

# Making the Most of God's Gift

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now, that was a hard question for some, wasn't it, to be asked what you would do when you grow up. For some, I think it was crystal clear, just like it was for Sammy, way before he could spell engineer.

He knew he was going to be an engineer. But for others, we sort of don't really have a clue, do we? We're just happy to go along and see what life throws up.

But it's an important question, isn't it, for us to ask as Christians. What should we be doing in life? Or more importantly, what does God want us to do in life?

And is that question still relevant after we've grown up, which most of you think you have? Well, this parable of the 10 minutes, I think, will help us today.

So let's begin in verse 11, where again, we're shown the purpose of the parable. For it says at the start, while they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable because he was near Jerusalem.

[ 1 : 03 ] And the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. So I think we have to take it that this parable was being taught, if you were here last week. While Jesus was still at Zacchaeus' house, his teaching had prompted people to expect that the kingdom was about to come.

It may have been that Jesus was declaring, the fact of Jesus declaring salvation to Zacchaeus, or his use of that messianic term, the Son of Man, coming to seek and save the lost.

Besides, we also know, as Luke tells us, that Jesus is now close to Jerusalem, God's eternal city where his anointed would be enthroned. So on the surface, it looked like Jesus, and remember, he was being called Son of David, was about to usher in God's kingdom.

And when that happens, the people of Israel can look forward to things being made right, not being under oppression. Well, this parable corrects that notion.

Jesus says, well, wait up. Yes, the king is coming, but his coronation would be very different to what you expect. The kingdom isn't coming in full just yet.

[ 2 : 20 ] In the meantime, there's work to do. So let's listen in on this parable to see what that is. So he tells, a man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king, and then to return.

So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minutes. Put this money to work, he said, until I come back. But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, we don't want this man to be our king.

Now, if you are aware of the history of the time, this was a nod to things that were happening at the time. Back then, Achilles was the regional ruler that had been installed by the Romans.

His father was Herod. And he wanted to be like his father and be given the title king, which Herod was. And so he was going to Rome to petition, to seek that sort of recognition.

It's the same way this man of noble birth in the parable is going to a distant country to be appointed king. Now, it happened that Achilles wasn't well liked, and so some of his subjects actually went after him to petition the Romans not to do that, just like in this parable.

[ 3 : 40 ] Now, we know that as we read the parable, we're meant to be comparing this king to Jesus. But here's the twist. Jesus is not like Achilles. Yes, Jesus was hated as well, but not because he was evil or cruel, but because his subjects were rebellious.

Now, here, the subjects was obviously a reference to people like the chief priests, to the teachers of the law, and all those who were plotting his death.

That's to be differentiated from the servants, who we equate to be his disciples, people who are willing followers of Jesus. Here, each servant is given a mina, and that's about three months' worth

of wages.

And if you do the maths, it's not a big number, but it was enough for someone to do something meaningful with, to invest. So, we have the title of the parable, of the ten minas, because there were ten servants, and each had one, ten minas in total.

And so, we get then to the point of this parable. What is the point of this parable then? Well, if you have the outline in front of you, which was in the insert in the news sheet, I set out four observations that lead up to the conclusion.

[ 5 : 00 ] But in the parable, the servants were to put the mina to work until the king returned. And in verse 15, we find that he does. It says, 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 them. And so, the first observation I put down is that what's given has to be accounted for.

Each was given a mina, the same amount. It was a gift that is not earned. But each had to then give an account of that gift. What they gained with it, was the phrase.

The first one came and said, Sir, your mina had earned ten more. Well done, my good servant, his master replied. But because you've been trustworthy in very small matter, take charge of ten cities.

The second came and said, Sir, your mina had earned five more. His master answered, You take charge of five cities. Then another servant came and said, Sir, here is your mina.

[ 6 : 02 ] I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you because you are a hard man. You take what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow. The 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. Why then didn't you put my money on deposit? So that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest.

And so from this, my second observation is that how much that is gained is not really the point. It didn't really matter. Rather, what's important is what's done with the mina. And the king doesn't set a very high bar, does he?

He says that even if you put the money on deposit, not hard to do, is it? And earned interest from it, that would have been fine. But no, even though you knew I was a hard man, you did nothing except to hide it away.

And that's pathetic. So the point is, the mina had to be put to work. There must be some attempt to add to it, even though the actual amount that is increased by is not that important.

[ 7 : 20 ] And so when we try to apply this to us as Christians, how is this parable applicable to us? The first question to ask then is, what does this mina represent? What is Jesus referring to?

And there have been various views about this, but I want to discount a couple. The first one is to say that, to discount the fact that this mina is to do somehow with a Christian's talents or gifts. Now I say that this is not what Jesus is talking about because, as you see, it's the same mina that everyone receives, isn't it? We all know that we have different gifts and talents. That's what the Bible tells us.

But here, it is the same mina. Same thing everyone gets. So I don't think it's about our talents or our gifts. So some have taken it then to represent the gospel, that is the good news, the message of Jesus.

And that works in a way because all of us have that same gospel, isn't it? No different. We receive it in the same one, same message. But then I think it doesn't quite work because what then does it mean for the gospel to be added to?

[ 8 : 29 ] Because again, the Bible says that the content of the gospel shouldn't be changed or increased or added to. And we might think that it's the preaching of the gospel that can increase as more and more people hear it.

But, you know, the gospel itself doesn't increase. So I think a better way of looking at the mina is to look around the parable at the context of it to see what Jesus has been talking about in the lead up to this parable.

And so if you look at last week's passage, Jesus uses the language of salvation. He talked about it with Zacchaeus, but also with the blind man. Your faith has saved you.

And in the week before, when the rich ruler was engaging with him, he talked about eternal life, didn't he? And then talked to the disciples about what they would do to get eternal life.

So I think the gift here of the mina represents the gift of salvation or eternal life that each of us as disciples receive. I think that's why also it's expressed as a mina, one mina.

[ 9 : 36 ] I'm sure that there are denominations that are smaller than a mina, but Jesus doesn't give them those denominations in multiples, does he? He gives them one single indivisible mina.

And that's just like salvation or eternal life, isn't it? That either you have it or you don't. It's not half-hearted, is it? You have to be wholehearted in terms of becoming a disciple of Jesus.

Now, naturally, this gift is what you receive only when you believe the gospel. But I don't think it's the gospel itself that Jesus is talking about here.

Rather, we are to put the mina to work means that we are to do with, to then take the gift of salvation once we receive it and live it out, as it were.

You were once spiritually dead, and then when you became a Christian, you were given new life.

This is the mina. But that life isn't static. You can think of it a bit like a little flame or spark that God lights in your life.

[ 10 : 46 ] But as you keep living out your faith, it grows. More of your life takes on the quality of Jesus' disciple. More and more of the quality of this eternal life is evident in how people look at you, in your acts, in your words, and in your motivations.

You have more of Christ's character. You show more and more of the fruit of the Spirit. You live more and more according to God's will.

Some people go from a small spark to a raging fire in no time at all. They sort of get to 10 minutes, in other words, very quickly. While others, they grow a little more slowly and, you know, take time.

But as the parable says, it doesn't matter as long as there is increase, as long as your faith is growing. For the warning is for those who take their gift of salvation for granted.

Verse 24. Then he said to those standing by, take his men away from him and give it to the one who has 10. Sir, they said, he already has 10. Well, he replied, I tell you that to everyone who has more, to everyone who has, more will be given.

[ 12 : 06 ] But as for the one who has nothing, even what they will have will be taken away. 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.

Now, verse 27, I think Jesus says, just to complete the picture, that, you know, Jesus deals with the chief priests too in that they will be judged. His enemies will be judged.

There's no doubt about it. But the focus really is in verse 26. His warning is to those who claim to be his disciples and yet have nothing to show for it in their lives.

It's almost as if they have a foretaste of eternal life. This great blessing in being God's kingdom and then somehow, inexplicably, they don't go on with it.

Now, Jesus could have been thinking in his day of the people in the crowd, perhaps, who followed him and then wandered away after a while. Or Judas, someone like Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve and yet ended up betraying Jesus.

[ 13 : 11 ] But whoever it is, the warning for them is, if you don't live out your faith, then even the little that you had at first will be taken from you.

And I think that principle runs quite commonly through the Bible. So that warning that we had in Deuteronomy, there the people of God, Israel, entered the promised land. They entered into life under God, didn't they?

God's people in God's place under God's rule. And yet, here's the command for them to live out their lives under that rule. Otherwise, the warning was, this gift of the promised land will be taken away from them.

So, if you look on the side, verse 15 of chapter 30, it says, See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. They were already in the land, but yet, they were still being set this choice, didn't they?

For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to Him, and to keep His commands, decrees, and laws. Then you will live and increase, grow, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you're entering to possess.

[ 14 : 14 ] But if you fail to do so and squander this blessing, then the warning comes. But if your heart turns away and you're not obedient and you're drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed.

You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. You see that principle at work? It's a similar one if you look back at Luke chapter 8 with the parable of the sower. Remember those four seeds? And some of them fell on the rocky ground, didn't they? And there, that seed represented those who heard God's word, received it with joy for a little while, and yet because it didn't take root, with it.

So it's the same principle, isn't it, here? God can give us the gift of salvation or eternal life, but we have to be responsible to make the most of it so that this gift can increase, so that we are living out our faith and having commitment to grow in Christ, to obey Him and do His will.

Now, I don't say this so that you doubt your salvation, that's not the purpose of the parable. Rather, we're to hear this parable and think, yes, we have genuine faith, but what we do with it now, that's the important thing.

[15:32] Now, some of you, I think, if I mention his name, will be familiar with C.T. Studd. Anyone familiar with C.T. Studd? Eric? Don't be shy. Jen, yes? Well, I'll tell you about him.

He was an English cricketer. He played in the original Ashes Test. And if you ever read the words on the urn, where is the urn at the moment? It's in England, isn't it?

Where? It's always in England. Yeah, Lords. Well, if you get to go there and you read the words on the urn, his name is actually on it. Or if you Google, they'll tell you what's written on the urn.

Now, C.T. Studd was also a Christian apart from being a cricketer. And he wanted to put his mina, or his life, to good use. And so, what he did was he became a missionary, firstly to China, but then I think he went elsewhere as well and ended his life, I think, while still being on mission in Africa.

But what he's most famous for is a poem that he wrote. And the last line is actually at the bottom of your outline. But it begins like this, and I'm going to read most of it.

[16:42] It should be on the screen. Two little lines I heard one day traveling along life's busy way, bringing conviction to my heart and from my mind would not depart.

Only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. Only one life, yes, only one, soon will its fleeting hours be done.

Then in that day my Lord to meet and stand before his judgment seat. Only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, the still small voice gently pleads for a better choice, bidding me selfish aims to leave and to God's holy will to cleave.

Only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. Only one life a few brief years, each with its burdens, hopes and fears.

[17:41] Each with its days I must fulfill, living for self in his will. Only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.

When this bright world would tempt me sore, when Satan would a victory score, when self would seek to have its way, then help me, Lord, with joy to say, only one life will soon be passed.

Only what's done for Christ will last. Give me, Father, a purpose deep, in joy or sorrow thy word to keep. Faithful and true, whate'er the strife, pleasing thee in my daily life.

Only one life till soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. Or let my love with fervor burn, and from the world now let it turn, living for thee and thee alone, bringing thee pleasure on thy throne.

Only one life till soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. I think it's a fairly good summary, isn't it, of what should drive us as Christians.

[18:53] What do we do with our life? Well, there's the answer in the poem. And I think it's a rather good application of this passage, isn't it? And I, you know, as I was thinking, I think that actually all of us know just how short life is.

Not just us who are Christians, but even those who do not know Christ or eternity, they know how short life is. But for them, what drives them is anxiety or fear.

Only one life will soon be passed. Attend to life's pleasure, I must. Only one life will soon be passed. I need my bucket list ticked off fast.

That's them, isn't it? I mean, they know how short life is, therefore, they want to cram everything into that life, isn't it? But the amazing thing for us is that our gift of eternal life is not something that we have to fear losing, as though, like that servant, hide it away, as though if we don't protect it, we will lose it.

No, we have the assurance that even if we lose everything materially, relationally, if we suffer for Christ in this life, then all it does, actually, is multiply the Christ-like quality of our life on earth.

[ 20 : 14 ] And that when the king returns, we will trade it in, we will reap a greater reward from it. We're going to trade up, did you realize? From a minna to a city.

And as Dave Chan said this morning, at the end, three months wage for one city. It's not bad, is it? Better than property prices in Melbourne. But that's why we're on to a sure thing aren't we?

This sure investment. And for me, I guess the irony, you know, as I struggle, and I'm sure many of you do, is as we face the choices in this world, sometimes we, you know, we're just so, you know, gripped by the fact that we might lose out.

You know, what will happen to our finances? What about my children's education and future? What about our friendships? What about the prospect of me getting married? It feels like, you know, we're losing all these things in life when actually, quite the opposite is occurring, isn't it?

That when we obey Christ, we're actually making a guaranteed investment for eternity. Now, normally as a pastor, most pastors like to do this.

[ 21 : 23 ] This is the point where I really drive the challenge home. That's what we're called to do, and you know, we love doing it. But as I was thinking about this passage, and I was tempted to do this, I thought, no, this is not right, actually.

Because as I was thinking about each of you, many of you here, I realize that there is actually no need for this. That many of you here already are committed to investing for this eternity.

I see it in your lives. I see the generosity with which you give, and you give to God's work. I see it in your faithfulness to be godly, some of you parents and spouses. Some of you are in full-time gospel ministry, others are planning to do the same.

You're faithfully serving in kids ministry, HTY, all those kind of things. And so I have to say, actually, with this congregation, I don't think the challenge is necessary, because you're already doing it.

And all I really need to say is, keep going. Remember that, you know, don't be discouraged. I know sometimes we measure ourselves against where we thought we would have been.

[ 22 : 31 ] We don't need to do that. Or we need to, you know, we compare it with what others might be doing in ministry and look where we are. You don't need to do that. Because, as we've read the parable, that's not the point, is it?

It's not how much. It's the fact that you are faithful in where you are with God. Humbly serving Him, whatever the opportunity or whatever your situation is in life.

Keep asking, as you live, what it means to be fully invested. to keep being fully invested. And it's often the little decisions that we make in life that actually count for the most in the long run.

Faithfulness, perseverance, rather than this big vision of wanting to conquer the world. Just do those things right. And I'm sure that God will keep guiding us each step of the way to keep increasing that minna or more than one now, probably, that you've got.

And for the one or two of you here still that are not decided, either you've still not decided to become a Christian or you're hiding that minna away, then all I can say to you is, just look around at your brothers and sisters here.

[ 23 : 45 ] And I pray that God will open your eyes of faith to see actually what you're missing out on. don't hold back because of fear or, you know, greed or lust or whatever because trust me, this life will soon pass.

And even that little that you thought you were holding back, well, that will be taken from you. If you desire to be saved, if you desire to have those grand cities in heaven, then make the most of God's gift right now, what it's given to you.

And so let me just end with the last verse of C.T. Studd's poem. Only one life, yes, only one. Now let me say thy will be done.

And when at last I'll hear the call, I know I'll say t'was worth it all. Only one life t'will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.

Let's pray. Yes, Father, let us say thy will be done. Let us look to eternity having invested ourselves fully in Christ and say, thank you, Father.

[ 24 : 57 ] It was all worth it. You have given and then you've given some more. And what we've laid down in service for Christ was merely an investment into the eternal rewards of the kingdom.

We ask and pray this in the name of our King, King Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.