

Second Sunday of End Times (Last Judgment) – November 11, 2013
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Luke 19:11-27

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. 12) He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. 13) So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' 14) "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' 15) "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. 16) "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 17) "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' 18) "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' 19) "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' 20) "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21) I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' 22) "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23) Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' 24) "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 25) "'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' 26) "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. 27) But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them--bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"

Dear fellow servants of the Lord,

How've you been? Busy. Busy? Busy, busy! It seems that almost everyone I talk to answers the question, "How've you been?" in just that way. Come to think of it; that's how I usually answer the question, too. So what have you been busy with – you know, stuff. I don't usually press others beyond that point but I know the kind of stuff that keeps me busy. At times I get so busy with stuff that I end up neglecting things that are important. And I know that sometimes the stuff that keeps me busy doesn't always reflect the Lord's priorities for my life.

With jobs responsibilities, family responsibilities, personal interests, recreational activities, household chores, the demands of friends and neighbors it's sometimes hard to know what to put first isn't it? Well the devil and our sinful flesh certainly want us to think so – but like so many of the questions we wrestle with the Lord has a simple answer – if we're interested and willing to listen! (Matthew 6:33) **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** Listen to Jesus as he explained to a very busy lady what this means in practical terms: (Luke 10:41-42) **"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42) but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."**

And what was it that Mary had chosen to do? If you recall the account of Jesus' visit to the home of Mary and Martha you will recall that Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet listening as he shared his words of truth with her. She had made God's Word her first priority and that word was feeding and strengthening her faith. Over and over again the Scriptures urge us to make the Lord and his Word the first priority in our lives. That doesn't mean that we'll have to neglect our jobs, our families or our personal activities. In fact often the Lord and his word can be part of our family and personal activities.

Hebrews 10:23-25 provides an excellent summary of the lessons Jesus teaches us with the parable in our text: **Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25) Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**

Let's take a closer look at Jesus' parable as it urges us:

Theme: Let's not Neglect the Lord's Business

1. Each of us have been entrusted with tools for the Lord's business
2. The Lord will look for results
3. There will be a reward of grace for the faithful
4. There will be a price to pay for the unbeliever

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. 12) He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. 13) So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'

Crowds of people have been following along with Jesus and his disciples as Jesus has been making his way to Jerusalem where he knew that he was going to lay down his life as a payment for the sins of the world. Following that sacrifice Jesus would rise from the dead and then return to his heavenly glory. These crowds of people had seen Jesus restore sight to a blind man, they had heard him announce that the kingdom of God was at hand and now they had just heard him tell Zachaeus the tax collector that he was a son of Abraham.

Jesus knew that the crowds were anticipating that he was going to immediately set up an earthly kingdom by overthrowing the Roman government. They were looking forward to having him take care of their every need on earth with his wonderful miracles. His parable was intended to correct those false ideas that those who follow him would enjoy a life of ease in this world.

It was a fairly common occurrence at Jesus' time for someone to have to travel to a distant country to become a king. Herod and his sons had to go all the way to Rome in order to receive the authority to rule in Palestine. Jesus uses this common event to help to explain that he himself would have to go on a trip to receive power and authority. He pictures himself – he who was by very nature the Son of God as the man of noble birth – who would one day return from his heavenly throne as the judge of all people. In Jesus' parable the nobleman called 10 of his servants together and entrusted them with a sum of money equal to about 100 days wages and told them to put the money to work.

Jesus regards us as his servants and he has entrusted us with a wide variety of gifts including his word and sacrament which he wants us to put to work while we wait for his return. Just as the 10 minas were a gracious gift from the nobleman to his servants so our Lord's gifts are given as an act of grace. The Lord has the same expectation of us that the nobleman had of his servants; that we will not neglect the Lord's business but that we will work with the Gospel – using it to build up our own faith, to encourage one another, and to bring more souls into the Lord's kingdom.

In his parable Jesus added the thought that many of the nobleman's subjects hated him...but that he became their king in spite of this hatred and returned home to call his servants to account for the work they had done with the gift he had given to them.

We can't help but think of the fact that Jesus – the one who created all things is hated and rejected by many ... but that doesn't change the fact that he is Lord of all and that he will come again to call all people to account for the gifts he has given them.

It is quite clear that our Lord will look for results – the evidence of faith when he returns. As Christians there are many areas in which we can be faithful servants of the Lord. We can be his servants in the home as we share his powerful word with our family. We can serve him in the church – again in a variety of ways – perhaps as part of an activity that shares the word of the Lord with little children, perhaps as part of an activity that seeks to discover those who do not know the Lord's grace to share it with them, perhaps as part of a Bible study group where you can grow in your faith and encourage others, perhaps as part of social activity where you can be a Christian friend to someone, perhaps by seeking an opportunity to become involved in the church at large and not just in our home congregation. We can give both directly and indirectly of the gifts the Lord has entrusted to us as we use and share his most wonderful gift – the Good News of salvation.

The reason Christ did not elevate his followers to glory immediately is because he has some business for them to do. After the work is done – they will be glorified. Jesus illustrated that point in his parable as he explained how the nobleman called his servants **to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.**

"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 17) "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' 18) "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' 19) "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

Both of these men gave credit where credit was due. They took no credit for being able to return a profit to their master. And so it is also for us as Christians. When we serve the Lord our purpose is simply to give glory to the name of the Lord because of his love and faithfulness. Our Lord promises that his word will not return empty but that it will accomplish what he wills. That word will prompt our acts of loving service. That word will encourage us to be faithful parents & workers. It will motivate us to serve the Lord in his church. It will fill our hearts with a love for the lost and the straying for those in need. And as we go into action the Lord will accomplish many things for his kingdom. At his return the Lord will say to the faithful: **34) 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35) For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36) I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' ... 40) 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'** (Matthew 25:34-36, 40)

But sadly as evidenced in Jesus' parable not everyone will be faithful with the gifts the Lord has entrusted to them. **20) "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21) I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'**

Although he understood that as a business person his master expected to gain interest on his investments he simply hid the money – at least he hadn't lost it. He makes excuses for his actions. But his excuses are really only efforts to hide his own laziness and unfaithfulness. The master was not impressed. Swift judgment followed... **'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23) Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' 24) "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'**

Unfortunately this same sad story unfolds in Christ's church too. Individual Christians who have been blessed with the Word do not put it to use – either in their own lives or in the lives of others. They're too busy, they think there's nothing it for themselves, they think it interferes with their other activities. Such are the excuses that are used by those whom the Lord will reveal as hypocrites on the last day with his word of condemnation when the Lord announces his rejection of all those who rejected him.

Surely there's a word of warning for us to not neglect the Lord's business – even as there's a word of promise to the faithful: **'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given.** That promise urges us to make the best use of the Gospel while we can because we don't know when we'll no longer have the opportunity to put the Gospel to use.

It's true for all of us that our lives are busy, busy, busy. May they be busy for the Lord as we do the business he has given us to do – making use of his Gospel for our benefit and for the benefit of others. God's promises of blessing assure us our time will be well spent. Amen.