

More + Better: Steward Everything! **Luke 19:11-27**

November 12, 2017
Steve DeWitt

More + Better. Why should we press on for More + Better disciples? The other alternative is summarized in a popular candy, *Good and Plenty*. Anyone like *Good and Plenty*? It's good candy but a devastating vision for our personal lives and for Bethel Church. *I'm good. I've grown as much as I'll grow. I've learned as much as I'll learn. I've done enough. I'm good. I've invested plenty in the kingdom of God.*

We're good. We have plenty. Plenty of disciples who are good enough. Good and plenty. There is a constant gravitational pull toward good and plenty in churches, particularly if they have had any fruit or success. Rather than pressing on, they sit on their gains. They engrave their approach to ministry in stone. *Don't change anything. Don't attempt anything. Don't be risky. Don't step out of the box. We might jeopardize what we have. We're good. We've got plenty.*

Is there a spirit of good and plenty evident in your life? Or are you ready for the next thing God has? Ready for more? Ready for better?

These two basic approaches to life and ministry are displayed in a parable Jesus told in Luke 19 called the Parable of the Minas. What is a parable? It was a favorite teaching device of Jesus in which he used analogies to illustrate spiritual truth. *Parable* is a combination of two Greek words. The first means "to cast" and the second means "alongside." So *parable* means "To cast alongside." To embed a truth alongside a story.

Our parable today is situated between two beloved and famous moments. The first is the story of Zacchaeus in Jericho. The wee little man who climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus. I have told that story many times at bedtime. Maybe kids can relate to being wee little people. His eventual repentance from a life of greed and materialism elicits from Jesus, "*For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.*" (Luke 19:10 ESV)

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, which provides the other side of this parable, the triumphal entry into the city of David. Between Zacchaeus and Palm Sunday is the Parable of the Minas.

"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." (Luke 19:11)

This is insightful and important to understanding the purpose of the parable. Notice the repetition of the word *because*. Luke helps explain the parable by telling why Jesus told it in the first place. He was near to the capital city Jerusalem. There was a growing excitement that Jesus may reveal his true identity. They supposed that the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

Why is that a problem? What do people do when they think the world is about to end? People get crazy about these things, but what they don't do is get busy. They go to a mountaintop and wait. The temptation is to do nothing. Jesus tells this parable to correct our understanding of the future and what we are to do as we wait for his return.

"He said therefore, 'A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.'" (Luke 19:12)

This would have resonated in Jericho because it was well known that their most famous resident did exactly that. Herod the Great, who tried to kill Jesus when he was born, had a son Archelaus, who in 4 AD went to Rome to hopefully receive the title of king, really a vice-king, over the Jews. Archelaus had a large vacation home in Jericho. Everybody knew the story.

Jesus draws on some local culture and legend to make his point. This nobleman left hoping for a promotion from nobleman to king of the land. It was a long trip; matters and business had to be handled in his absence.

"Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.'" (Luke 19:13)

A mina was a monetary unit equal to about three month's wages for a common worker. It is far less valuable than the talent in the sister parable of the talents. A talent was worth 20 years' salary. Perhaps there is a lesson right there. Stewarding includes the big and small things God gives to us. The minas and the talents.

So the nobleman gives each servant one mina and a command, *Use this mina to engage in business until I come back*. Everyone had the same mina, the same opportunity, the same command.

"But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'" (Luke 19:14)

This also echoes the legend of Archelaus. He was such a tyrant that a delegation from the Jews went to Rome to protest him being made king over them. Archelaus was not made full king but the nobleman in Jesus' story was.

"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." (Luke 19:15)

He returns, not as nobleman, but as king and orders each servant to give an account for the mina he had given them.

"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.'" (Luke 19:16-19)

Here we see a dramatic turn of events and fortunes. The first servant had turned the one mina into 10 minas. That is a 1000% return on investment. How many of you would like this guy managing your retirement account? 1000%. It doesn't say how he did it or what line of business he engaged in. It simply gives the return on investment and the king's response. *"Well done, good servant!"* What was good about what he did? He used the interim time between the king's departure and his return as a time for working hard, investing wisely, and increasing value for the king.

Look at the generosity of the king. *You made me ten minas, I give you ten cities to rule and govern.* How much is a city worth? Worth much more than a mina. He got 10 cities.

The second follows the same pattern, only this guy made him 500% return. He got 5 cities. Again, what he made and what he got seem way out of proportion, but such is the generosity of the king.

So we come to the third guy. He must have been excited. The king is in a generous mood. I'm going to come out of this pretty good.

"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?'" (Luke 19:20-23)

Here is the power of the parable. The king has real expectations for his servants. Strong and severe expectations. This final servant discovers this as he very unwisely took the mina and hid it in a handkerchief. This servant thought, *I'll play it safe.* Doing nothing seems safe. The do-nothing approach never risks anything.

Doing nothing is a terrible idea when your king expects productivity. The king expects results. He points out even a no-brain approach would at least get interest value added at the bank. The Jews were not allowed to charge interest to a fellow Jew by Old Testament law, but they could do it to a Gentile. Why not at least do that?

So right now the man is thinking, well at least I get one city. He thought wrong.

"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.'" (Luke 19:24-27)

The parable takes a dark turn at the end. The servant who did nothing not only loses the reward of a city, he loses the mina as well. Why? He has shown himself to be unfaithful and unreliable. The king is about results. If you had three month's wages and could give it to any of these three servants, having seen their results, which one would you invest with? Yeah, the 1000% guy. Jesus explains that servants that have, as a result of faithfulness, will be given more responsibility. But those who do not have, because of unfaithfulness, even what they have will be taken away.

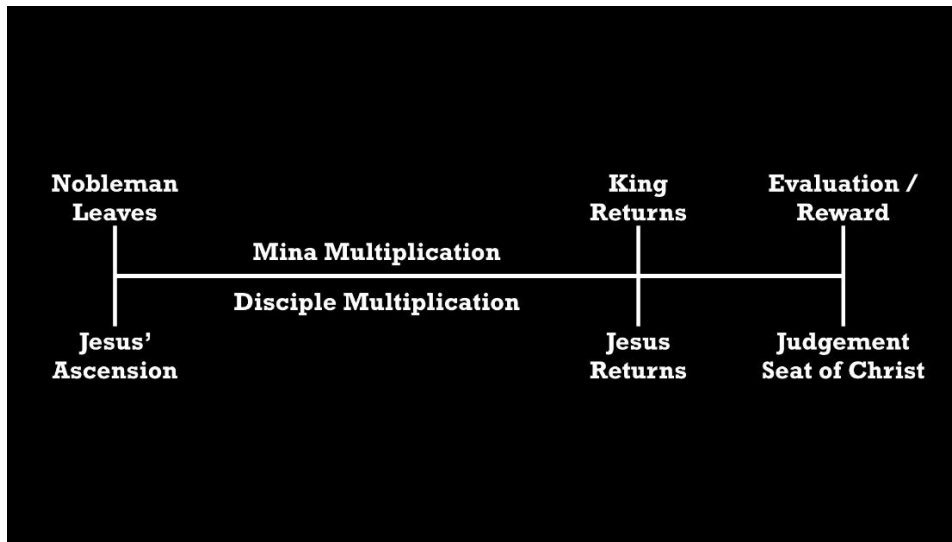
We have hinted at it but let's draw the analogy.

The King = Jesus

The Servants = Disciples of Jesus

Timeline Graphic – Nobleman leaves, returns, judges, rewards/punishes (see next page)

Mina – Steward anything God gives us (everything)



Steward everything. The main point of the parable is that while Jesus is gone, each disciple is responsible to steward everything God gives. Everything means everything. The easy application is money and we will get there. But it is so much more. Steward your natural gifts. Steward your time. Steward your body that God gave you. Steward your relationships. Steward doors of opportunity God opens. Steward your education. Steward your life as a gift given by a king with real expectations.

- *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." (James 1:17)*
- *"What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it" (1 Corinthians 4:7)*
- *"Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:2)*

Steward. Manage. Multiply...everything for the King. Notice the three aspects of mina management.

Opportunity: God's provisions and providences

These ten servants were honored to be given minas in the first place. Every mina is an opportunity. A privileged opportunity. Our lives represent opportunities to glorify God and magnify Jesus and be a part of God's work in the world in big and small ways. Talents and minas. Churches and homes. Years, minutes, and seconds. It's an incredible privilege and opportunity to make our lives count for Jesus.

Responsibility: Multiply!

The king blesses the servants with a mina, but they are not to use it as if they own it. It's the king's mina and the king expects a return. The king is much more serious about this than the guy with the one mina was. How serious are you about not wasting your life? Not wasting your time? Not wasting your resources? The Son of God is so serious about gospel ministry he gave his life on the cross for it and for us.

Accountability: Judgment

Like the servants, we will all give an account for our lives. For our mina.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

This verse, better than any, summarizes the parable of the minas. We will all give an account to the King. What did you do with what I gave you? How did you invest it? How did you use it?

This is the danger of the third servant and the good and plenty. We view our mina as a possession rather than a gift. *This is mine to use as I want* rather than, *this is the King's and I must use it as he wants.*

Pastor Steve, what are you getting at? I want to apply this to two things. Money, and *More + Better.*

The Mina and Money

While this parable applies to everything, it easily applies to money as the parable itself is about money and finances. We all have been given mina. With it, we all have opportunity, responsibility, and yes, accountability. God cares about what we do with his mina. There are many people that try and divorce their faith from their money and possessions. Jesus won't let us do that. Here is what he says earlier in Luke.

"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (Luke 16:10-13)

Faithfulness with money, no matter how little, reveals character. How do you know which servant was faithful? How do you know which servant was obedient? What they did with the King's money revealed their true character. If your character was evaluated based on how you handle the King's money, which servant do you most resemble?

How we handle money is a window to the real loves of our hearts. If someone can be trusted with a little money than he can be trusted with more. But if someone mishandles money, a basic commodity, how can they handle more valuable possessions like gospel ministry, leadership, and spiritual responsibility?

Future reward and responsibility was based on what was done with smaller responsibility. This is David and his sheep before God gave him a kingdom. There are many other biblical examples. If you long for your life to matter, to have significant spiritual things tied to your life, could it be that God has not granted you that because you haven't been faithful with what God has already given you?

I feel compelled to tell this story because I learned this lesson so powerfully in my life. In my early years of ministry, I was a youth pastor. I had a small youth group, but I was aspiring to other things and I wanted God to do big things in my life. I'll never forget, I

went in to talk with my pastor about it and I said, "You know, something's not clicking. Something's not right." And I'll never forget, it was a Holy Spirit moment when he said, "Steve, you've got to be faithful with what God's already given you." And he said, "what if David would have said, 'Oh, these few small sheep!'" And God used that. It was like a knife in my heart. I mean it just pierced me to the core and I realized that rather than having my eyes on the lofty things of the future, I needed to be faithful with what God had given me—those few small teenagers. And that's what I did. And it was just a couple years later when this church in Northwest Indiana called and said, "Hey do you want to be our Senior Pastor?" Would that call have come if I had not been faithful with the few, small sheep? And what about in your life? Do you aspire to great things for God? You don't want to waste your life? Yet your eyes are always on the future and the lofty things rather than being faithful with the little things—the mina right in front of you.

Be faithful with the mina and God can trust you with more significant things.

Could it be that some of us are not receiving greater spiritual opportunities because we are mishandling God's money? You are sitting on it. Piling it up. But how can I be faithful with God's money?

Simple answer. Invest it by giving it away. By that I don't mean giving it to your girlfriend or the Moose Lodge. Invest it for maximum gospel impact. When we talk about this we often have people say, *Be practical. What does that mean?* Let's assume you are a new Christian. You want to honor the Lord with your mina but don't know how to start. Here is at least a start.

A Practical Guide of How to Get Started

Give 10% - Cultivates Generosity

Save 10% - Cultivates Resources

Live 80% - Cultivates Contentment

I always hesitate to put this here because many people look at the give 10% and see it as the end goal. We should see it as a training wheels-type starting point allowing me to begin to steward. Saving and contentment are also critical, but less people ask me about that.

Give as much as you will be glad you did when the King rewards you. Do you think the 10 cities servant was like, "Bummer, I wish I would have scaled back"? They all wish they would have done more. If there is a regret in eternity it will be that we didn't do more for the King. Now is the time to do more.

The Mina and More + Better

The king criticizes the unfaithful servant for failing to steward the potential of the one mina. He didn't lose the mina; he failed to maximize the potential of the mina.

That brings us back to *More + Better* vs. *Good and plenty*. *More + Better* isn't merely a slogan, it is a vision for us as a church that we hope trickles down into each of our lives. Last week we shared lots of minas that God has added to us over the years. It would be tempting to put all of them in a handkerchief and think, *It's good and plenty. Let's play it safe.*

But while our church is there in the handkerchief, it isn't working. It isn't producing. It isn't striving. It isn't growing and multiplying. All that it could be is lost for the King.

The next chapter of our church is us throwing the handkerchief away and saying, *We're not done yet*. Five minas aren't enough; for the King we want five more.

So we say, not *Good and Plenty* but *More + Better*. Not one mina in a handkerchief, but more minas multiplied in Gary and Crown Point. Not two minas good enough in Cedar Lake and Hobart, but more minas multiplied for the King.

This holy dissatisfaction with where we are sees a generous King waiting to reward us for today's faithful stewardship of everything. He is no Archelaus; he is our servant King. The King who loves us. Who died for his people. He must motivate us to press on, invest more, pray more, love and serve more, and strive to steward every day, every dollar, every relationship, every opportunity, every gift and talent, all that we have moving toward our life's goal of God's glory and Jesus' fame and a kingdom of people redeemed by Jesus. Minas multiplied by faithful obedience and sacrifice for the glory of the King.

Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Permanent Text Edition® (2016)*. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

© 2017 by Steve DeWitt. You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that: (1) you credit the author, (2) any modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include Bethel's website address (www.bethelweb.org) on the copied resource.