

When Jesus Hands You Cash

Introduction

The Text

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. ¹² He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. ¹³ Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come.’ ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’ ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’ ¹⁷ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’ ¹⁸ And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’ ¹⁹ And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’ ²⁰ Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; ²¹ 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.’ ²² 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? ²³ Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ ²⁴ And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’ ²⁵ And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten minas!’ ²⁶ ‘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. ²⁷ But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.’” (Luke 19:11–27)

Locating Ourselves Within the Parables

- A. With a lot Jesus’ parables, it seems to me, we are invited to try to locate ourselves somewhere within them.
1. So with the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) we are wondering: Am I like the prodigal—running off from God in search of satisfaction elsewhere? Or am I like the self-righteous older brother—doing all the religious stuff but for all the wrong reasons?
 2. With the parable the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18) we’re left wondering am I like the Pharisee, parading around at the front of the sanctuary, priding myself in my own accomplishments? Or am I like the tax collector in the back, face to the floor, beating his chest in godly grief over his sin, who, in the end, goes home justified by grace?
- B. Well, as with these previous parables, so it is with the parable we have before us this morning. The burning question that emerges here is going to be: Where am I in this? How does this story merge with the ins-and-outs of my own life? Where do I stand in relation to the matter put forth in these verses?

- C. It's for this reason that I've thought it best to simply come at this text by asking five questions spun from a more personal angle: (1) Have I Been Given a Mina?; (2) If Yes, What Is It?; (3) How Do I Turn It for Gain?; (4) What Motivates Me in This Work?; and (5) What Is Coming for Me at His Return?

Two Opening Observations

- A. Now, those are the five questions we shall set out to answer in a moment, but before I do, there's a bit of work we need to do here at the beginning to set the stage. Let me make just two quick observations:

Observation #1: The Context for the Parable

- A. The first thing to see is the connection Luke makes between this parable and the previous scene we looked at last week with Zacchaeus. [V. 11](#) opens like this: "[As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable . . .](#)"
- B. As they heard what "[things](#)"? The stuff about Zacchaeus—about "[salvation](#)" coming to his house ([v. 9](#)) and about the Son of Man coming "[to seek and to save the lost](#)" ([v. 10](#)).
1. So as we proceed to deal with this parable, we ought to bear in mind that Jesus is addressing it to this crowd of disciples, and Zacchaeus even, as well as those grumbling Jews we saw back in [v. 7](#).

Observation #2: The Reason for the Parable

- A. Now, that's the context. Next I want us to see the reason Jesus tells this parable. [V. 11](#) continues like this: "[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.](#)"
- B. Now that's significant! Here up front again (as we've seen Luke do before—e.g. [Luke 18:1, 9](#)), Luke gives us the interpretive key for unlocking the whole of the parable that follows.
1. What we learn is that Jesus tells this parable precisely because He is approaching Jerusalem and He knows that what's about to go down there with Him and the cross is going to fly in the face of Jewish messianic expectation concerning the kingdom of God.
- C. Let me give quick background on this:
1. Jerusalem was (and still is obviously) a city of great importance to the Jewish people.
 2. It was set up by King David of old as the capital city of Judah and became the place for God's temple and the king's palace.
 3. It was there in Jerusalem that God came and made a covenant with David saying to him in [2 Sam 7](#): "[12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever](#)" ([vv. 12–13](#)).
 4. And, with Solomon, the people say: "Yes! It's happening!" But then, because of Solomon's idolatry and things, the kingdom splits and everything just starts to unravel . . . until, at last,

Babylon finally burns it all to the ground in 586 BC and Nebuchadnezzar leads the people out in chains.

5. And then, though the Jews later rebuild the temple and regain some sense of national identity, they've, from the exile forward, pretty much always remained under the thumb of Gentile nations—whether Persia, or Greece, or now, in Jesus' day, Rome.
 - a. For the Jewish people, this was one of the great historical perplexities—why God would say David's throne shall be established forever, and yet, for so long now, no one has been seated there! They're baffled. They're troubled. They're getting angry.
- D. And then along comes this man, Jesus of Nazareth. And, as His ministry has been gaining momentum, there's been a certain messianic energy and excitement developing. There's a feverish murmur spreading among the crowds: "Could He be the One?!"
 1. Now, of course, you and I know that He is the One. He is the Messiah, the anointed of God, the offspring of David, the King of Israel. After all, we remember that the angel Gabriel tells Mary as much when, speaking of Jesus, he specifically references this Davidic covenant, saying in [Luke 1:32-33](#): "³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."
- E. Oh yes Israel, He is the One! He is your King! And, guess what? In our text, He is now drawing near to Jerusalem. He's coming to claim what is rightfully His! Isn't He? Well, yes . . . and no.
 1. "[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](#)" (v. 11) . . . but it wasn't—at least not in the way they expected.
 - a. They thought the King would manifest the full strength of His kingdom "[immediately](#)." They couldn't conceive of the fact that the King would come at first to suffer and die—though He's told them now time and time again that it would be so.
- F. So the point of this parable is to, once more, push back on some of these expectations and show them (and us) how to live in the space between His two comings—the first where He's come to die, and the second where He will come, at last, to reign in full.
 1. And, with this, we're ready to approach those five questions . . .

(1) Have I Been Given a Mina?

A Nobleman, Citizens, and Servants

- A. As we begin to make our way towards an answer to this question, look at the opening verses of the parable again: "¹² [He said therefore, 'A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.](#) ¹³ [Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them,](#)

“Engage in business until I come.”¹⁴ But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, “We do not want this man to reign over us” (vv. 12-14).

B. You’ll note right away there are three different players in this parable:

1. We’ve got first this “nobleman”—who clearly stands for Jesus. And Jesus describes Himself as going into a “far country” to receive this kingdom.
 - a. We can see what He is getting at here. He is most certainly King—the Kingdom is His. After His resurrection and ascension, we’re told, He has sat down at the right hand of His Father. He is on the throne! But it will take quite some time for the full effect of this kingdom of His to be manifested in the world round about us.
2. In the second place, drop down to v. 14 there where we meet a group of people whom Jesus refers to as “his citizens.” They are, sadly, full of spite and rage. They “hated him.” They can’t stand the thought of Him reigning over them.
 - a. With this, of course, we are to think of that group in audience that had just been grumbling about Him being in the house with Zacchaeus. Here are those Jewish leaders and others who rejected Him—because He simply was not the sort of King they desired.
 - i. Certainly, in this we are meant to draw lines towards the present day as well where there are people all around the world who want nothing to do with Jesus. Our city is full of people like this.
3. And then, finally, we come to this third group, whom Jesus refers to here as “his servants” (v. 13).
 - a. This clearly alludes to those who have an interest in Jesus and are attempting to follow along with Him. It’s a reference to His disciples. It’s a reference, I hope, to people like you and me.

C. I think many of us here want to follow Jesus, we want to grow in His likeness, we want to be associated with Him, we want to be His disciples, His servants even. And, if that’s the case, we, like these servants in the parable, are given a mina.

1. For in this parable, if you noticed, it’s only the servants whom this King entrusts with such a thing.

(2) If Yes, What Is It?

Goods, Gifts, and Gospel

A. So now, then, we come to the second question. If it’s true that we who in this room are disciples of Jesus have been given a mina, what exactly is it?

- B. Now, literally, a mina at this time was a Greek coin worth about hundred day's wages, or about three months' salary. It's money, but we understand Jesus is simply using it as an illustration, an analogy, to speak of that which He entrusts to His disciples to steward for Him in some way.
- C. Now, still that sounds vague, so let me just try to break down for us what this mina could represent in our lives. Though I'm sure it is more than what I'll identify here, I would say it at least includes three things: (1) Goods; (2) Gifts; and (3) Gospel.

(1) Goods

- A. With "Goods" I'm thinking especially of material goods. What we have is not our own. It's been given to us from God.
 - 1. "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1 Cor 4:7).
 - 2. "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven" (John 3:27).
 - 3. Or as David prays after taking up an offering for the building of God's temple: "[W]ho am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you" (1 Chr 29:14).

(2) Gifts

- A. Now, with "Gifts," I am thinking especially of what we might call "spiritual gifts." These are those special endowments of Christ's personality and power given to us through His Spirit that, again, we are to steward for Him in some way.
 - 1. This is what Paul refers to in [Rom 12:6](#) when he says that we all have "gifts that differ according to the grace given to us."
 - 2. In [1 Cor 12:7](#) he says that "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit."
 - a. If you are in Christ, I don't care how stupid, how worthless, how insignificant you feel . . . He has given you a gift and He wants you to use it!

(3) Gospel

- A. Finally, "Gospel."
 - 1. With this I'm simply referring to that which Paul talks about in places like [1 Cor 4:1](#) where he says we are "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." By "mysteries" here, uppermost in his mind would be the gospel—that God in Christ on the cross was reconciling men to Himself. And Paul's been entrusted with this message. He's a steward of it.
 - 2. In another place he says: "We have this treasure in jars of clay . . ." ([2 Cor 4:7](#)).
 - a. I'm the jar of clay. The treasure is the gospel. And my job—the point of my life—is to pour out that treasure in such a way that others may come to find it and enjoy it as well!

- B. Later, after Jesus has died and risen, He shows up to His disciples and He's giving them their marching orders, as it were, before He ascends. And it's interesting to see how there's this overlap with the parable we're looking at this morning.
 - 1. The disciples, even after the cross, are still stuck on this idea of the kingdom appearing immediately and Jesus has to push back again. And He goes on to tell them what they're really supposed to be busy doing from the time of His departure to the time of His return.
- C. Listen to this: *"⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷ He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth'" (Acts 1:6–8).*
 - 1. They ask Him: "Is the kingdom coming in full right away?" And He says: "No! But the Spirit is coming. And you're going to be my witnesses in all the earth."
 - a. "Witnesses . . . to what?" "The gospel. That's what you've been entrusted with above all else. That's the point of this space between. That's the reason for My delay—the proclamation, the spread, the advancement of the gospel. Steward it well."

(3) How Do I Turn It for Gain?

- A. And with this, I'm really starting to nudge us towards the answer to our third question now: How Do I Turn It for Gain?
 - 1. If Jesus has entrusted me with a mina—if He's given me goods, gifts, and gospel, what does it mean to steward these things in such a way that it brings in a profit for the King? What does it mean to *"engage in business" (v. 13)* with these things until Jesus returns? How do I turn my mina for gain?
- B. You noticed it, right? When He comes back, this is what we're going to have to give an account for: *"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" (v. 15).*
 - 1. Now, to be clear, we're not talking about business savvy. Jesus isn't that hard-lined boss who only cares about the numbers and the bottom line. That's not what this is. This is kingdom economics here. He's just getting at spiritual realities through this analogy.
 - a. But still, our destiny, Jesus seems to be saying, is going to hinge on whether we know how to take what He has entrusted to us and make a spiritual profit.
- C. So how do we do it? What does it mean to be engaging in this business?

1. Well, if I could sum up my answer in just a sentence it would be this: If we would bring gain for Christ's kingdom with our entrusted goods, gifts, and gospel then we must release our goods, and use our gifts, for the sake of the gospel!
 - a. In many ways that's the point of this whole sermon. To help us see that. To help us do that. So let me make sure we're clear on what that mean?

Releasing Our Goods for the Sake of the Gospel

- A. Releasing our goods for the sake of the gospel means doing something like what we see the early church does when we keep reading on in the book of Acts.
 1. Jesus just said their call is to spread and witness to the gospel. And when the Spirit falls on the day of Pentecost, that's what the disciples there start to do.
 2. But we also see something crazy start to happen alongside this. They just start giving their stuff away—for the sake of the church, for the sake of the needy, for the sake of the mission: “⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:44–45).
 - a. The point is bringing more people into the kingdom and salvation and they're willing to release their stuff to see that happen.
- B. Now, you can relax. I'm not trying to start some cult here where you've got to come and lay your stuff before me like they did before the apostles, and I'm going to be looking in on your budget and bank statements and things.
 1. I'm just saying good stewardship of your goods, turning it for kingdom gain, means releasing it for the sake of the gospel going forward. You start seeing your stuff not as the end, but as a means to the end of making much of Christ and helping others come to know him.
 - a. If you've got a dog, dogs are fun. Cats, not so much. But dogs, they're great. You like to snuggle with them, play with them and things. But you also realize, man, they give me a neat opportunity to meet my neighbors because they need walks and get me out of my house and people like to come and pet them and we walk together. I can see how this dog, while just simply a blessing to me, is also something God wants me to steward for the sake of the gospel.
 - b. The same thing if you have a house right? Your house is not just your personal little sanctuary but a place to invite in your neighbors and show them something of the hospitality of heaven. Maybe you use your home for hosting folks from church to come and pray and connect. You see, these things, they're not mine. They're God's. And we're putting them to use for the sake of the gospel and the advance of His kingdom.

Using Our Gifts for the Sake of the Gospel

- A. But now what does it mean to use our gifts for the sake of the gospel? Well, I think we get this. In our flesh, we want to use our gifts and talents for ourselves, to build up not God’s kingdom, but our own.
1. But if we want to turn our gifts for gain like Jesus is calling us to here we have to do something like what Peter writes about in 1 Pet 4:10-11a: “¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace:^{11a} whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”
 - a. It’s not about me. Whatever gifts God has entrusted to me, I want to use them in love for Him and others—so that He may be seen and the gospel may go forward.
- B. This is how we turn our mina for gain.

(4) What Motivates Me in This Work?

- A. With this question, I actually want to back in towards the right answer by first looking at the wrong one. Because I think it’s the wrong answer that’s actually accented for us in the text.
1. If you noticed, Jesus spends quite a bit of time talking about this third servant, whom He calls a “wicked servant” (v. 22), who made no gain. And it doesn’t go well for him. But we kind of see the inner workings there, where stuff started to break down.
 - a. Look at vv. 20-23: “²⁰ Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief;²¹ 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.’²² 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?’²³ Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’”
- B. Now when we read this, we might get confused. When we hear this third servant’s description of Jesus, the King, everything in us says: “Man, you’re wrong! This isn’t true of Jesus! He’s about to go to the cross and lay down His life for His enemies. If anybody is taking what he did not deposit and reaping what he did not sow, it’s me! That’s the meaning of the gospel: ‘For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God’ (2 Cor 5:21). I have no business being counted righteous. But I get that from Him. The only thing this King gets from me that was not properly His own is my sin.”
1. So what’s all this talk about a “severe man”? And why does Jesus seem to agree with him? Well, note the question mark at the end of v. 22. Jesus is not agreeing with him, He’s simply reiterating the problem and preparing to deal with the man on his own terms.
- C. The bottom line is this: The reason this man wasn’t motivated to do the work, was too afraid to do the work, was too cold and hard to do the work, is because He didn’t truly know the King He was called to work for. The King seemed to Him to be cruel and rigid.

1. We were watching a show the other night and this cop was talking about his experience working for what he suspects is a corrupt Sheriff and he says: “It’s hard to be motivated when you work for a man you don’t respect.” “I don’t respect him therefore I don’t want to work for him or with him.”
 - a. I think something of this nature could be going on here.
- D. And it happens with us today. The culture around hears some of the historically orthodox teachings of Scripture on homosexuality, or male headship, or hell, or things of this nature and they just spout off about how severe and unkind this God seems to be.
1. And when you buy into that, without seeing the bigger picture—how truth and love work together, how Jesus does say the hard words sometimes but with a soft heart—you don’t want to release your goods, use your gifts, for the sake of the gospel. You don’t want to work for a jerk.
- E. But when you truly come to know the King, when you at last comprehend the love He has for you, the love that led Him like a lamb to be slaughtered there on the cross, well that changes things.
1. All of a sudden, like Zacchaeus, you’re ready to let it go, you’re ready to live for Him, that’s it.
 2. I thought of Peter’s mother-in-law here. Listen to this: “¹⁴ And when Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him” (Matt 8:14–15).
 - a. When Jesus comes in to serve her—when she encounters that love, experiences that grace—she can’t help but begin to serve Him.
 - i. That’s when we start to release our goods, use our gifts, for the sake of the gospel.

(5) What Is Coming for Me at His Return?

- A. Let me just quickly draw things to a close by answering that fifth and final question: What Is Coming for Me at His Return?
- B. In this parable Jesus pictures for us really two possible outcomes upon His return.
1. There are those who, at the end of the day, simply weren’t interested.
 - a. Some like that third servant, have been in the church for a little bit, they’ve been associated with Jesus for a little bit, but they never truly knew Him. They were just in it to get something else and at the end that becomes clear.
 - b. Others never even pretended. They hated Him, despised the way He reigned, would have nothing to do with Him and His kingdom.

- i. And so it will not end well for them. Jesus may be patient and gracious but He is still holy and just. If they thought Him too severe on earth, what will they think of Him in hell? I shudder to think of it.
- C. But then there are those who have encountered the love of God for them in Christ. And it's transformed the way they handle all of this stuff. They've been faithfully managing their mina, faithfully stewarding what the King has entrusted to them, longing for more to know Him, longing for His return.
 - 1. And to these who knew the King to be gracious, to them is given grace upon grace: "Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over [more]" (v. 17). Don't you want to hear that? Don't you want to experience that?