

Luke 19:1-27

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[0 : 00] Well, we have before us this morning two engaging scenes placed side by side. Two scenes which on first appearance look like they are moving in contradictory ways.

Almost as if they are competing one against the other. In the first, a man who divests himself of his wealth.

And Jesus calls it the day of salvation. In the second, a steward who invests all of his wealth, multiplying it.

And finding himself under Jesus' words of commendation. The first learns to give it all away. But in the parable, Jesus seems to indicate you need to get all that you can.

One man learning to let go. Another man commended for laying hold of more. How do we make sense of them and put them together?

[1 : 19] Simply in this way. In the first scene, you will see what it looks like to walk into the kingdom. And in the second, what life looks like while you wait upon the ultimate consummation of that kingdom.

The first, of course, is that wonderful Sunday school story. Zacchaeus was a wee little man. A wee little man was he.

Who he was. Well, it says there, interestingly, he was a tax collector.

A chief tax collector. By the end of the vignette, though, Jesus also indicates that he was a son of Abraham. Most likely a Jewish man engaged in business, working for the Roman government in the Department of Revenue.

You see them, don't you, driving around in the trucks, even in our city streets today. Got a boot on your car?

[2 : 38] The Department of Revenue has come calling. A chief tax collector. A man who had, in one sense, I think spiritually, gotten lost along the way.

Had removed God from the center. It says that he was rich. And it appears that he got rich on the backs of the tax-paying public.

Rome, of course, worked in a very simple Chicago way. A region. An amount of money that needed to come in.

The appointment of one to bring it. Whatever he made above that, well, that was his to keep. Or dole out. Zacchaeus seems to have done his job quite well.

I say he got removed from God along the way because it seems that money became the thing that he was chasing. Or if not money, the things that only money can buy.

[3 : 56] What did others think of him? Verse 7, of course, they grumbled when they realized Jesus was talking with him.

If you look back at chapter 18 and verse 9, you'll see that he told another parable to those who trusted himself that they were righteous. These are those who treated others with contempt.

And then it's the story of a Pharisee and a tax collector. The tax collector, of course, would have been treated with contempt. Always coming at you.

Always looking for a little more. One who had sold out on just ways. Purporting to serve the public good.

All the while lining his own pockets. Two ways that that kind of corruption normally happens.

[4 : 59] Probably in our day, just as in that day. One. There's an element where you can pay it forward.

Or an element where it'll kick its way back. By paying it forward, you simply find yourself before someone of great means.

Public or private. That if you support their cause. You pay it forward. Third, they will usher you into a world of contracts and the ability to move yourself ahead.

They call it the Chicago Way. The other is things are kicked back. I think of Boss Tweed. Ancient New York man out of Albany where all the money flowed.

And getting the big contract for the taxpaying public's work on the Brooklyn Bridge in the 1880s. This massive amount of public funds.

[6 : 10] That was devoted to a regional project. And all he had to do was tell the contractors to submit their bids that not cost, but cost plus 50%.

And in doing so, they would receive the contract. And when it came, they would do their work, whether it be the steel or the iron or the cable.

The check would come to them from the government. The taxpaying public. But it was 150% of cost. The man would get his own and put a portion of the 50% back in a bag and bring it to Boss Tweed.

And he would dole it out. Kick it back. The corruption is as simple as your aldermanic streets.

Those who have access have opportunity. And where opportunity knocks, people lose their way.

And God moves to the side and our own comforts come to the fore.

[7 : 30] And little men make big plays for personal gain. Interestingly though, look at the closing vignette of that Zacchaeus story.

For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. Here we are, almost at the point in the Gospel narrative where Jesus is arriving in Jerusalem.

Where he will be killed. And we've seen throughout Luke's persistent elevation of the love of Christ for the poor. And yet, in the last scene before he enters the city, it's a very wealthy man that he wants for his own.

It is a disservice to Luke. Indeed, it is a disservice to the Lord Jesus Christ. To indicate that his love is only for the poor.

He wants the world. He wants the great and the small. He wants you and me and all who aren't like us.

[8 : 45] Who was Zacchaeus? Well, he was a man who shrewdly knew how to get along in the world. What did others think of him?

Well, they thought he was a sinner. They held him in contempt. And what does it look like when Jesus changed his life? Jesus found him up there in that tree by eyesight.

Told him to come down. Wanted a word with him. Off they went. Verse 6 wonderfully says, He hurried and came down and received him joyfully.

We've seen earlier in Luke's gospel, the strength of that term wasn't merely to open a door to Jesus, to have him in his home, but to receive him was in some sense to be converted or to believe in him.

We saw that back in chapter 9 when we read about the Samaritans and the one city who rejected Jesus. He does so with this word. But the people did not receive him.

[10 : 00] In other words, they did not believe in him. And Jesus, to his own disciples in chapter 10, says, Whenever you go to a town and they receive you, eat what's there and do the work.

But if they do not receive you, then the dust of the town clings to your feet. In other words, to receive Jesus is to accept him, to believe him, to realize that he is your Lord.

That's what Zacchaeus did on that blessed day. He turned his life over to Jesus. He took him as his king.

And what does it look like when one does that? Well, he began immediately to divest himself of his ill-gained fortune.

He repented. He made restitution. What a wealthy man he must have been. For the text says that he says, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.

[11 : 05] There it is. He divested 50% of his estate to the poor. And with the other 50%, anyone I've defrauded, I'll repay him fourfold.

This is a man of extraordinary personal wealth. Repenting. What does it look like to walk into the kingdom?

Simply this. Zacchaeus. To receive Jesus in his righteous and just ways. And to begin divesting your home of all the idols you've brought in along the way.

In the Old Testament, they would get rid of their little house gods. Zacchaeus needed to get rid of his money. Many. Many need to take all kinds of things out of their home.

Their heart. Whatever it is that is in your home, and by that I mean your heart, in which you find satisfaction above and beyond the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word, needs to be relinquished.

[12:27] Jesus says today salvation has come into this house. Whatever you have taken from this world at the expense of the dignity of others in the world needs to be returned.

If it's a circus parade of pornographic images that arrive in the home and in the heart, they need to be shown the door.

If it's a person that you cherish above all else, but doesn't actually fit within the construct of the Word of Christ, well then it needs to be shown the door.

If it's one of the seven deadly sins like greed as we have here, well then it needs to be shown the door. It needs to be replaced here.

Greed for one of the cardinal virtues. Generosity. A beginning. A new beginning. Zacchaeus learned to love God again on this day.

[13:54] He walked in. And that's what it looks like. The second scene is a story.

A parable. I was helped by Robert Kinney, one of my colleagues who's back from Vienna today. Praise God. So the parable is kind of like an extended comparison.

I love that phrase. It's something that just gets stretched a little bit to make a point. The danger with parables is to assign all the characters some other meaning.

They do have meaning, but it's like a screw in the sense of you screw down a parable too tightly.

You strip the whole thing of its meaning. You're better off thinking that a parable is an extended comparison by which we're to learn a main truth, but not necessarily assign every component in the parable in ways that is really meant for something else.

And so he tells them a parable. He throws something down. Notice verse 11. We've seen this all the way back, haven't we, from that question in chapter 17, verse 20, being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come.

[15:19] And now that he's close to Jerusalem, some of them are quite certain it's nearly here. And when he moves from Jericho, where Zacchaeus lives, down the road just a bit to Jerusalem, the full manifestation of his power will be made known, his rule will be set up, Rome will be overthrown, his people will rejoice.

Jesus says, well, hold on. He tells them a parable on what life looks like as you wait for the kingdom.

For indeed, the kingdom was in their midst and salvation came to Zacchaeus on that day. But, the kingdom is something yet to come.

We are promised here by Jesus a long delay. By this story that there will be a delay between his first coming and his second.

And he instructs his own how to wait. And if you walk into the kingdom, by divesting yourself of the idols which you've accumulated and held on to and you know, as I know, they are now like barnacles under the water line that keep you from running clean, then the way you wait in the kingdom is actually to invest all things for his righteous rule.

[16:58] That's the chief concept, the takeaway of the parable. Maximize everything he's given to you for his glory and gain.

he tells a parable of one who I think he's referring to himself in some veiled way, a nobleman who goes into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom.

He just called himself the son of man and Daniel spoke of the son of man coming to the ancient of days to receive a kingdom. And Jesus knows that after his death and resurrection, there will be his ascension and he will indeed stand before the father and receive his kingdom.

And that the spirit will then minister his rule until his eventual individual and personal return. And so Jesus is indicating that there is one who is receiving a kingdom, but he's going to go away into a far country.

And he has a word for his servants on how you live while you wait. And it's not passive. It's not idleness. It's not lost in pleasure seeking.

[18:30] No, it comes down to one word, invest. And so the story goes. Ten servants. two years. We only hear of three.

To the first, he gave ten minas. A mina was the equivalent of three months' wages for a common day laborer. I mean, this is not a guy that's getting paid bonuses, working on salary, with an investment according to performance.

This is someone who's paid according to the hours put in. I don't know. You can do the math yourself in regard to what you think a common laborer makes today.

But even if you were to think of something like a number of \$50,000, then to receive ten minas is to receive ten times a quarterly equivalent of that, which would be twelve and a half thousand times ten.

It's a gift of \$125,000 for someone of that stature. I want you to keep working. I know you make \$50,000 a year.

[19 : 40] Here's \$125,000. Put it to use. That's a substantial amount of money. To the next one, five, and on and on it goes.

And then he went away. upon his return, which I believe we can safely say, speaks to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the account books being opened for the things that he has given his followers.

And accounting is made. And the first one doubled. doubled his initial investment.

And Jesus says, because you've been faithful in a little, you shall have authority, verse 17, over ten cities. I love the disproportionate nature of his reward.

This is a lavish reward. word. I'll give you \$125,000 of earthly money, mammon, to put into the kingdom work, and in an eternal level, maybe you actually stand over ten cities.

[21 : 07] That's disproportionate. That is lavish. marriage. It's so out of accord with what actually was given. It ought to be an encouragement to us in every temporal gift given.

But the point of the story is clear. Maximize your opportunities. If you are a Christian, you are to maximize all that he has given you for that day, for an accounting will be made.

Think of it in this terms. Whatever resources he's given you, financial resources, how might they be maximized for the growth of his rule?

Now, I know that we have our bills we have to pay. I have my children I need to get through school. I know I've got to pay rent or mortgage.

I know that to not take care of my own family, according to the Bible, is worse than being an unbeliever. I know that some allocation of my resources is going to be spent in the very natural workings of life.

[22 : 27] But the truth of the parable is there. Invest your resources, for the growth of the kingdom. In regard to money, Billy Graham says, tell me what you think about money and I can tell you what you think about God.

For the two are closely related. A man's heart is closer to his wallet than almost anything. that's how you wait.

Begin to look at your resources and put them toward the kingdom. But I don't think that it's merely a financial thing here. This is a parable. It's not merely your financial resources.

Think of the work he's given you to do. The actual work. work. Now when we walk out of here today, we will go into a myriad of work engagements.

And how are we maximizing the work he's given me to do for the growth of his own rule in world?

This is wonderful because you might say, I don't even, I might just be home watching four children.

[23 : 55] My main job of the day is to try to get dinner ready without killing somebody. Well, children are a gift from the Lord to be invested in.

The return on that investment for the kingdom can be so far beyond your own understanding. You might say, well, I'm a student and my interest is in this field or that field.

Well, then, if that's your work, how are you integrating that work with his kingdom growth? This, of course, means it's impossible for a Christian to stay below the radar on their personal faith.

It doesn't make any sense. that's putting something in a handkerchief. If you're in the academy, others in the academy will need to know you're a follower of Christ or you're making no investment. Yes, do your work well, but do it with words, too. What's the greatest gift you've been given by God, if not the salvation that's come to you in Christ, which arrived on your doorstep through hearing and hearing through the word, it's impossible to be making kingdom investments with our life pursuits vocationally without speaking of the salvation that comes through faith in Christ.

[25 : 29] the resources that He's given you, the work that is there before you, and every opportunity that is available to you.

God is going to give you opportunities that are particular to your own situation. And they're not going to come to other people. He's going to give them to you to invest.

The music of the song that Jill sang today, He giveth and giveth and giveth more grace and giveth again.

My great uncle wrote that music. Hubert Mitchell, that's his song, or the music of it. in the most unusual of circumstances.

The jungles of Sumatra, 1941, the death of his spouse, laboring for the kingdom.

[26 : 41] He had opportunity to speak and he did and write and he did. We came to the end of his hoarded resources. He learned that God giveth and giveth and giveth again.

He's going to give you opportunities in trial. He's going to give you opportunities in sufferings. He's going to give you opportunities in heights that are unimaginable.

He's going to place you before people that nobody else will stand before who can be a witness not only of the ways of Christ but that might speak the words that we need of Christ.

Christ. And when that day comes well the reward will follow. It's difficult to know whether the third individual with the single mina is a Christian or not.

At one point he's called a wicked servant. I really don't know. I do know there is a group these citizens of verse 14 and the equivalent that they are now the enemies in verse 27.

[27 : 56] Those who do not want Jesus to reign over them well they are those who are brought to the slaughter. Two scenes.

What does it look like when someone walks into the kingdom? What it looks like is a complete reorientation of their life and they divest themselves of the things that owned them and they restore life under the rule of Christ.

And what does it look like as we wait for the kingdom? It's a moment where we are to invest our resources invest our work invest our opportunities communities all to the growth of his kingdom.

That is what it is to be on mission and on mission together. We can't do it without his spirit.

We'll need his strength and for that today we have the Lord's table. what a picture of one who had it all and divested himself to the form of becoming a servant and humbled himself to death relinquishing his grasp and yet in the same act investing in what would be his joy.

[29 : 45] As you come today to the table may you come in prayer. Lord I'm coming because I've got to show some things the door and I'm going to need your strength to help me walk in your kingdom.

Lord I'm coming today because I need to make an investment and I need to be led by your spirit. May he strengthen you to do that.

Our Lord Jesus Christ as we come before you in this hour to receive this meal. May you strengthen your people for the welfare of your kingdom.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.