

“The tale of two servants” Luke 19:11-27

As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. 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 minas, 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 whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’ And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’ Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ He said to him, ‘I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’ And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten minas!’ ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from 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, bring them here and slaughter them before me.’”

We have this powerful and, yes, we can't deny this almost scary and very challenging in its clarity and demands a parable that describes our age, our situation, the world in which we live, and the Church as the history is approaching its fulfillment in the second coming of our Lord and God Jesus Christ.

We have a handful of main characters in this parable and we will take a look in turn at each one of them. First, as the main character we have this nobleman, our Lord Jesus Christ. Then we have 10 of His servants, that is, those who belong to His Church, or at least who mix with God's people. The number 10 probably symbolically includes all of the nobleman's servants, all of those in the Church.

Then we have the ten minas. They are not exactly characters in the parable. But they play a very significant role. What are those ten minas that are equally distributed to all the servants? They are the Word of God, the message from our God both as the Law and the Gospel given to all of us. Finally, we have the citizens that live in the nobleman's lands. Or we could say, His enemies, the world.

Now, let's zoom in and see what does this parable communicate to us today. The nobleman. The son of the famous king David, the son of the father of all faithful – Abraham, the son of Adam, the Son of God, as Luke summarizes it in his account.

Jesus Christ, the noblest, the most beautiful, the most gracious, the wisest, the humblest of all who have ever walked on this earth. He went into a far country, ascending into God's presence, to receive for Himself a kingdom and then return.

His path wasn't like that of other kings. It didn't begin in a palace, it begun in a manger in a house of very ordinary people. His first crown wasn't from gold, adorned with precious stones. It was a very simple crown, made of ... thorns.

The hour of His glory wasn't when all those present knelt before Him, it was when He bowed His head on the cross, giving up Himself for the sake of His people. But as He left, He left to return. And as He left, He called His servants and gave them His greatest treasure, and said to them: "Engage in business until I come."

But then there were His citizens. They hated Him. They hated this noblest and most beautiful master. They lived on the land that belonged to the nobleman. They lived by His grace day by day.

It was Him, their Lord, who made His sun rise on them every day, and sent His rain when it was needed. It was their Lord who opened His hand and gave everyone their food in due season, it was Him who satisfied the desires of every living thing. Still they hated Him...

How deep and ugly was the darkness in the hearts of these citizens! How deep and spiteful is the hate of this world towards their Creator and Redeemer! How fervent is their rejection, how bitter is their mocking!

"We don't want this man to reign over us." We don't want even to hear His name. Jesus Christ... It stings... Let us push it out of public square, let us ban it from our speech! Let us lock it into deepest of dungeons, so that it is never ever heard again! So that His memory is erased from the earth, so that we can live as we desire.

What had He done to them? What has He done to the world? What was His sin? False witnesses failed, His accusers could only roar in blind hatred, as there was no sin found in Him. "No, but He deserves to suffer and be destroyed for He has made Himself like God, therefore – crucify Him, crucify Him!"

There are no limits to this hatred. As the world hates this nobleman, as they hate His name, the same way they hate also His disciples. "You will be hated by everyone for my name's sake." Sounds familiar...

The arrogance and ignorance join their hands in bling hatred screaming – take them away, they don't deserve to live among us, these hypocrites, these judgmental

troublemakers! Only when this name is not mentioned anymore, only then there will be peace on earth. “But He who sits in the heaven laughs...”

He knows, that He will return. Then He will send out His angels to the ends of the earth and they will gather all His enemies, and this deep darkness and this well of hatred will be destroyed.

“But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.” The ugly and lying head of the ancient serpent and all who have chosen his side will be thrown into the lake of fire.

We still live in time of grace. This is the time when the Lord Jesus is patient and merciful and slow to anger. This is the day of salvation, when our Lord gently calls everyone, when He speaks kindly even with His enemies. And we all used to be numbered among them.

This is the time, when He opens before them His friendly heart, when He endures their blasphemy and spits of anger, when He keeps sending His Spirit into their hearts, calling them back to Himself.

When He opens His nail-pierced hand inviting them into this wonderful fellowship with Himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit. He doesn't want anyone to come to Him out of fear. He doesn't want to force anyone into His embrace.

He shows the depth of His love and commitment, and He waits for our willing response. “Love me, for I have loved you first...”. But when the day of His return comes, the time of grace will be over.

The Holy One will not permit the evil, the hatred and darkness to poison the lives of those who love Him, thus nothing unclean, nothing detestable and false will enter His Kingdom, only those who love Him, only those sealed with His Spirit.

Now, let us turn the spotlight on us! “When [the nobleman] returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business.”

We, who bear His name, how well have we done? As we can see in this parable, obviously not everyone has taken the Lord's command seriously. “The first servant came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’

Remember, when the nobleman, our Lord Jesus Christ left, He entrusted His servants His treasure, the Word of God. And He commanded: “Engage in business! Use it so that it would bear fruit for my Kingdom!” The success of this business enterprise doesn't depend on servants. The power to produce fruits, the power to

change hearts, the power to bring people in the Kingdom of God belongs to the Word of God and to Him alone. This is why the first and the second servants said it clearly: “Your mine has earned.”

“The Word that you entrusted us, the Word which we shared, this Word has not returned without accomplishing its purpose. It has made more minas.” The only thing required from the servants was – to be faithful. Not to hide the message that was entrusted to them, not to ignore the Lord’s command, not to pretend the command doesn’t applied to them, but to be faithful.

It is joyful to read about these first two servants. They were so blessed. Not only after their master returned, not only when they received their surprising reward, but from the very beginning. They loved their master, the nobleman.

They cherished the privilege entrusted to them. It makes sense, for they, being just servants of the master, were given the privilege to do business with their master’s treasures. They had engaged in this business with all their hearts.

They wanted His enterprise to prosper. They had done their best, with fervent prayers and joyful care trying to gain as much as possible for their master. Not looking for His reward, but considering this very service as joy of their lives.

They couldn’t imagine what the nobleman’s reaction will be when He returns. “Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.” This is not a salary. This is more of God’s grace. To His faithful servants.

Grace upon grace that those who love the Lord keep receiving from Him. We don’t know what it means “over ten cities”, but we can be pretty sure that those who love true God, will be totally taken by the abundance of our Lord’s generosity.

Whatever you may expect from the life to come, there will be more... so much more... But then the third servant came. This is a very different story. He hadn’t loved His Lord. He hadn’t feared His Lord.

He may have grumbled at others servants: “Why do you always worry about the nobleman’s business, why do you always want to make everything about the Word of God, that’s too much, that’s too heavy, can’t we just be nice?!”

He had considered Himself to be right and His master to be wrong. Even as He mixed among the servants of the nobleman, in his heart he was pretty much like the citizens who hated the nobleman.

“Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.” It is so sad when this happens.

When someone mixes with the servants of the Lord, when they are in His Church, but neither love nor fear the Lord Jesus. When they hate the privilege that is given to us, to participate in His mission, when they dislike the command of the Lord, and when they decide to hide the life-giving and life-changing treasure, the Gospel, that is given to us.

The Lord said: “I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?”

In other words, you lying and shameful servant, now you want to accuse your Lord that He is unjust and severe! If you were so afraid, you could have given your mina to those who joyfully put it to work. You could have supported them. Prayed for them, encouraged them.

You would have found a way to obey your Lord, if only you cared at all. And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’ I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

The Lord is the One who gives us the words of eternal life, and He is the One who can take them away from those who don’t appreciate His gifts. When the Lord withdraws His Word from us, His Spirit departs from us. When the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of life departs, only eternal death looms large in hopeless future.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, here we are, the servants of our Lord. We all have received the same treasure, the same Word, the same Gospel message, the same Spirit of the Lord. We all have been blessed beyond our comprehension.

We have been entrusted with this wonderful privilege, to participate in our Lord’s enterprise, in His mission. And I pray today that we all would do it joyfully, that we would never put this greatest treasure away.

That by God’s grace we could be faithful over the little things entrusted to us, so that when our Lord Jesus Christ returns, you would hear His voice saying: “Well done, good servant, well done!”

Amen.