this man to reign over us.”

That’s exactly what would happen in Jerusalem in Jesus’ crucifixion, and that’s exactly what would happen after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. The Jews would reject Jesus as their King, even though he had come for them. As John 1:11 says,

“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.”

There would certainly be some exceptions (after all, the first disciples were all Jews), but the general trend was that God’s Chosen People would reject God’s Chosen One. We will see the consequences of that rejection later in the parable.

(2) **THE KING’S GENEROSITY**

So what are the servants of Christ to do while their King is away, and what will happen once the King returns? This leads us to our second point: the King’s Generosity.

Verse 13 says that the nobleman called “ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come.’” A mina wasn’t a huge amount of money, but it wasn’t insignificant either. It was worth about 100 days of wages for a common labourer. So if we translate that into today’s currency, taking into account our minimum wage, think about it as being worth about $8,000.

The nobleman gives out these ten minas to his ten servants and instructs them to “Engage in business” until he returns. He wants them to make him some money with the money that he has entrusted to them. He doesn’t want them to sit idly around just because he’s going to be returning soon. He wants them to work. He wants them to be productive. He wants them to multiply what they have and be fruitful, and he gives them everything they need to make that happen.

That’s what Jesus expects of us. While he’s gone, he has work for us to do, and he has given us everything we need to do it. He’s given us time. He’s given us skills and gifts. He’s given us resources. And his expectation on us, his servants, is that we will use all these things in such a way that will serve and honour *him*.

We must never forget this. Everything that we have has been *entrusted* to us. Our possessions, our wealth, our gifts, our time, none of it belongs to us. All of it belongs to *Jesus*. And because it belongs to Jesus, we will have to give an account one day for how we used these things. Did we use them well or poorly? Did we honour Jesus with them or did we honour ourselves? Did we wisely apply what we have to further our Master’s cause, or did we abuse those things by advancing our own interests?

A day of reckoning is coming for all of us, a day when we will stand before God and give an account for how we used what he entrusted to us. God will call us to stand before him and ask us, “How did you use those business skills I gave you?” or “How did you use the wealth that I entrusted to you?” “Did you use all that I gave you for my glory?” And as we answer, nothing will be hidden from God’s sight. Every moment of our lives will be before him, and he will judge us.

That’s what happens in verse 15, which says “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.”

How would his servants do? Verse 16 says that “The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’” That’s a 1000% increase. Impressive! The original $8,000 has become $80,000. This servant was smart with how he used his time, and he was wise with how he used what was entrusted to him. He took a little and turned it into a lot, and his master was pleased, which is why he says in verse 17, “Well done, good servant!” This nobleman who is now a king commends his first servant for his excellent service. He praises him for the return he was able to make on the master’s investment.

But praise isn’t the only thing the master gives him. He continues in verse 17: “Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.” Wait a minute. That can’t be right. *Ten cities*? Yes, this first servant was quite impressive, but where did *that* come from? It’s one thing to manage $8,000. It’s a whole other thing to manage *ten entire cities*. We’re not just talking about a few minas or a few thousand dollars any more. We’re talking about hundreds of millions of dollars.

We see the same sort of thing with the second servant in verse 18. He didn’t have quite the success as the first, but he still yielded a 500% increase. The servant had turned the one mina into five, and now the master was turning the five minas into five entire cities.

In other words, the Master’s rewards were completely disproportionate to what the servants had done. He gave them way more than they gave to him, and that tells us something very important about the reward: it wasn’t earned. The cities weren’t given to the servants as the just payment for their service. They weren’t given as the servant’s wages. They were given to them as a gift, a gift that reflects the generous heart of their Master.

That’s who the King is. He’s generous. No, it’s more than that. He’s *extravagantly generous*. He’s generous beyond description! Jesus shows us in this parable that if you are faithful with what he has entrusted to you, you can look forward to the Day of Judgment with *joyful* anticipation, because your King is extravagantly generous! You don’t have to think about Judgment with dread, as if Jesus will look at what you’ve done and say, “Is that all?” He’ll look at what you present to him and smile before he turns and presents something to you, a reward so great that it infinitely outweighs what you produced. Why? Because that’s who he is. He is a generous king who vastly outgives those who give to him.

This point of the parable is crucial for us to understand, because without it, the rest of it won’t make sense. Jesus is ready and willing to reward his faithful servants with a reward that far exceeds their work, not because they deserve it, but because he delights to show generosity to his servants.

(3) **THE KING’S JUDGMENT**

What about those who aren’t faithful? What will happen to them? This leads to our third point: the King’s Judgment.

The parable began with ten servants, but it ends with the third, because between the first three, Jesus has made his point.

This third servant is much different from the first two. He hasn’t done anything with his mina. Instead, he hides it away in a handkerchief. Why? He tells us in verse 20: “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.” This third servant was paralyzed by fear of his master. He saw his master as harsh, unfair, even cruel, and that kept him from doing anything with his master’s money. He was afraid he would lose it, or invest it foolishly, so he decided that it would be better to just wrap it up and stow it away so that he could give it back to his master when he returned.

But that’s not what the master told him to do. He didn’t say, “Engage in business, but only if you’re good at it. If you’re not, just sit on your hands and do nothing.” He didn’t say that. He said, “Engage in business.” Period. The servant disobeyed his master by failing to do what he instructed him to do, all because he was afraid of him.

Was this third servant right? Was his master truly a severe man, a man who takes what’s not his and enriches himself off the hard work of others? Of course not! In fact, he’s proven himself to be exactly the opposite. He doesn’t take what doesn’t belong to him. He gives to others what doesn’t belong to them. Entire cities are given to his lowly, undeserving servants! No, his master isn’t a severe man. He’s a generous man.

This third servant completely misunderstood his master’s heart. He didn’t know him at all. His ignorance of his master led him to disobey him, and the consequence of that disobedience are devastating.

The master says in verse 22, “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, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?” Given what we know about the rest of the parable, we know that the master isn’t saying that he’s actually a severe man. He’s saying that if he truly is a severe man like the servant thinks he is, then the servant should have had *more* motivation to obey, not less. He should have been more afraid of the consequences of disobedience than of the consequences of investing the money poorly. If he had more carefully considered his position, then he would have found a way to obey, like investing the money with a bank. It may not have made as much money as the first two servants, but at least he would have been obeying his master’s instructions. But he didn’t do that. He didn’t do anything, and because of that, the master condemned him.

Jesus doesn’t tell us exactly what it means for the third servant to be condemned, but there’s good reason to believe that it meant banishment from his kingdom. That’s what the parallel account in Matthew says. Matthew’s version of the parable is almost exactly the same as Luke’s, except it ends like this:

“And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:30)

The master then strips the servant of all his responsibilities in verse 24 when he takes away his mina. He takes it away and gives it to the faithful servant who already has ten minas. Some of the servants protest in verse 25, saying essentially that it’s not fair that the servant who already has ten gets another while the servant with one gets none. The Master replies in verse 26 with this: “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.” The King’s judgment isn’t about equality. Jesus doesn’t care if some have more and others have less if there’s good reason for it. And in this case, there is good reason for it. The one servant was faithful and the other wasn’t, so the faithful servant will receive more, and the unfaithful servant will receive nothing.

The parable ends with the King turning his attention to the rebellious citizens from verse 14. He says, “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 sounds harsh to our 21st century ears, but we need to recognize that the King is doing exactly what he’s meant to do. He’s rewarding his faithful servants, and he’s executing justice on those who have rejected his authority. Judgment is coming for everyone, to those who are faithful, and those who are not. It may be delayed while the King is away, but one day, it will arrive, and everyone, for better or worse, will be judged.

**CONCLUSION**

I want to end this sermon with just one question. Do you know Jesus? I don’t just mean do you know *of* him, or do you know *something* about him. I mean, do you know who Jesus *truly* is? When you think about Jesus, do you believe that he is generous? Do you believe that he is *extravagantly* generous, so much so that he gives entire cities to his undeserving servants to rule over? Or do you believe that he is severe? Harsh? Cruel? No question is more important than this one, because how we answer the question will determine whether we are the faithful, commended servant in the parable or we are the unfaithful, condemned servant.

That’s what this parable is ultimately about. It’s not just about obedience. It’s not just about *doing* the right things or “engaging in business”. It’s about relationship. The difference between the first two servants and third was their relationship with their Master. The first two servants did what their Master told them to do, because they trusted him. They knew that he was good, so they did their work without fear while they waited eagerly for his return. But the third servant didn’t do what his Master told him to do, because he was afraid. He was afraid that his Master would deal unfairly with him. He was afraid that he would be harsh with him. And because of those fears, he disobeyed.

Obedience doesn’t lead to knowing Jesus. Knowing Jesus leads to obedience. The first way is the path to death. The second way is the path to life. If we get it wrong, if we focus just on doing the right things and we miss Jesus’ heart, our obedience isn’t going to get very far. It’s going to be paralyzed just like the third servant’s was, and we will be condemned.

We need to know Jesus. We desperately need to know his heart. We need to know that he is good, that he is righteous, that he is *generous*. And the only way we can come to know him like that is by considering what he gave us on the cross. Jesus hasn’t only given cities to those who trust him. He has given us *his very life*. Jesus shed his precious blood on the cross. Every single drop of his blood is infinitely more valuable than all the treasures of our world, and yet he shed his blood willingly *for us*. Why? Because he loves us. He shed his blood *for us* to pay the penalty for our sins so that no one who turns to him in repentance and faith would have to fear his judgment. He gave his life for us so that we could find new life in him.

Our King is a generous King, and nowhere is that clearer than on the cross. We need to grasp the cross if we are to grasp his heart. Without the cross, we will become just like the third servant who was paralyzed by fear. But with the cross, we can engage in the King’s business as we joyfully await the Day of Judgment, when Christ will welcome us into his presence with all the riches of his grace.