

The King's Story (and ours)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 March 2024

Preacher: James Ross

[0 : 0 0] 11, as we think about the King's story and ours. Probably if you are paying attention to the news, you would have recognized once again that still today there is a lot of royal interest. We had that rather strange, rather sad, I think, story of so much attention being given to the royal Mother's Day photo. You know, that little bit of editing that generated days and days of media interest and speculation and chatter.

In the absence of the princess, so much misinformation and misunderstanding was used to fill the vacuum.

Thinking about that story this week perhaps helps us, in a sense, to appreciate some of the royal expectation there was as the crowds were heading to the festival in Jerusalem in that scene that we just read in Luke chapter 19. We have been following a crowd at fever pitch, waiting for the Messiah King.

Is Jesus the one? And we have seen so much misunderstanding about the kind of King Jesus is and the timing of His kingdom.

Now, we may or may not have paid any attention or be particularly bothered about royal stories in the press, but I would suggest that we all need to listen as King Jesus tells the story of God's King.

[1 : 4 9] Because in this little story, we have an explanation for history and how history will end, and we have revealed from Jesus our purpose as people until that point.

This story, if we hear it well, will encourage us to live well as we mind the gap. You know, if you visit London and you're on the tube, and as the tube is drawing into the station, you hear that voice announce, please mind the gap.

Now, watch your step as you continue on your journey as you leave the train. Well, the story Jesus tells strikes a similar note.

He encourages the crowds and He encourages us to mind the gap between Jesus' first coming and His second coming. And again, what we see is that the timing of Jesus' return is unclear, but the reality that He will return is certain.

And we are to mind the gap in the sense of being careful how we live, how we journey through this life. We have to be careful about our response to King Jesus and His summons for us to be servants.

[3 : 1 2] The story tells us that God's King has come, that His kingdom will come, and that His kingdom must grow. It's a story we all need a healthy interest in, a story that reminds us to mind the gap.

Let's think, first of all, about the king's story, the story about a king. Perhaps you are familiar with the famous quote, those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat its mistakes.

Well, did you know, I discovered this this week, Jesus bases this parable on a famous event in history. This was living memory for the people in Judea, Israel, Jerusalem at the time.

So in 4 BC, and this is history, Herod the Great died. And when he died, he divided his kingdom between three of his sons.

And to his son called Archelaus, he was given the title King of Judea. And so Archelaus, when the will was read, then made the procession to Rome to claim that title, to claim kingship.

[4 : 31] But as he traveled, a delegation of 50 people from Judea followed him to go to the Roman emperor to say, we don't want this guy as king.

He is unfit for service. And so what they expected to be routine actually took a really long time. But the upshot was, Archelaus was crowned king.

And he did return to Judea as king. And he came and he dealt very severely with those who opposed his claims. Do we hear the parallel?

Hear what Jesus is doing? Now Jesus is not saying, my character is the same as Archelaus. Absolutely not. Because Archelaus was a terrible king, an awful king. And Jesus is a wonderful king. But he is saying, my circumstances follow that pattern.

Follow that story and history. Now before we get to the story, why does Jesus tell it? So sometimes Jesus tells stories and we're not always invited to know what was the context. Why did he choose to say it?

[5 : 33] But here we are led to understand why. Verse 11, Jesus went on to tell them a parable because, two things, he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.

So he's coming to the climax of his journey to Jerusalem and the crowds are hoping, well, if Jesus is the Messiah King, then he's going to be crowned in glory. His kingdom is going to come now.

Our enemies are going to be defeated. We're going to live in a renewed promised land and it's going to be peaceful. And Jesus comes to say the reality is different. Now he has said to them that his kingdom is now.

We've heard that on the journey. For example, in chapter 17 and verse 21, nor will people say of the kingdom, here it is or there it is because the kingdom of God is in your midst.

So he's quite happy to say, yes, the kingdom is now. But he also invites us to recognize the kingdom has not fully yet come. It will not be final glory right away.

[6 : 38] So just like every king, Jesus will ascend, though in the first instance, Jesus will ascend across before ascending to the throne of glory.

When Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, he will be crowned, but it will be a crown of thorns, not a crown of gold that he will wear.

He will be greeted by great crowds, but those crowds will turn and cry, crucify him. We have no king but Caesar. He will win a victory, but that will be a spiritual victory over Satan and sin and death by his sacrificial death on the cross.

So he needs them to know that the reality is different. So let's follow the king's story. Verse 12, we have a king who departs. A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.

And so the idea of going to a distant country implies this is going to take a while. There's going to be delay. Jesus teaches that. His kingdom is not coming. His return is not immediate.

[7 : 54] His authority is clear, though. The end of the story is never in doubt. He is going to be crowned and he is going to return. Jesus has been preparing his followers and us as we've listened for his departure.

So ever since Jesus went up a mountain with James and Peter and John and shone with the glory of God, he spoke to them of his departure. He was going to leave.

His departure involved his suffering and his death. And it involved his resurrection. And it involved his ascension to the throne of heaven.

Now Jesus knows the response of many to him as king. Verse 14, his subjects hated him and sent a delegation to say, we don't want this man to be our king. And so we've seen on the journey and we'll see at the cross that he is the perfect king of perfect love, of absolute authority, of the kingdom and the glory of God that he brings.

And yet he was rejected and he is rejected and he will be rejected by many throughout history. Sad reality.

[9 : 07] So the king departs. As the king departs, we also discover in verse 13 that the king commands, he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. Put this money to work until I come back.

Again, there's those two elements, ten servants, ten minas. They're told, put my money to work and do that until I come back. So they are going to be working.

And again, verse 14 is in the background. There are going to be those who are serving the kingdom of Jesus who are going to be working for him while there will be others around them who say, we don't want him as king and we don't want to receive him or his message.

So the kingdom will be opposed and the kingdom will grow. Do we recognize that? As true in our day as it was back then. So we have the same call.

The church is to be doing the work of the king until the king's return. That's our purpose. It's our duty as Christians. We're doing the king's work. We have the promise of his presence, his power, his spirit, but we also know that we will face opposition and there is spiritual battle.

[10 : 16] Jesus prepares us for it, for us at that in the parable. So the king departs, the king commands. Then notice the king returns, verse 15. He was made king, however, and returned home.

So remember that opposition. We don't want this king. It is to no effect. The king is crowned. He does receive glory, does have authority.

And so Jesus is preparing us for this reality that as he approaches the cross, death is not the end for Jesus or for his mission, for his kingdom.

Opposition, rejection does not stop the plan of God. Jesus will take the throne of heaven. That's where he's sitting right now, ruling and reigning over the universe and over the church, and he will return one day to draw history to an end, to establish the kingdom of God on this earth, to establish his final and ultimate victory over all the forces of evil, and God will dwell with his people forever.

The king returns. When the king returns, we also discover the king judges. It's the bulk of the story, isn't it, from verse 15 down to 27.

[11 : 41] In verse 15, then he sent for the servants to whom he'd given the money in order to find out what they had gained with him. So we are invited to imagine here is the king on his throne, and here is a day of reckoning.

It's judgment day. And as the servants come, we see two categories in view. We find those who are described in verse 16 and 19 as good and trustworthy.

They have put the money to work. They have kept going until the king came back. And the result is they are given honor and responsibility in the kingdom, sharing in the king's rule, responsibility for ten cities or five cities.

But then there's another judgment, isn't there? Verse 22, the master speaks to one who is described as a wicked servant, the one who doesn't work, the one who doesn't do anything with what has been given to him from the king.

And we discover he loses everything and ultimately is given a sentence of death. So Jesus, as he has spoken to us in the gospels, announces that the father has given him authority to judge all people.

[13 : 03] And he will reward some with salvation, those who receive him by faith, those who honor him in their lives, those who are ready to serve him with the grace that he provides.

But others will know punishment and condemnation, Jesus says. Those who reject him as king, those who rebel against his will and his word, those who are guilty of treason.

And so Jesus tells us this story because we are invited to learn from history. Just as the people in Jesus' day could learn from the story of Archelaus since he parallels with Jesus' own story, we are invited to see Jesus is the king, God's king.

He has departed, he is now in heaven, but he will return with glory after a delay. Only the father knows how long that will be and we are invited to receive him today.

We're also reminded in this parable about how history will end. History will end with a bang and not a whimper. But that bang will not be the bang of an atomic bomb.

[14 : 25] It will not be the bang of an asteroid colliding with the earth, some of those fearful expectations that people might have. It's the loud thunder that announces the returning of the king.

It's the trumpet blast that says, the king of kings and the lord of lords has come to establish his kingdom on the earth. And the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of the Bible reminds us also that history is working towards a certain end.

It is not chaos, it is Christ who is in control. And there's a wonderful invitation in that, I think, to trust the one who sits on the throne, to trust the one who rules over history and who will rule for all eternity, to place our hope in him, to pray, your kingdom come, your will be done.

But this parable also reminds us that all through history we're going to see these opposite responses to King Jesus. And we will see them in our own heart. And what we need to understand is that our response to Jesus determines our eternal destiny.

That's the King's story. But I want to think just for a few minutes about the King's treasure. So last, maybe some of you, if you were here on Sunday evening, you might be thinking, I feel like you told us this story last week.

[15 : 58] I had a panic late on Sunday night. I usually, on Sunday night, think about what's coming next Sunday. I was like, oh, no, it's the same story. This is going to be bad. We're going to have the same sermon.

But it's not the same story that we looked at. And actually, one of the things that makes it so different is the money. And I'm going to show you that. If you weren't here, you might be thinking, why is he even bothered?

But, you know, there's some stories in some movies where money or treasure becomes central to the plot. Maybe you've read Treasure Island and you realize what that treasure does to various characters in that book.

Or you think about the Ring of Power in Lord of the Rings and how central that becomes to the plot. Well, Jesus tells us this story and he told similar stories where the money becomes an important part of the storyline.

I'm going to show you how this story was different from the one that we looked at in Matthew 25, verse 14 to 30. There's the parable of the talents. And there was a key difference there because there was still a king and there were still servants and there were gifts that were given.

- [17 : 16] But one servant got ten talents, representing a huge amount of money. Somebody got five talents and somebody just got one. So, they were given different amounts according to their abilities.

Now, that was Matthew 25. What about here? Look with me at verse 13. He called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas.

Okay? Ten servants and they all get the same amount. The same treasure is given to them all. Now, that's significant. What does it mean?

Jesus is telling us that everybody that listens to him receives the same good news. The good news of God's king and his coming kingdom of grace.

That's the mina. That's the treasure that we are given. Just stop and think about what is the gospel? The gospel is the announcement that we are made by God, our good and holy creator, and we are subject to him as our good and gracious king.

- [18 : 22] But as subjects, we choose to say no to God's rule in a whole variety of ways. Breaking his law, refusing his will, rejecting his love.

That every person who has ever lived stands guilty of rebellion and treason against God and God's king. And wonderfully, despite our rejection of him, God chooses to show grace.

And God, in his grace, sends his son Jesus as his promised king. And Jesus is the king who will rescue his people by dying in our place for the sins of all who will put their trust in him on the cross.

Jesus is the king who rules over us, building his kingdom, the church, sending his spirit, giving forgiveness in new life.

And Jesus is the king who will return to take his people to live with him one day in his eternal kingdom of love. And he invites us to receive his treasure, to believe the good news of saving grace, to turn from rebellion, to trust in him as Lord and Savior, and to enter into this kingdom.

- [19 : 44] That good news is the treasure. And that good news is powerful. So here's the other difference from the story in Matthew.

When there's the time of reckoning, when the servants stand before the king, we find them saying, you entrusted these talents to me, and see, I have gained ten more.

I have gained five more. How does Jesus tell the story here? Verse 16, the first one came and said, Sir, your mina has earned ten more.

Verse 18, the second came and said, Sir, your mina has earned five more. Where does the growth come from? It comes from the money. It comes from the treasure. It comes from the power of the gospel of God.

The transformation comes from God and His good word about His good king. It is the good news of the Lord Jesus that brings forgiveness.

- [20 : 52] It is the good news of the Lord Jesus that brings spiritual freedom. It's the good news of King Jesus that establishes us in fellowship with God and with one another in the church.

It's the good news of King Jesus that we receive by faith. And so we teach it and we share it and we proclaim it all the while trusting that God's word does its work.

That it's the gospel word that is powerful. It's the gospel word that saves. And we are called to be obedient and faithful servants.

That takes us to the last thing I want us to think about the king's servants. I remember I think it was probably my first week as a Scottish history student we had a very energetic slightly eccentric perhaps a professor of Scottish history who told us two things that first week.

One who told us just how bad and historically inaccurate Braveheart was. That can kind of help you gauge my age and stage in life. And the other thing he told us was that he was only recently back from Canada.

[22 : 09] When Scotland had had a referendum about independence from the UK and that referendum failed he'd had enough of UK rule and he left to go and live in Canada.

For years and years and years a particular government or a particular form of government can lead us to vote with our feet to say nope I don't want that form of rule I don't want that king and so I'm leaving the country.

We know this we see it we see it in the world. Jesus' story reveals something hugely significant. While many dislike his rule hate his rule oppose him as king we cannot avoid the reality of his rule.

My feelings about the rule of Jesus your feelings about the rule of Jesus does not change the fact that he rules. He is king he will always be king of kings and lord of lords.

He is God's king we all stand accountable to him and one day he will pass judgment on all of us. That's something we need to reckon with.

[23 : 28] Return with me for a moment to verse 11. I think this is really interesting how it's introduced. While they were listening to this he went on to tell them a parable. What have they just been listening to?

They've been listening to Jesus talking with Zacchaeus and they've just heard Jesus say today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost.

What are they listening to? This good news that Jesus has come on a rescue mission that he brings saving grace that he comes to seek and to save the lost that he has the power to call people from darkness into light from death to life to make people who have deliberately made themselves strangers to God to bring them into the family of God.

He's come on this loving rescue mission and yet still there are those who say we don't want him. There are two responses in this story of course.

There's the positive response. There are those servants who hear the call of the king they acknowledge his authority and they gladly serve him honoring him with their obedience and in particular according to this parable they are those who put this money to work.

[24 : 53] The king gives a treasure they put the treasure to work. If the treasure is the good news of who Jesus is and what he's done for us in dying and rising what does it look like to put that to work in our lives?

Well it begins of course by personally receiving by faith this good news. We apply it to our lives so that we might enjoy eternal life.

We put it to work in our lives by seeking by God's grace to grow spiritually. So we want to read God's word that we might hear him speak to us.

We might receive grace. We want to draw on our communion with him as we pray. We want to gather together to worship. We put it to work as we seek to grow in obedience.

As we recognize that he is king and yes I am a servant. We look to grow in love. As we recognize that the rule of faith for the Christian is summarized by Jesus and love the Lord your God with all your heart soul mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

[26 : 04] So we put it to work as we seek with his help to grow in our love. We put it to work as we grow in our commitment to his mission.

As we recognize that he is the king and that everybody should recognize his glory. We want to support the work of the church here locally and globally in our prayers and our giving and our going.

Well those we're told who put the money to work who have that positive response they receive don't they a positive outcome. Jesus says verse 17 because you've been trustworthy in a very small matter take charge of ten cities faithful with just a little honour of greater responsibility that promise that we will rule with the Lord Jesus in the new heavens in the new made to rule one day that rule will be perfectly restored and we will rule and reign with him.

There's honour there's joy waiting for us as the people of God. There's a positive response to the king but there's also the negative response.

Jesus knew he was going to meet a negative response by and large at the cross. Verse 20 there's that servant who said here's your mina I've kept it laid away in a piece of cloth I was afraid of you because you're a hard man.

[27 : 29] He does someone refusing to do anything with the treasure that the king gives not receiving the good news personally not receiving Jesus as Lord and Saviour no desire to share it with others here's someone who misrepresents the king harsh unworthy of loyalty unworthy of service ignoring the fact that he's been joyfully generous you've looked after a little bit of money look after ten cities for me missing his generosity and failing in their duty as servants to the king it's a sad picture it's a sad picture in our day of someone who is religious but with no spiritual life got that mina but doing nothing with it and that brings the negative outcome verse 24 take his mina away and give it to the one who is ten to take the money means there's now no relationship with the king no connection to his kingdom they are in fact the enemies of the king in their rejection those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them bring them here and kill them in front of me

Jesus is very honest sounds a loving warning you don't want to hear condemnation from king Jesus the lesson is loud and clear of this parable when it comes to the good news of king Jesus the good news of his victory over sin and death of his gift of forgiveness and eternal life of entry into his kingdom of the privilege of serving him we either use it or we lose it and each of us must decide use it or lose it we're going to close with this reminder that the king comes to us today to offer us grace today remember verse 11 while they were listening to this while they were listening to the one who said I've come to seek and to save the lost

I've come to bring salvation and grace I imagine that at least some of us might be here today thinking Jesus calls me to put what he's given me to work and what have I done for Jesus perhaps that's true of most Christians as we reflect William Carey who brought the gospel to India on his birthday when he was 58 he wrote a letter to his son he said I'm 58 and I've done so little I imagine if that's true for William Carey it's something that we perhaps resonate with and we need to be reminded by the king of grace you are not saved by what you have done I am not saved by what I have done but only by what Jesus has done for you remember remember we're saved by grace remember our generous king and savior and remember that he loves to reward even the cup of water given in his name when we feel kind of flat

I've done so little we remember his goodness and his grace that's where we're going to find our motivation to keep on seeking to be faithful with a cup of water being faithful in our weakness as we remember the grace that he shows to us and that he gives to us day by day but maybe some of us are here today and you know we read this story and you see yourself and I'm like the king's subject saying no saying I don't want him to be king I'm the servant who's had the gospel I've had gospel privileges and I've done nothing with it if that's you remember grace is offered to you from Jesus today Peter the apostle will remind us that the delay in Jesus' return is actually good news it's patience because it represents a chance to repent to turn away from sin and to turn to God to submit to him as Lord and King so there is grace offered to all of us today from King Jesus whoever we are wherever we find ourselves there is that promise of grace if we will have him and if we will receive from him let's pray together thank you for the in the world and and it within and