



“Rewarded”
Luke 19:11-27

Idea: God rewards the faithful and awards the unfaithful.

Intro: Two employees retired from the same company after thirty-five years of employment. Both were recognized together in a retirement ceremony. The first employee, whose name is Dean, had helped the company’s sales and bottom line increase annually. He was an innovative leader and willing to take risks. The ventures he championed typically resulted in generous profits for the company. For this reason, during the retirement ceremony, the CEO of the company rewarded him for his faithful leadership with a 5% stake in the company’s stock and a lavish ten-day, all-expenses-paid trip to Maui for he and his family on top of his accrued PTO. Dean was shocked and overwhelmed by the generosity of the CEO and the Board of Directors. The second employee, whose name is Ed, had only taken three sick days in thirty-five years of employment. He was always on time and fully followed the policies of the personnel manual. Therefore, after seeing the generous gift the CEO gave to Dean, Ed was excited to receive his gift. The CEO presented him with a certificate of achievement for stellar attendance and a check for his accrued PTO. Ed was appalled by the insignificant gift and expressed it to the CEO in front of everyone. Without missing a beat, the CEO said, “Ed, you were always an employee that we knew was going to be present. This company, however, prides itself on doing more with what you have. We expect our employees to take risks and make investments that return a profit. You were hesitant to do that, and you left that responsibility up to others. For this reason, we thank you for the years you served and award to you everything you have earned. Dean, on the other hand, took risks and increased our profits, so we have rewarded him for his faithfulness to our mission.”

There is a big difference between a reward and an award. A reward is a gift given in recognition of an achievement. Dean was rewarded generously for how he faithfully carried out the mission of his company. He received what the CEO generously chose to give him. On the flipside, an award is an official payment or compensation given to someone for an action completed. Ed was awarded a certificate for stellar attendance and his accrued PTO. He received what he had earned.

This scenario might seem unfair and unequitable to you, so before making a judgment on it, you need to know that we find a similar story in the Bible. We discover in the next pericope in Luke that God graciously rewards the faithful and judicially awards the unfaithful.

[Read Luke 19:11-27.](#)

Inquiry: Jesus and His disciples are journeying toward Jerusalem where a cross and a tomb await. His crucifixion will take place around Passover. This season was always an emotionally charged time for the Jews because it reminded them of their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. This annual celebration also

aggravated the misery of their bondage to Rome and made them yearn even more for a deliverer. Now, there were subversive groups like the Zealots who used commando tactics against Rome and politicians like the Herodians who compromised with Rome, but most of the Jews rejected those approaches. They wanted God to fulfill the words of the prophets and send them their promised King.

The Lord knew that many of the people in the crowd were hoping to see Him establish the Kingdom, so He told this parable to clarify things. Surely, there were people in the crowd who connected the parable to an event that had taken place about thirty years before. The Romans rarely gave the title of *rex* (king) to the rulers put in place over conquered lands. An exception was made for Herod the Great. After defeating the Parthians on behalf of Rome, Mark Antony granted him the title of king. For this reason, he is called "*Herod the king*" in Matthew 2:3. When Herod died in 4 B.C., he left over half of his kingdom to his son Archelaus, but the title was not passed along. Archelaus had to go to Rome to have his inheritance of Judea approved, so he arrogantly planned to ask for the title as well. He took with him a large entourage who would speak on his behalf. Much to his surprise, a delegation of over fifty people was also sent from Judea and Samaria to oppose him before Caesar. Part of this delegation were members of his own family. They argued that Archelaus was murderous, inept, and full of corruption, which polluted the prosperous land of Palestine.

After a few days, Caesar awarded half the kingdom to Archelaus, with the title ethnarch, promising to make him king if he proved to be worthy. This decision pleased no one. Archelaus never proved himself worthy of the title, so it was never granted. This scandal was tucked into the Jewish mind, and it was part of their lore. Archelaus was known as the "wannabe king." As Jesus referenced this well-known storyline, he took the story in a different direction. He was not speaking of a would-be-king but the true King. He was speaking of Himself. Jesus is the nobleman who receives a kingdom. He, thus, rewards and awards those who are subject to Him.

This parable is like the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, but the lessons are different. In this parable, each of the ten servants received the same amount but different rewards, while in the parable of the talents, the ten servants received different amounts but the same reward. The parable of the talents teaches us to be faithful to use our different gifts as God gives opportunities. Some people have a great deal of ability, and God gives them great opportunities to use it. The important thing is not how much ability you have but how faithful you are to use what you have for the Lord. In the parable of minas, each servant has the same deposit, which most likely represents the gospel. Our gifts and abilities are different, but the job is the same. Each is responsible to multiply the gospel and fill the world with it (1 Thess 1:8; 2 Thess 3:1). The important thing is faithfulness, and the reward is more work.

In the parable of minas, Jesus is the King who receives a kingdom. The servants are disciples who receive a deposit, which they are to invest and return. The citizens represent lost sinners who reject Jesus as King. As such, He is the King who rewards the faithful and judicially awards the unfaithful. There are three components I want to point out in this parable.

1. The activity of gospel investment.

The nobleman gives a mina to ten of his servants (19:13). It was a sum of money equal to three months' salary for a laborer. Again, each servant was given the same amount. Therefore, a mina does not signify an ability but rather a deposit that is given to every disciple. It represents the gospel.

Consequently, every disciple is a steward of the gospel (1 Thess 2:4; 1 Tim 1:11; 6:20; 2 Tim 2:2), having received the same investment capital. Think about that for a moment. As a follower of Jesus Christ, you have received the same gospel investment as the Apostle Paul, Jonathan Edwards, Lottie Moon, and Billy Graham. We have also received the same command to "*engage in business until I come.*"

The disparity between the gospel capital in your life and someone else's has nothing to do with the deposit but with what you do with that deposit. This parable calls for the activity of gospel investment. As a disciple of Christ, you and I must invest the deposit of the gospel in others. We are to multiply our spiritual capital, increasing its yield in others.

Our gospel investment is then rewarded (19:16-19). When the nobleman returned to his kingdom, he brought in his servants who were charged to engage in business. The first servant shared how he had invested his one mina and grew it by 1,000%. Likewise, the second servant shared that he had grown his by 500%. Both men were humble, emphasizing that the mina was the Lord's. The nobleman, then, rewarded both men. He gave them a gift given in recognition of their achievement. The first servant was given authority over ten cities, and the second servant was placed over five cities. The rewards graciously exceeded all expectations.

This parable presents to us a King who graciously rewards His servants. The grandness of this reward, however, should not be missed by the possessions that are given. Jesus is presenting through this parable something far greater than material possessions as a reward. It is a call to enjoy the blessing of ruling and reigning with Christ. As Helmut Thielicke says, "...heaven does not consist in what we shall receive, whether this be white robes and heavenly crowns or ambrosia and nectar, but rather in what we shall become – namely, the companions of our King." The reward of Christ's faithful servants is an elevation of eternal intimacy with Him. It is the joy of serving alongside the King as His coregent, viceroy, and confidant. The eternal reward, then, is not rest but responsibility as we work with Him in vast and unimaginable new spiritual enterprises.

How active are you with the gospel investment Christ has made in your life? There is a second component.

2. The passivity of gospel conservation.

The third servant is brought before the nobleman to give an account of what he did with his mina (19:20-26). He reached into his satchel and pulled out a handkerchief that held the money. He gave back to the nobleman his deposit. Out of fear, this servant had chosen not to *"engage in business."* His thoughts about his lord were slanderous and not based on truth. He accused him of being severe and exacting. The servant appears to have feared that he would get no return for his work because all the profit would go to his lord. The investment was not worth his time, so he did nothing with it.

This sorry excuse of a disciple slanders God in his heart and hoards the deposit made in him by Christ. He tucks it away in a rag. In his heart he says, "Rather than being active with the gospel, I will be conservative. I will make sure to preserve Christian orthodoxy. I will get married and raise my family in the church. I will strive to do good. I will faithfully attend worship, participate in small group, and serve on a ministry team. I will wrap Christ's deposit in a handkerchief, conserve it, and present it back to Him."

This servant's passive disobedience is rightly judged. Ignorance of his lord's character resulted in him being rebuked by his own words. He also lost the mina he was entrusted to invest. Rather than being rewarded, this disobedient servant was awarded what his actions had earned. His works are incinerated, though he himself is saved. In the parable, he is a disciple but barely. His life looks like that of those in the Corinthian church. Paul said to them, *"If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire"* (1 Cor 3:15).

How passive are you with the gospel investment Christ has made in your life? There is a third component.

3. The gravity of gospel rejection.

This parable ends with an alarming and gruesome scene.

Read Luke 19:14, 27.

The citizens of the kingdom rebelled against the nobleman. In response, the nobleman commanded that each of them be rounded up and slaughtered in front of him. This is not the portrayal of Jesus that we prefer. We are more comfortable with a cute, baby Jesus lying in a manger. We like a Jesus who feeds the hungry, heals the sick, sympathizes with the hurting, and brings justice to the marginalized. The “He Gets Us, commercial during The Super Bowl earlier this month presented this side of Jesus, but it failed to show Him overturning tables in the Temple, railing against the religious hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and rebuking the immorality of the people. You see, Jesus loved sinners like the woman caught in adultery, but He never permitted them to continue in their sin (John 8:11).

The gospel is free and available for all (Rom 10:13), but for those who rebel and reject His Lordship, there is an eternal punishment. The gravity of gospel rejection is eternal separation from God. Read Revelation 20:11-15.

Those who will be cast into the lake of fire are people who have rebelled and rejected Jesus as Lord and Savior. They will rightfully and forever be slaughtered in a place of eternal torment because they chose it. This is their award (Rom 6:23).

Conclusion: Do you remember Dean and Ed? Both men worked for the same company for thirty-five years, and both men were retiring. During the retirement ceremony, Dean was rewarded generously for how he faithfully carried out the mission of his company. He received what the CEO generously chose to give him. Ed, however, was awarded a certificate for stellar attendance and his accrued PTO. He received only the official payment or compensation that he had earned by his actions. As we think about standing before Jesus one day and giving an account for the gospel deposit He made in our lives, what will that ceremony be like? Will the Lord reward or award our commitment and obedience to the Great Commission? As a disciple, I encourage you to assess yourself. Are you active or passive with the gospel deposit in you? As a sinner who has yet to believe on Christ through the gospel, have you considered the warning of what the day of judgment will be like for you if you continue in your rebellion?