

Responsibility & Reckoning

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to do a sermon series today in the Gospel of Luke. So if you'll turn with me to Luke chapter 19, that's where we're going to get it. That's page 825 in the few miles.

Luke chapter 19, page 825. This time of year, the time between Christmas and Easter, is this hard time when the church has focused its attention on the person of Jesus.

We're always focusing on Christ because we've just sung. What we want is to see Christ more clearly, but it's good to regularly return to the Gospels themselves and get a firsthand encounter there with the one that we worship, the one that is at the center of our worship, Jesus.

Now, as we start into the Gospel of Luke this season, just a quick orientation to this book. The Gospel of Luke falls roughly into three parts.

The first, chapters 1 through 9, deal with Jesus' birth and his ministry in Galilee. And the big question that Luke deals with there is, who is this Jesus?

[1 : 0 8] And the picture that emerges in Luke 1 through 9 is that Jesus is, in fact, Israel's Messiah, the Lord, the liberator that we've been waiting for. And then begins the second section of the Gospel of Luke, in chapters 9 through 19.

And there Luke recounts Jesus' long journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. And here we join the disciples on the road with Jesus. And Luke is dealing with the question here of, what does it mean to follow Jesus?

What does it mean to follow him? And the picture that emerges in 9 through 19 is that following Jesus means complete allegiance to him as our Lord.

And if you were here last winter and spring, we preached through that section of Luke. You can find those sorts on the website if you want to go back and listen to some of those. But now, we come to the third and final section of Luke's Gospel, chapters 19 through 24.

And these chapters deal with the climax of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem. And the big question here that Luke takes up is, what has Jesus come to do?

[2 : 1 5] This liberator who calls for our utmost allegiance, what is the work he's come to accomplish? How will he set us free? And the shocking answer to that question, the answer that will turn everything upside down, the answer that will make Jesus and Christianity completely different than every other religion, the answer to that question is, the cross.

Now why is Luke right on this? In the opening chapter of Luke, chapter 1, the opening verses, he says there that he's taking time to research and gather all these first-hand accounts of Jesus.

Luke's writing in the 60s, 70s, the first century, 60s, 70s, 80s. He says he's gathered all these first-hand accounts of Jesus, put them into an orderly account, so that his young friend named Theophilus might know the certainty of the things he did.

He wants the faith of his friend not to rest on wishful thinking or on vague notions, but on the certainty of who Jesus is and what he's done.

So it's our prayer that as we launch into the gospel, Luke again, that that same sort of assurance, that same sort of assuring certainty will increasingly be ours.

[3 : 35] And out of that assurance, we can be the kind of people who are people of love and hope and even joy in the midst of our city that so desperately needs all of us.

So why don't we pray? And then we'll dive into those things. Let's pray. Father, we are grateful that we get a chance on Sunday mornings to gather together as your people in this new covenant that you want for us, where there's grace and forgiveness in life.

Amen. God, thank you that through your word you speak to us. Thank you that we have these documents that have been written and preserved and inspired by your spirit so that we can hear afresh the truth of who you are and what you've done, Jesus, and what you continue to do through your spirit in your church and in our own lives.

God, do your work this morning, we pray as we attend to your word. We ask this humbly in the name of Jesus. Amen. So we're getting up to Luke 19, verses 11 through 28.

This is the passage that ends the second section of Luke's gospel and begins the third and final section of Luke's gospel, Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem. So Luke 19, verse 11. As they heard these things, he, that is Jesus, proceeded to tell Pharaoh, because he was here to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God to appear, he is.

[5 : 01] 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 meetings 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 move me and give him the money to be called to him, that he might know what they would gain by doing business.

The first came forward and saying, Lord, your mena has made ten meetings. And he said to him, Well done, good servant, because you have been faithful and very little, you shall have a foreign meeting.

And the second came, saying, Lord, your mena has made five meetings. And he said to him, You are to be over five meetings. Then another came, saying, Lord, here is your being, which I kept laying away in the hand of chief.

For I was afraid, because you are a severe man, you take what you did not deposit, reap what you did not sow. And he said to him, I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant.

[6 : 14] You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit, reap what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank? And am I coming?

I might have collected it with interest. He said to those who stood by, Take the need of him, give it to the one who has ten meetings. And he said to him, Lord, he has ten meetings.

I tell you, that to everyone who has, more will be given. But to 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, break from the air, it's a lot of them for me.

When he said these things, he went on ahead. I'll go back to Jerusalem. Well, our passage today is about expectations.

Expectations, of course, can be a very powerful thing. Imagine the school child waking up, seeing snow on the ground, one expecting for a snow day. And yet being told, let go, despite their expectations, they still have to go to school.

[7 : 25] That's going to be a rough morning for the fall. Or imagine a newly married couple settling into their new home, and one expecting that the other will gladly do the bills, or take care of the shopping, because, well, that's how it was growing up for them.

Think about getting a new job. Finally, this is the place where I can make my mark, get ahead, earn respect. It's not hard to see that these kinds of almost unconscious expectations can be the source of all sorts of misunderstanding, disappointment, but have you ever considered that that's also true spiritually?

Many expect religion to always say basically the same thing. And then are very surprised when they find out that they're actually quite old. Many expect Jesus to be just another good moral teacher, and then are surprised or even taken aback when they find out that he's claiming a whole lot more than that.

Many expect that following Jesus will always make our life easier, and then are surprised, even upset, or discouraged, when the road gets rough and trials come. In verse 11 of our passage, we see that Jesus tells this parable because he's about to arrive in Jerusalem, and the people around him expect the kingdom of God to appear immediately.

The kingdom of God, that is, the world healing, justice-bringing, evil, and the in-taking reign of the creator God on the earth, where the world's last would be put right next to the kingdom of God.

[9 : 12] And had God Jesus himself said that that kingdom was at hand, and that the kingdom was even in their midst, so they're expecting the kingdom of God now to remain under Jerusalem to appear in the earth.

But although Jesus had indeed launched God's kingdom in his own person at work, the kingdom of God in its complete fullness was not going to appear.

In other words, in Jesus, the kingdom of God was inaugurated, but its consummation was not going to happen right away, as the disciples expected. And so our expectations can cause us such problems relationally, vocationally, and so the spiritual.

And so this parable is the just for the first disciples following Jesus' own Jerusalem. It's for us, today, as well. So what should we expect as followers of Jesus?

Well, the first thing that this parable shows us is that we should expect not immediate victory, but ongoing responsibility. We should not expect immediate victory, but ongoing responsibility.

[10 : 34] Look at it, verses 12 through 14. Jesus said, therefore, a nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then returned, calling ten of his servants to give them ten units 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 bring our kids. Now, this idea of a nobleman going away to receive a kingdom or to receive the authority to be king would have been familiar to Jesus' contemporary.

In fact, when Herod the Great died, his son, Barabbeus, actually went to Rome to try to convince Caesar to make him king over Judea in the place of his father. And the Jewish citizens disliked Barabbeus so much that they sent an embassy probe to tell the emperor that they didn't want to be a king.

So I think the emperor ended up making him sort of a sort of semi-classic war and said, well, if you move into our menu and you can use him. So this idea that one would go away in order to receive the authority to be a king was a true man.

I don't know if I could get him to the volume to the sword together here. And Jesus, is your client to his co-signation? Is it going to result in an evening king?

[11 : 44] Would you say was that? Rather, he's going to be a king for some time and then return in the future and fold forward into the future. And as the story of Luke's gospel unfolds and as the story continues into the past, that's exactly what we see.

Jesus accomplishes his glory personal and then ascends to the Father promising that he will one day return in glory to the Lord. This is what Jesus himself and the rest of the New Testament teaches and is what the church has professed from the very beginning that we live in between Christ's first and second coming.

His first coming in grace to purchase our redemption and to ignore the kingdom and his second coming in glory to judge and to cause them. And so, like those first disciples, we should not expect immediate victory in this in-between time.

We still wrestle and we will still wrestle with sin and temptation. We will still battle sickness and death. Our relationships will be hard at times.

Our emotional life will not always be easy. Being a follower of Jesus, being filled with his spirit does not maybe guarantee health, wealth, or sinless temptation.

[13 : 07] And if we expect those things, we will be sorely disappointed. And we can even end up shaking our fist to God when he tells that he hasn't accomplished those things.

Rather than immediate victory, Jesus is telling us to expect ongoing responsibility. In the parable 10, servants are each given one beating, which is a unit of money that's about three to four months' wages for a day worker.

And they're told to engage in business until he comes. Engage in business. Now have you ever thought about engaging in business as a benefit for discipleship?

That's what Jesus is doing here. Had Jesus said that there were 12 servants entrusted with money, we might have thought he was talking about the 12 apostles maybe. But no, there's 10 servants and that might have been talking about all of us.

Engage in business. Use what the master has given you. Your time, your talents, your treasure, all of it is a gift for him to be used in the engagement of his business.

[14 : 23] Now I'm not a business person, but I do know that if you want to be a successful business person, you need a plan. Have you ever stepped back and thought how your time, your talents, your resources can be used for God's kingdom?

As you engage in your location, as you engage in your family life, as you engage in your community life, have you ever thought, and made, yes, a plan, about how I might be engaged in the business of God's kingdom?

But a business, you don't just need a plan, you also need to be willing to take risks, don't you? Following Jesus is like that. There will be times when you need to step out and do something risky, but no great business venture ever really was a success without a little bit, or maybe a lot of risk, right?

You have to do something outside of your comfort zone, like striking up a conversation with your neighbor, or maybe volunteering with a classroom full of first graders.

Could there be anything you want to do that? But in business, I've heard you don't just need a plan, and you don't just need a willingness to take risks, you need planners.

[15 : 42] You can't move along. And discipleship is the same, we need each other. The business of God isn't a one-person operation. We need various things and talents and resources working together in this business of the kingdom.

But let me mention just one last thing. In business, it seems to be, you need confidence.

Because it's not easy. Look at verse 14. Jesus tells us to expect that many people will not let complain to business. Some will passively reject Jesus as their king.

Some will actively reject Jesus as their king. So as we engage in business, things are going to be easy. Discipleship is going to be hard. We will face setbacks physically, emotionally, relationally.

What confidence can we have in the midst of the trials? Well, the glimmer of good news here in this first part of the Bible is this, that our king has looked upon us, servants, and he's made us partners.

[17 : 01] The gospel, the news that God accepts us by grace and not works through Jesus, elevates us and gives us a statement that we want to be not.

No longer just serving, but partners in this business of the kingdom. What wonderful news is that? That even if setbacks and trials come, we are partners with the king representing his interests in the world, awaiting his glorious review.

What better business to give our help? What other business venture could be more adventurous than to be engaged in the business of the king of the universe? believers. This is the life of discipleship.

This is what we should expect. Not a beginning degree, but an ongoing, glorious, hard responsibility. But there's more.

The rest of the parable is just as important when it comes to our spiritual expectations. Because you see, many of us expect that this life is all there is.

[18 : 09] Or if there is something more to come, it's not very connected to what happens here and now, or maybe only marginally so. It sort of reminds me of J.J.

Abrams' TV show Lost. If you were a Lost fan, you'll know that it was six seasons of high drama, plot twists and turns, character development, and then in the final episode, rather than drawing all those threads together and making a meaningful whole out of the series, the final episode simply had the characters reunite, realize that much of their story didn't matter, and they simply walk into the light of the afterlife.

You can tell I have to the light on the process. They simply move on. Is that what we should expect? Mere reunion?

reunion? According to Jesus in verses 15 through 27, we should expect not a mere moving on of your reunion, but a thorough coming reckoning.

In the parable, the noble returns under being granted a kingdom, and he calls to him above his servants to whom he entrusted his money and the citizens who rejected him.

[19 : 34] Now, it's this final group that probably causes us the most concern. That description of judgment in verse 27 strikes us as incredibly harsh, offensive. But think for a moment of all great parts.

Sometimes we need something shocking, something in your face to wake this whole reality. Is it much good art like this?

Whether it's a modernist painting, or a punk from an album, it's raw, it's in your face, so that the viewers of the minister will actually wake up to the reality of the problems that are trying to be exposed.

So what is the reality in which Jesus is trying to wake up? Well, it's to the reality of the choices that we make in this life. have eternal meaning.

Life is not meaning. That thing that we feel deep in our bones, that this life matters, that our choices have dignity, that we aren't simply dust specks on a turntable of oblivion.

[20 : 49] No, this throtttable reckoning by the King brings the good news that our choices matter, that life does not be used. But the harsh reality is that one day some will be granted exactly what they have asked for.

Those who happen to be rejected, who want nothing to do with one, who want to be ridden once and for all, they will be granted just that. In God's justice, they will be excluded from his presence, eternally separated.

And if God is the eternal source of all life, what can separation from him be like but eternal death? Some modern art can make us unworthy whole, who will walk through the LR and tolerate finds a freedom in people pieces, but that doesn't make it any less true.

The question this part of the parable puts to us is, are we in line rejected the world to right the king?

But lest we think that Jesus' parable is unfair, notice that thoroughgoing reckoning also comes to the nobleman servants. In particular, notice that the bulk of the parable deals with the last servant, the servant who merely returns and ultimately be that having hidden away in the king of king.

[22 : 28] Now, outwardly, this servant would have been identified with becoming king. He would have been named among the business partners, and yet, the reckoning proved that he had no lasting place in the kingdom.

The warning here is to nominal Christians, that is, those who identify outwardly with Christ in name. but for whom there is no inward reality, no real relationship into Jesus.

You see, it's not out of my hearts that Jesus is looking for, but inward reality, inward sincerity, things like baptism, or church attendance, or being able to recite a read, those are all good things that can be fruits of genuine faith, but in and of themselves they are not sufficient.

Now, this doesn't mean that we are ultimately saved by our works. The good fruit of our life does not put us in a saving relationship with God.

We could never be with it. We are saved by faith in Christ's righteousness alone. But as the reformers would say again and again, we are saved by faith alone, but saving faith is natural.

[23 : 50] A living tree produces fruit, an active bank account produces fruit. Faith without works is dead faith.

No real faith at all. And this last servant has nothing to show when the master returns. He did nothing with his meaning.

Is this meaning? Is this meaning? having grown up in a time and place where the gospel is clearly proclaimed, when scripture is printed and available in our own language, if we just click away on our smartphone, we can read the very word of God, whatever and whatever we want.

When scholarship again and again continues to affirm the gospel's reliability, when friends and family around us are trusting and following Christ, will we have nothing to show for this theme that God has given to us?

Will we not entrust ourselves wholeheartedly to the King? God has done it. Amen. And notice something important here.

[25 : 10] This servant disobeys his master's wishes and does no business with the man. And then to justify his inactivity, his rejection of the nobleman's wishes, he creates a defined picture of the nobleman.

And what is that creating a picture like? Well, this nobleman in his mind is harsh and demanding and he takes when he didn't have a cross and he grieves when he didn't have a soul.

And of course the nobleman's generosity to the previous servants for his own. And yet, in this servant's mind, this is the picture he's creating. And this picture of the nobleman that he creates, as severe as the bandit, then allows this servant to blame for his exoesies.

Well, he blames the nobleman. I was afraid of you, so I did nothing. Because you're so hard. Do you notice the hard dynamic of sin that Jesus is laying for us?

We disobey. We create a false image of God that justifies our disobedience. And then we use that false image to turn and put the way back on the thought of sin.

[26 : 28] Do you see that dynamic in your own heart? I know I've seen you mine and it should make us trouble.

And so the lesson we're going to take away from this last circle is that we must make use of the meaning that God has given us.

We must not allow the false images of God in our minds to us from taking advantage of that gift that God has given. It's not enough to be a Christian in name only.

As verse 20 shows us, if you look there, if we are a Christian in name only, even that name will be taken away from us. not our identity, but in living relationship with Jesus, that's what happens.

And how do you do that? First, something called an evidence, which is admitting to God that you're saying, and then saying, trusting in the Lord Jesus' life, death, and resurrection of the world, that you are not in trusting yourself to him as your business.

[27 : 56] And for those who make that step, there is also a right. In verses 16 through 19, the servants who had occasion visits with the masters being in, we find them there.

They've taken their message. They've stepped out of faith. They've come, and they come with what they've gained. Some, no doubt, have been hit through hardship and trial.

Some have probably spent sleepless nights wandering out when all turnouts. Some, they have lost friends or family members along the way. Some probably made deep sacrifices.

But at last, this day of reckoning comes. And what we have to see in the airport is the radical generosity of the king.

I think that it was no more than three or four months of a day was a generation. You know, history tells us, I think it was Mark Anthony, history tells us that when Mark Anthony tried to reward his soldier's service, he gave them a mina as a gift.

[29 : 10] And they basically mocked him because he was such a small man. So he had to up his gifts over the Lord. Which goes to show that mina was something of that much.

And yet when these servants come before their king, some having been ten minas, which was not a number of return in the first century, and some having been five minas, what's the reward?

In return for a minas, run, the servants are rewarded with the rule over whole cities.

The reward is lavishly disproportionate. For the small amount they return, they are granted unprecedented dignity, position, importance, and honor in the kingdom of God.

I mean, imagine, if I gave you, let's say I gave you 3,000, to invest. No, small amount had a huge amount of money. And you came back to me and you said, hey, I actually turned you \$3,000 into \$10,000.

[30 : 13] How do you think about that? What you wouldn't expect me to say, great job, you beat the whole city of New England. Just have progress.

And that is the graciousness of our duty. we are saved by grace, and we are rewarded in grace.

You see, what Jesus wants us to see is that the business of discipleship, the plans, the risk, the trials, the hardship, it will all be worth it for the king of the situation.

Amen. even if you feel as if your demon has gained so little, it is not little in the eyes of our king.

If done in love for him, then it is held in greatest need. It is worth cities upon cities in his eyes. grace. So don't hesitate to give this king your all.

[31 : 20] To live your life for him. To plan, to risk, to suffer, even to die for him. This is no harsh, severe, tired, despite what that final servant might say, or despite what the voice in your head might sometimes want you to hear, this king's heart is abounding in grace.

after all, what gives this king the right of the church? What is, what is it that Jesus has done that put him to such a place?

Look again at verse 12, the beginning of Jesus' paradigm. The noble that went into a far country to receive her himself.

A far country. Let's take phrases used in Luke 15 to Jesus' parable of the product of the son. When the elder son leaves his father, he goes to a far country to squander his wealth.

And you see, Jesus too would go to the far country. He would go out into the far country where we could squander them all down into our sin and our explosive world.

[32 : 38] And he would go out to the far country of our top country and our rebellion. And to the far country he would go and it would lead to the cross. And in that far country there, he would lead for himself a kingdom.

no other king, no other religious leader, no other moral teacher has done what Jesus did. He alone has gone into the far country and found him for our sins.

He alone has risen again and ascended to the Father and now into a seed of the man. This is what gives Jesus the water to be our and to be our judge.

And to be our Lord. Jesus did what no one expected the Messiah would do. He died on the cross. So that we could receive what no one expected sinners to receive.

What the life is the kingdom of the world. Let's pray. Lord Jesus we pray that you would take our life and let your consecrated soul today.

[34 : 03] Take our moments, take our days, Lord, invite the Holy Spirit to let them grow. pray.

And when we look ahead to your return, with the right expectation, and so we're ready for that great thing. We ask this in Christ's love.