

Luke 19:11-28: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 0 0] Luke chapter 19 verses 11 to 28. 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 minors, 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 miner has made ten minors more. 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. And the second came, saying, Lord, your miner has made five minors. And he said to him, And you are to be over five cities. Then another came, saying,

Lord, here is your miner, 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? And at my coming I might have collected it with interest. And he said to those who stood by, Take the miner from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minors. And they said to him, Lord, he has ten minors. I tell you that to every one 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. And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. Jesus' parable of the miners in Luke chapter 19 is similar to the parable of the talents in Matthew chapter 25, albeit with some variations. Matthew's talents parable is given in the context of the Olivet Discourse, whereas this parable is seemingly delivered in the preceding week as they are nearing Jerusalem. It is a response to the belief that the kingdom is going to appear imminently. Rather, Jesus teaches there will be an interval of time, and it won't appear in the form that some expect. Jesus speaks of a nobleman who must first go away and receive a kingdom. Matthew's parable lacks this entire subplot of the nobleman going to receive a kingdom and his relationship with his rebellious citizens. The departing nobleman would remind the Jews of

Archelaus, Herod the Great's son, who had gone to Rome to petition Caesar Augustus for the kingdom of his father in 4 BC, followed by a deputation of Jews who protested against his rule. These resonances would have come to many hearers' minds. In this parable, it's miners instead of talents.

Matthew emphasises difference in the initial distribution of his talents, whereas Luke has equal initial distribution, but sharply different outcomes. Matthew's talents are truly immense sums of money, whereas Luke's miners are just a few months' wages. In both cases, however, they're to be used for trade, and the importance is to be found ready for judgement, having been proved faithful in what has been committed to your charge. The time of testing will reveal the work of people.

[4 : 29] The parable, it seems to me, is referring to AD 70, not to the end of all things. The nobleman who has received his father's kingdom returning and judging his servants and his rebellious subjects is Christ, returning to judge his people and the land in AD 70. The fact that the judgment of Christ is not going to happen immediately does not mean it's referring to some point in the very long distant future, thousands of years hence. The first two servants are rewarded with different levels of responsibility. The final servant, however, is lazy and indolent. He doesn't think that he has anything personally to gain from acting as a faithful steward of his master. He ventured nothing, he just sought to avoid losing it. And importantly, his behaviour was based upon a perception of his master that was uncharitable and false. We could maybe think of this in terms of a form of faith that is merely concerned with preserving what we have for our own sake, rather than actually doing something with the gifts and the other things that have been entrusted to us. The wealth entrusted to the sterile service of the unfaithful servant is then handed over to the most fruitful and faithful servant.

They are going to Jerusalem, and yet this is not going to be the time when the kingdom appears. Christ, the nobleman in the passage, is going to have to go away and receive his kingdom from his father. And then he's going to come back, and then he's going to judge the people who have rejected him.

Those who are faithful will expand in their responsibilities, and those who have been unfaithful will be condemned. A question to consider. The miner is taken from the wicked servant and given to the servant with the ten miners.

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