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# *God's Faithful Work: Our Fruitful Reward*

## *A Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow (Luke 19:11-27)*

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I'll be right back. I promise.

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I told you I would come back, right? Can I ask, what did you do while I was gone? Did any of you think to pull out your Bibles, or to reread the Scripture lessons from our service today?

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he promised to return to judge the living and the dead. And now we are in this kind of awkward time, where we are waiting for Jesus to return. Many people question whether or not Jesus will return. Today, our sermon will focus on what we are to do during this time while we wait for Jesus' return. As we take a closer look at the parable of the Minas, we will focus on this theme: God's Faithful Work: Our Fruitful Reward.

As we begin our look at the Parable of the Minas, we see Jesus' sure promise that he is returning. Just as the nobleman left to be made king, Jesus has gone away for a while to be made King over everything. Just as the nobleman's own people hated him and did all they could to stop him from being king, so we live in a world of people who hate Jesus and do not want him to be king. But, just as the nobleman was made king and had those people who tried to stop him killed, Jesus will return to punish all who oppose his kingdom.

And just as the nobleman finds one who opposes his rule even among his servants, we see people in our world who call themselves Christians, but want nothing to do with serving our one true King. They will not escape the judgment. Jesus will return one day and all who oppose the King will be condemned.

But what about us? By God's grace, you and I have been purchased away from sin and death by Jesus' death on the cross. God paid the price of his own blood so that you and I might be *his* servants. Through Christ, we see God's deep love for us. We see how he was willing to suffer to save us! We are no longer those who hate God and oppose him as our King. No, we love our King because we see how deeply he has so loved us in Jesus Christ.

So, as God's servants, what are we to do while we wait for our master's return? God has some investing for us to do. In the parable, the nobleman left his money, his investing power in the hands of his servants. He gave the same amount to each servant and told them to put it to work. God's Word is the one thing that all of God's

servants, all Christians have. The minas in this parable represent God's Word. This is God's investing power in the world.

It is through the Word that we hear what God has done for us in Christ. It is through the Word that God creates faith in our hearts and it is through the Word that God strengthens our faith until he returns! Without the Word, we would still be among those who hate God. Without the Word, we would still be among those who want anything other than God to be their king.

God has made his Word the power for salvation to all who believe. His Word alone can turn people away from their hatred of God. His Word alone can save people from the coming judgment!

So, what does God do with this incredible power? He gives it to us. He gave it to us so that we might do business with it. So that we might invest it. So that we might use it faithfully.

You've heard people say, "If you want something done right, you gotta do it yourself." You ever found that? Sometimes, you're just the only one who knows how to get something -done the right way.

I've always found it fascinating though, that God doesn't think that way. God has done all the work for our salvation. He sent his Son. He earned life for us by his perfect life. He took the punishment we deserved by dying on the cross and suffering hell. He won our salvation so fully that even you and I, though we can rightfully be called the worst of sinners, we might be forgiven and purchased to be God's own people.

But now, instead of God spreading that gospel message to the world, he brings us into it. Think about it! Wouldn't God be able to do a much better job of telling people about salvation through Jesus? He would certainly do a better job than any of us. But God has entrusted the faithful use of His Word to you and me.

It may be a daunting task for us. Maybe some of us have never read through all four Gospels before (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Maybe some of us have never talked about the gospel with other people. But consider what Jesus teaches us in the Parable of the Minas.

He shows us that using God's Word faithfully means two things: 1) Growing in the Word and 2) Going with the Word.

The first thing we need to be doing is growing in the Word. Notice how the wicked servant kept his master's mina just hidden away in a cloth. He is the person

who hears God's Word, and then just keeps it tucked away, never even getting it out to listen to what God says, never seeking to feed his faith by drinking anew from the waters of life that are the very words of God which we have in the Bible.

Notice too how the wicked servant views his master. He calls him a harsh man who takes out what he did not put in and reaps what he didn't sow. This person hates God, even while calling himself one of God's servants. This person has no idea who God is. Since he has not been in the Word, he doesn't know about God's love in Christ and so he thinks God is unfair, unjust.

Jesus warns us against this kind of nominal Christianity, being a Christian in name only. Do not let your relationship with God be only a name. Do not let your membership at this church be only a cultural thing. Do not let the church only be the place where you have always gone. Instead, let Jesus' Word be your everything!

Get into the Word and find the depths of God's love for you! Learn the God-given wisdom that fills the words of the Bible. Learn how to spot and fight temptation. Learn how to deal with loss and suffering in this world. And most of all learn that *it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Are you in the word regularly? Do you come to church every week? If not, make it your habit. Do you study the Bible, either on your own or with others? If not, join us for Bible Study here at church. Start reading the Bible with your family at home and talk about it. Get into the habit. Of faithfully using the Word God has given you, and brace yourself for the blessings God will shower on you through it.

The second task our God has for us while we wait for his return is to be Going with the Word. We need to be sharing the gospel message which has transformed our lives with other people. God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth! And he has graciously included us in that glorious mission!

Maybe that's a scary thought to you. Maybe you never talk about Jesus with other people and you are afraid that it will be awkward or you will turn people off. Maybe you are afraid to ruin some relationships. Maybe you just don't feel you are good enough to share the word with people.

Again, going to the parable of the minas, we learn something fascinating about spreading God's Word. What do the faithful servants say when they come to their master to show what they had gained? They say, "Sir, *your mina* has earned 10 more." "Sir, *your mina* has earned 5 more."

It wasn't the greatness of the servants that spread God's Word to people. It

wasn't their incredible character or their deep intellect that won more minas for their master. It was their master's minas that did all the work. In the exact same way, it is God's Word which does the work of saving more souls for God. We need only put that Word to work by sharing it.

This is again why our own growing in the word is so important. When we are in the Word, then we will learn better how to share the Word.

And that doesn't mean that when we do try to share the Word that things will always go smoothly. There will be awkward moments. There will be times when we will look back and say, "Man, I really messed that up." There will be times when an unbeliever will get the last word in and make us look like a fool.

But don't let those things discourage you. As we keep sharing the Word, we will grow in it. When you were learning to walk, you probably fell down a couple times. But you got better at walking, and you eventually learned to do it without thinking. When you were learning to ride a bike, you probably got a couple bruises and looked pretty silly on that thing. But you got better at riding, and it got easier to stay balanced.

The same is true with sharing the Word. It will start off hard, but as we continue growing in the Word and as we continue going with the Word, it will come more naturally.

Finally, notice the encouragement that our God gives us as we seek to faithfully use the Word. In the parable, the master gave his servants minas. Depending on whether those minas are gold or silver, their value was probably between about \$17 and a few hundred dollars. It's probably just the \$17 though. Even the guy who gained ten minas didn't make his master all that much money. But look at how his master rewards him. Just for making his master \$170, his master rewards him with control over 10 cities! That's WAY more than he deserved!

In the same way, when we faithfully use God's Word, when we are faithfully growing and going with God's Word, our God will reward us with infinitely more than our efforts deserve.

Dear fellow servants of God, Jesus will return soon. But for now, he has entrusted us with his greatest treasure: the gospel, and he has commanded us to put it to work. How will you use the time you have? Amen.