

## **“The Good Servant and the Wicked Servant”**

### **Luke 19:11–28**

Every week, we are going through a sermon series called "A Better Way: Living in the Gospel." Every week, we look at the difference between living in our own strength and living in the power of the gospel. Every week, we look at the difference between what people are prone to do and a better way to live.

This week's passage is particularly important in the life and ministry of Jesus. This is the last week of Jesus's life. He's on his way to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is not far away, about a day's walk. In the next passage, he enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Today, we see Jesus the King. We see the kingdom of Jesus. We see a kingdom full of grace.

#### **Luke 19:11-28**

**<sup>11</sup> While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.**

**<sup>12</sup> He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. <sup>13</sup> So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’**

**<sup>14</sup> “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’**

**<sup>15</sup> “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 it.**

**<sup>16</sup> “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’**

**<sup>17</sup> ““Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’**

**<sup>18</sup> “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’**

**<sup>19</sup> “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’**

**<sup>20</sup> “Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. <sup>21</sup> I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.’**

**<sup>22</sup> “His 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? <sup>23</sup> Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’**

**<sup>24</sup> “Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’**

**<sup>25</sup> ““Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’**

**<sup>26</sup> “He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away. <sup>27</sup> 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.’”**

**<sup>28</sup> After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.**

The word of the Lord. Amen.

## **1. “The Good Servant”**

In today's scripture, Jesus tells a parable about the good servant and the bad servant. The master gives each of his ten servants one mina each. A mina is a measure of weight, about a pound of silver. Today, that's about 40,000 yen. Not very much.

And the master says, “Put this money to work.” When he comes back, the first servant says, (verse 16) “Sir, your mina has earned ten more.” His master replies, “Well done, my good servant! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.”

The second servant comes and says, “Sir, your mina has earned five more.” And his master answers him, “Take charge of five cities.”

The good servants were rewarded for increasing the minas of the master. But what a reward it is! 10 towns for 40 man yen! 5 towns for 20 man yen! Isn't there a big difference between the value of 40 man yen and 10 towns?

What is going on here? What does 1 mina represent? Money? Talent? Education? Experience?

I don't think so. We each have different amounts of money, talent, education, etc. But the 10 servants all got the same thing. 1 mina.

To find out what the 1 mina represents, we need to look at verse 11: “While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable.”

“Listening to this?...” We need to look a little further back, verses 9–10, “Jesus said to him, ‘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.’”

This is the verse we looked at last week about Zacchaeus, when Jesus offers salvation. From this context, we know that 1 mina stands for salvation. If a mina represents salvation, what does “put this money to work” mean? Does Jesus say to Zacchaeus, “Well done, my good servant! You worked really long hours,” or, “Well done, my good servant! You really

volunteered at the church a lot"? No, of course not. "Put this money to work is about grace. It's about the gospel. It's about increasing the currency of the kingdom.

"It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed...but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

"Today salvation has come to this house." With the salvation we have been given, we put it to work. We increase the kingdom of God. We increase peace, love, and beauty. We pray that the love and knowledge of Christ may abound. We pray "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

At work. At school. At home. The "mina" we've been given affects everything, making it full of life, hope, and joy.

## **2. "The Wicked Servant"**

Next, Jesus contrasts this with the wicked servant. What did he do? He rejected the master's gift of 1 mina. He wrapped it in a cloth and hid it away. He didn't put the mina to work. He did not do anything with it. He didn't show it to others. No one knew he had 1 mina. It didn't affect the world or the people around him. It didn't mean anything at all.

In the Japanese, "wicked" is translated as "bad," but the original meaning is much stronger. It doesn't mean someone who doesn't do their work or is lazy. In this case, it means immoral. Sinful. It means he disobeyed his master.

The wicked servant said to the master, (verse 21) "I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow." His 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?"

The wicked servant said that his master was "hard." One who "takes." But the master is not a taker. Quite the opposite. The master is big-hearted. He's a giver. Receiving a mere 40 man yen, he gave 10 towns in return. The wicked servant did not receive the master's generosity, and so was judged by his own harsh words.

It would be scary to be judged by the standards people put on us: our boss's standards, our teacher's standards, our parents' standards... We can't even live up to the standards we put on ourselves. The wicked servant's words are terrible for relationships. They cause too much pain. They have no grace at all. Yet, this is the way that people tend to think.

### 3. "The Man of Noble Birth"

We looked at the good servant and the wicked servant. It's a very strange parable, isn't it? And what a cruel ending! Verse 27, "those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me." Indeed, the master is a "hard" man. And more than a little scary, just as he said.

This parable is based on a historical event. Jesus is in the city of Jericho at this time, which was once ruled by King Herod. Before Herod died, he divided his kingdom among his three sons. His son Archelaus received Jericho among other places. He had to go to Rome, "a distant country," to see Caesar. Fifty Jewish messengers were sent after him to tell Caesar, "We don't want this man to be our king." When Archelaus returned from Rome, he slaughtered 3,000 in the temple. Because of all this, Jesus was raised in Nazareth, to escape the rule of Archelaus. So it really affected Jesus's life as well.

**Matthew 2:22-23**, "When [Joseph] heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that [Jesus] would be called a Nazarene."

Archelaus was indeed a cruel king. So why did Jesus associate himself with the "man of noble birth" in this parable?

**Verse 11**, "because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once."

Jesus wanted to talk about the Kingdom of God. He wanted to proclaim, "This is my kingdom. I am the king." Those with him understood this message very well. In the very next passage, when Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowd cries out in a loud voice, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" (v. 38)

Jesus doesn't reply, "No, no, you're mistaken. Thank you, but please stop." No, rather, he seems to say, "I am worthy of this praise" (v. 39). Some of the Pharisees even came to Jesus and commanded, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." Jesus was king. The praise of the crowd was right and proper.

Then, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. This was the prophesied entry of the king.

**Matthew 21:5**, "See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Afterward, Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" and Jesus answered, "Yes." Then, the words were written on the cross above Jesus's head, "King of the Jews."

The people understood the message. Jesus was the king. But Jesus was the good king. Jesus is the man of noble birth, given the kingdom by his Father in heaven. The Jewish delegation said, "We do not want this man to be our king," but Jesus did not say, "Slaughter my enemies in front of me." Rather, he said, "Father, forgive them for they know now what they do." Rather, he himself was slain! Jesus took the punishment of his enemies. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Jesus was the good king who was slain for his people.

Salvation has been given to his servants for the the spread of his kingdom. In this community. In this city. That Tokyo may be known as the City of Grace. That is the vision of this church. That one day, we will live in this new Tokyo, full of grace, in the Kingdom of God, under the kingship of Jesus.

The man of noble birth has gone to a distant country for a little while, but he will certainly return. At that time, he will look to see if we have been putting the grace we have received to work. Until Jesus returns, we have work to do, the work of grace.

Do you accept this great grace of salvation given by God? Are you walking in line with the truth of the gospel? Are you living in that way? Does it influence your words, thoughts, and actions?

Do you accept Jesus as your King? Do you want a kingdom of grace? Please don't be the wicked servant. Accept this grace and spread it to everyone around you.

Let's pray.

"Dear Heavenly Father, please help us to see this amazing gift that you have given us. Thank you for this gift of salvation, that you have given in abundance. Help us to accept this gift and to joyfully share it with others. We pray that your kingdom may grow. We pray this in your precious name, Amen."