

“From Mina League to Major League” (Luke 19:11-27)

You hear it again and again in sports, business, and education: “He or she had so much potential.” It is a phrase usually spoken about someone who failed to do what was expected or what others perceived was possible. The words may be applied to the highly touted college star, the gifted (but lazy) student, the talented but recklessly indulgent actor or actress, or the savvy businessperson with no people skills. It is the sad story of “what might have been.”¹

In the spiritual realm, God has given every Christian unlimited potential. Sadly, many Christians will never realize their God-given potential. Instead, they will always wonder “what might have been.” Fortunately, you may be living up to your potential in Christ. If so, this message will encourage you. However, if you recognize that you are not currently living up to your potential in Christ, there is hope. By God’s grace, you can decide today to change the course of your life. “He or she had so much potential” doesn’t have to be your epitaph. Rather, you can live up to your full potential in Christ and fulfill His dreams for your life.

In the parable that we’re going to look at, we will study three slaves who exhibit three different responses to their God-given potential. But first, let’s set the context (Luke 19:1-10). Jesus has been traveling around proclaiming good news. On His way to Jerusalem, He passes through Jericho and encounters a chief tax collector.² Zacchaeus is rich, short, and empty. He longs to see Jesus so he climbs up in a sycamore tree so that he can catch sight of Jesus as He comes through town. Upon His arrival, Jesus immediately calls Zacchaeus down from the tree and says, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” Filled with joy, Zacchaeus responds, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if³ I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” Jesus tells Zacchaeus and all the onlookers that “salvation has come to his house.”

The parable that Jesus tells evidently takes place in the home of Zacchaeus. It is designed to encourage Zacchaeus to continue in his faithful and generous course of action.⁴ It also serves to remind and motivate you and me that we only have one life to live and we must live it to the fullest. Jesus’ bottom line is this: *If we don’t use what we’ve been given we will lose it.* Or, if you prefer, “*Use it or lose it.*” Please turn to Luke 19:11-27⁵ where we will be struck by two warnings⁶ from Jesus.

1. Invest your life while Christ is away (19:11-14). Luke provides an introduction to Jesus’ parable in 19:11: “**While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.**” Jesus is moving toward Jerusalem for the great Triumphal Entry (19:28-48). The excitement is building. The disciples and many of the people believe that this is the “moment of truth”—the time when Jesus will institute His earthly kingdom.⁷ However, this assumption is mistaken. The disciples and the crowd didn’t realize that Jesus would suffer and die, be raised again, ascend into heaven, and that many years would go by before He returned to establish His kingdom. Therefore, Jesus will explain that the coming of His kingdom will be delayed.⁸ He wants to let His hearers know what they are supposed to be doing in His absence. Thus, we must be prepared for a lengthy period of delay in which we are to faithfully serve God.⁹

Now in 19:12, Jesus begins His parable: “**A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return.**”¹⁰ Theologically, this parable alludes to the experience of Jesus in a number of ways: (1) Jesus was born of noble birth in that He was divinely conceived (cf. 1:31-33). (2) After Jesus’ death and resurrection, He ascended to heaven to receive His kingship (cf. 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-12). (3) After an interval, Jesus will return and make visible that kingship (cf. 21:27; Acts 1:9-12).¹¹ The correctness of these identifications becomes clearer as the parable unfolds.

In 19:13, Jesus continues His parable: “**And he [the nobleman] called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, ‘Do business with this until I come back.’**” Ten is apparently a round number representing all of the nobleman’s slaves. Jesus did not mean just His twelve disciples. This description of ten slaves refers to all believers. Jesus pictures His slaves as investors who are responsible to “do business” (i.e., invest the mina) during His absence. They are not supposed to sit around waiting for Him to return. Rather, they are to be actively doing business for Him with what He entrusted to them, for the day will certainly come when He will return. At that time, each slave must give an account for what he has done.

Notice the nobleman gives each of his ten slaves one mina. A mina was a bag of coins, usually silver, that weighed approximately one pound.¹² From the marginal note found in the NASB we can learn that a mina was equivalent to nearly 100 days’ wages.¹³ The nobleman’s purpose was not merely increasing his wealth. His overarching purpose was one of *testing* to see which of his slaves would be worthy of greater responsibility in his kingdom when he returned.¹⁴

Theologically, the mina seems to represent life’s potential.¹⁵ Every Christian receives the same sum representing the one life that each has to invest for Christ.¹⁶ Since it is baseball season, we can call this “mina league.” The mina league—our earthly responsibilities—prepares us for the major league—our eternal responsibilities. Thus, our earthly lives serve a dual purpose. We are carrying out God’s will to please Him in everything we do (Col 3:17, 23). But we are also in training for our eternal assignments. Earth is our temporary world to prepare us for the everlasting kingdom. By living each day to please God, we can make today count for eternity. This is why we need to view our lives not in terms of seventy or eighty years on earth, but in light of forever. The end of this life is the beginning of the next.¹⁷ Therefore, we must use this life for God’s purposes.

Pretend you are given a bank account that receives a fresh deposit of \$86,400 every day. You are free to spend the money any way you want, but the unspent balance is not carried forward to the next day. Regardless of what you’ve spent by the end of the day, the balance is reset daily at \$86,400. What would you do with such a bank account? Now consider the fact that each dollar represents the number of seconds in one day: $24 \times 60 \times 60 = 86,400$ seconds. Once they are “spent” they disappear; and the balance is reset at 12:00:01 a.m. every day.

Some people become slaves of what they have, living frantic lives, trying to spend time, talent, and treasure before they lose it. In so doing, they become servants of things that are supposed to serve them. Jesus said we cannot serve both God and money (things of this world). And the only way to keep our priorities straight is to have a wise, godly plan: Today I’m going to glorify God this way with my time, talent, and treasure. Do you have such a plan?¹⁸

In 19:14, Jesus says, “**But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us’**” (cf. Matt 22:6; Acts 17:7). These citizens represent unbelieving Jews. Jesus was near Jerusalem, and in a few days He would hear the Jews protest to Pilate, “We have no king but Caesar!” (John 19:15) In other words, “We will not have this man reign over us!”¹⁹ The Jews, and particularly their religious leaders, resisted Jesus’ rightful claim to be their King. But beyond this historical reality, this verse also represents this evil world that is hostile toward God and does not want to submit to Jesus as King. It is in this hostile world that we are to “do business” with the mina that Jesus has given us. What a reminder that serving the Lord is not easy. There will be opposition. Undoubtedly, the slaves in Luke were not popular with those who hated the King. Likewise, when we stand with Jesus we will become a target to some. The apostle Paul recognized this and wrote, “Therefore be very careful how you live—not as unwise but as wise, taking advantage of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15-16, NET).

It is not difficult to understand the story thus far, nor is it difficult to see its meaning with reference to Jesus' departure, rejection, and return. Like the nobleman, Jesus came to the earth with great position and power. Like the nobleman, Jesus' power greatly increased as a result of His departure. Jesus was rejected by men, hung on a cross, put to death, buried, raised, and then ascended to heaven, where He now is seated at the right hand of God. Jesus' power is now even greater than it was when He first came to the earth (cf. Phil 2:9-11). His return to reign over His kingdom has been delayed (from our human perspective), but He will surely come.²⁰

2. Remember your life will be judged (19:15-27). In 19:15, the king returns and deals with his slaves. Jesus says, **“When he [the nobleman] returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done.”**²¹ In 19:15, there is an allusion to the second coming of Christ and His visible reign.²² No longer is Jesus seen as the rejected King, He is seen as the King of all the earth who will judge His slaves.

In 19:16-26, the spotlight falls on three of the ten slaves. It is likely that the chosen three represent the differing degrees of faithfulness from the ten slaves. The three slaves receive three grades: A, C, and F. In 19:16, the first slave appears saying, **“Master, your mina has made ten minas more.”** This first slave gained 1,000 percent on his master's mina. He was a faithful and effective slave. He also wisely did not take the credit for his success. He did not say, “Master, my great business skill has multiplied your mina.” Rather, he ascribes the increase to his master who gave him the mina.

The nobleman responds to the first slave by saying, **“Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities”** (19:17). This first slave hears the commendation that every Christian longs to hear, “Well done, good slave!” Now this may not seem very important to us right now; but I can assure you that in eternity this will be our greatest desire. Think about it: Every one of us would like to think that our parents were proud of us and approved of the way we lived our lives. Some people ache for this illusive approval. Imagine how much more we will yearn for the “Well done!” of Jesus. In that day, we will have glorified bodies that are free from sin and selfishness. Consequently, all that we will care about is hearing words of approval from our heavenly Master. And these words will not be short-lived; rather they will resound in our ears for all eternity.

In addition to verbal commendation, Jesus alludes to another reward—authority over cities. Faithfulness and effort in “a very little thing” will bring huge returns in the kingdom. Too often we think that we must do great things, big things, but it is the many *small* things in life that count.

- It is being a man or woman of character when no one is looking. When that television show or movie comes on that your flesh longs to watch, you squelch that temptation and honor God with your mind and heart.
- It is listening to someone at church or work when you really don't have time in your schedule to do so. Even though one eye is on your watch, you strive to care, express concern, and demonstrate the love of Christ.
- It is sharing your faith when you are afraid. This school year, the Lord will give you the opportunity to talk about Him with some of your classmates, but discouragement and persecution may follow. Faithfulness is sharing Christ anyway.
- It is refusing to fight with your spouse. Remember, it takes two to argue. When your spouse “lights you up” with some criticism, take it like a man or woman and graciously back down. This takes enormous strength and self-control. But it demonstrates faithfulness to Christ.
- It is serving in the church behind the scenes. You may be asked to make a meal for someone in need, serve on the sound and video team, or work in the nursery. While there will be no glory in your service, God will be pleased and you will be faithful in a very little thing.

The truth is we will never be used greatly by God until we are faithful in what He has given us to do now. It is in the little things of life that we show whether or not we can handle the big things. If you don't put the Lord first in your present finances, you won't put Him first when you have more. If you don't fulfill your present commitments, there is no reason to believe you will fulfill greater commitments. If you can't handle the influence you presently have, you will not receive more. The way you handle the little things shows your character.

Fred Craddock tells this story about a wealthy man who "went to his priest with a check for fifty thousand dollars made out to the church. He handed the check to the priest and the priest looked at it. It was a lot of money! Then the priest handed it back and said, 'Go cash it in. Cash it in for quarters or dollar bills and spend fifty cents or a dollar at a time doing the Lord's work.' The man exclaimed, 'But that will take the rest of my life!' 'That's right!' answered the priest. 'That is the point!'"²³

- If you are a widow who has been a wonderful wife and mother, will you remain faithful to daily trust the Lord with your finances? Even though it doesn't look like you're going to make it this month, will you cling to Christ and pray that He will see you through?
- If you are a teenager, will you put the Lord's interests over your own? In your pursuit of acceptance and friends, you may have to compromise yourself. Will you say today that it just isn't worth it? Instead, will you ask the Lord to meet your needs and help you find friendships that will strengthen you?
- If you are married, will you spiritually lead your children in the knowledge of God? Will you daily read the Scriptures to them? Will you pray with them every night?

In 19:18, the second slave appears saying, "**Your mina, master, has made five minas.**" The nobleman said to this slave, "**And you are to be over five cities**" (19:19). This second slave had also been faithful, but he only earned a 500 percent return on his master's mina. This slave likely achieved half of what his master had for him to accomplish. He did not receive any verbal commendation, but like the first slave, his reward is proportionate to his service. This shows that rewards will vary depending on a slave's overall faithfulness.

In the Christian life, some might serve Christ halfheartedly for their entire lives. Others might serve Him wholeheartedly for half of their Christian lives. Still others might run hot and cold again and again.²⁴ Generally, this is true of most Christians. Maybe you've attended Bible college or are a former elder or ministry leader, yet your life has been filled with spiritual inconsistency. You know that if Jesus returned today, you would not be clicking on all cylinders. God wants you to repent and be fully restored to Him.

In 19:20-26, a third slave enters the picture. The first two slaves received two verses of ink, but this third slave earns seven verses. Since Jesus knows that many Christians will share a lot in common with this third slave, He makes him the central figure of the parable.²⁵ In 19:20-21, this slave approaches his master and offers the following explanation: "**Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.**" This third slave reveals that he has not earned anything with his master's mina. After being given the mina, this third slave "played it safe" by storing his mina away in a handkerchief or "sweat cloth."²⁶ Farmers used these "sweat cloths" in the fields when they were working. But this slave's sweat cloth is not sweaty! Going back to the introduction in 19:11, this third slave personifies the problem that Jesus is addressing—the problem of thinking that the kingdom is imminent. By "playing it safe," this slave "played the end against the middle." If his master returned, he could offer him his mina, but if he didn't return this slave saved himself a whole lot of sweat. This third slave reasons away his laziness by saying, "Boss, you are a man who expects to get blood out of a stone. You're ruthless and demanding. And I'm afraid of you."

This third slave explains that his fear of the master was responsible for his lack of fruit (cf. Matt 25:25). Now it was appropriate for him to fear the master since he would eventually bring his slaves to account, but the slave's action in view of his fear of the master was improper. Instead of letting fear paralyze his actions, the servant should have let fear motivate him to act wisely. He should have gotten busy and served the master since he feared him. His assessment of the master was correct, but it did not have the proper effect on him. God seeks a disproportionately high return on His investments, so the slave's conservatism was sinful. He appears to have felt that he would receive no reward for his work for the master if he ever returned. He should have taken some risks. Faithful stewardship involves taking calculated risks.

There is no such thing as standing still in the Christian life...you are progressing or regressing. The person who is growing will be given increasing opportunity, blessing, and responsibility. The person who is coasting will find joy decreasing, effectiveness diminishing, and compromise increasing...they will lose ground. This slave represents the believer who does nothing of eternal value with his or her life. Like many believers today who are not concerned about the Lord's business or the Lord's return.

In 19:22-23, the master responds by saying, **“By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?”** The master said he would judge the slave on the basis of his own words, namely, that the master was an exacting man who demanded much from his slaves. I will often use my children's words against them. After my children disobey and I discipline them, I will ask, “Do you understand that if you talk back to me again, I will spank you again?” As I am talking with my children, I make sure that they understand the consequences of their actions. They can't nod their head or mutter or murmur in reply. They must say, “Yes, Daddy, I understand that if I disobey again there will have to be further discipline.” Naturally, ten seconds later, a second act of disobedience occurs and I have to refer the child to his or her previously uttered words. This is justice. Yet, the convicting thing is that the Lord will also do the same thing to me. He will use my own commitments and promises to bring me into account. This is a disturbing prospect.

Rather than commending this third slave, the master rebukes him calling him a “worthless slave.” By this, the master means that he is “unproductive” (cf. Jas 2:14, 16, 20, 26). He has produced nothing of value. The master's character should have moved the slave to productive service rather than passive sloth. Even by depositing his investment in a bank the slave could have earned some interest for the master with little risk.²⁷

It is easy to think that if we don't serve God with what He's given us, the worst that could happen would be no reward. But the truth of the third slave is that if we do not use what God has placed in our care for Him, we will suffer loss of both the potential reward we could have earned and the opportunity to serve God more fully in eternity.²⁸ Again, it is easy to think, “Ho-hum...no biggie...just as long as I make it into heaven. I don't care if I'm the chief bottle washer or toilet plunger.” However, I must warn you; on that day we will all care and be very concerned about the quality of our eternal future.

Another point worth making is that this third slave suggests that he is frightened by his master. Whether this is true or not, we don't know. He may have been simply excusing his laziness. However, there is wisdom in having appropriate fear for God. After all, He is a holy God who runs the universe. We should have a healthy awe for His power and judgment.

This past week during our family devotions, I asked my children if they feared me. Justin, my seven-year-old son said, “Dad, I fear you because in your love, you will discipline me!” What an answer! Justin understands a healthy fear for authority. He also recognizes how God operates (see Heb 12:6-11).

My prayer is that we will have a healthy fear of God. By this I mean that we should not be paralyzed by fear, but motivated to move from fear to faithfulness.

In the Christian life, we don't stand still. We use our life and make progress or we lose what we have.²⁹
"Use it or lose it."

After rebuking the third slave, in 19:24-26, the master and the bystanders engage in some interesting dialogue. The master turns to the bystanders and says, **"Take the mina away from him [the third slave] and give it to the one who has the ten minas"** (19:24). Ouch! This is going to get intense.

After hearing the master's ruling, the bystanders express concern with his decision. They cry out: **"Master, he has ten minas already"** (19:25). Of course, this arrangement appears unjust to the bystanders. They may think that the unfaithful slave's mina should have gone to a slave with a smaller reward. They are looking at what seems best for the slaves, not for the master. Isn't it funny that we tend to think that we are fairer than God? We pride ourselves in how gracious and sympathetic we are, assuming that we surpass God in these characteristics. How foolish we are!

With ice-water in his veins, the master replies, **"I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away"** (19:26). The master is distributing his gifts on the basis of faithfulness and capability, not fairness or need. For the unfaithful slave, life's opportunities have been lost! His mina is gone. But he has no one to blame but himself. He was given the same potential as the other slaves. In life this is how things work. In our world...

- The salesman who works hard will be given more territory to make more sales.
- The student who is diligent will continue to excel at learning while the lazy student will eventually find that they are unable to keep up.
- The athlete who continues to work hard on the fundamentals will remain sharp and at the top of their game, while the athlete who feels "good enough" will cease to be effective.
- Those who train their bodies will work more efficiently and be more fit and stronger while those who neglect their bodies will lose their energy and be unfit.
- Those who keep working at their spiritual life will discover more of God's goodness and grace; those who become lazy in spiritual pursuits will slowly drift from the Lord.

The master was operating on the principle that faithfulness with little indicates faithfulness in much (cf. 8:18 with 19:13, 17, 29, 26). Therefore it was to his advantage to give the unfaithful slave's mina to the most faithful slave because he would make the best use of it. The master expressed this truth proverbially (19:26; 16:12). He was looking at what was best for himself. Obviously, what is best for God is more important than what is best for His slaves. Still the master's action was also fair to his slaves since the slave who glorified the master most received the greatest reward. Zacchaeus, who was listening to this parable, had just promised to give half of his possessions to the poor and to reimburse anyone he had defrauded four-fold (19:8). Jesus' teaching here would have encouraged Zacchaeus to follow through on his commitment. He would have a great reward, much treasure in heaven, if he so served the Master faithfully. This is equally true for each one of us.

The bystanders in Jesus' parable represent those who assist Jesus in carrying out His will, perhaps angels or other human servants. The unfaithful slave lost even what the master had given him. If the mina each servant received represents his life potential, this servant would lose that. The master gave it instead to the most faithful servant. This seems to mean that God's faithful servants will receive additional opportunities to glorify Him in the next stage of their service as well as authority over others. The next stage of these servants' service will be millennial service in the kingdom.

Jesus' final words in 19:27 are rather alarming: **“But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.”**³⁰ The strong adversative “but” (*plene*) contrasts the punishment of the unprofitable slave with that of the citizens (cf. 19:14) who did not want him to rule over them.³¹ Historically, Jesus' enemies (i.e., the Jewish people who crucified Him) were indeed destroyed by the Roman army at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (cf. 21:6, 20-24; 23:28-31). Eschatologically, Jesus' enemies (i.e., those who ultimately reject Him) will be consumed at His return (cf. 21:25; 22:66-70; cf. Rev 19:11-19). The focus here refers to the Great White Throne judgment, which culminates in “the second death” for the unsaved (Rev 20:11-15). Will Jesus' words mean reward, rebuke, or possibly retribution?

This final verse prompts a critical question: “Are you a citizen or a slave?” Which are you? That is the most important distinction in the world. Your eternal destiny is determined by the decision you make here. Is Jesus the Messiah, the King of the earth, or is He one to be rejected? If He is the Messiah, then you are to be His slave and faithfully “do business” until the day that He returns. You become a slave by trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Your eternal destiny is determined by whether you are a citizen or a slave. May you be a slave, for Christ's sake, and yours. And if you are a slave, may you be a faithful slave, one to whom the Master can say, “Well done, good slave” (cf. 19:16).

George Boldt worked faithfully for years at the front desk in a small hotel. One day an elderly couple came into the lobby and asked for a place to stay. Every room in the hotel—and every hotel in town—was occupied. Realizing that the elderly couple had nowhere to sleep, Boldt offered them his own room. Although they were reluctant to accept his offer, they eventually did so because George insisted. The next morning when the couple was checking out, the elderly man said to George, “You're the kind of man who should be managing the best hotel in the country. Some day I'm going to build that hotel and let you manage it.”

Several years later, Boldt received a letter in the mail. It contained a round-trip ticket and a note from the man to whom he had given his room years before. The man invited George to visit him in New York City. When Boldt arrived in New York, the gentleman took him to a downtown corner where a huge building stood. “George, this is the hotel I built for you to manage.” Boldt stared in amazement at the glorious structure. The hotel was the Waldorf-Astoria! The elderly man was William Waldorf Astor, one of the wealthiest men in the country. Boldt's faithfulness in managing a small hotel had prepared him to manage one of the most magnificent hotels this country has ever seen.

On judgment day, God will examine how well we managed our lives on earth. If we were faithful in fulfilling our responsibilities in this life, He will assign us better things to manage in the next life. God wants you to realize the significance of your earthly existence so you can live up to your fullest potential. Don't believe the lie that your life isn't important. The few brief moments you live on earth will determine your responsibilities for all eternity. You only get one shot at living on planet earth—your opportunity.³² May we be faithful slaves to use what we've been given so that we may multiply the effectiveness of our lives for all eternity.

Copyright © 2006 Keith R. Krell. All rights reserved. All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any articles written by Keith Krell, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Keith Krell, Timeless Word Ministries, 2508 State Ave NE Olympia, WA 98506, 360-352-9044, www.timelessword.com

Scripture Reading

Luke 19:11-27

Luke 19:1-10

Luke 16:1-13

Matthew 25:14-30

Ephesians 1:13-14

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Study Questions

1. The thrust of Jesus' parable is that His disciples must be vigilant and faithful in His service (19:13, 15b-26). Overall, how have I invested in my life's potential? Specifically, in what ways am I a vigilant and faithful slave? How can I grow as a slave of Christ? Who will help me in my maturing process?
2. Jesus mentioned the importance of being faithful in "a very little thing" (19:17). What "things" have Jesus entrusted to me? What are some practical implications of seeing myself as a slave who invests for Jesus? How would I live differently if I believed I was working for Jesus in my business, school, and personal life? Obviously, most people have many responsibilities other than Christian service. What does it mean for them to "do business" (19:13) for Jesus? Is it a mindset or a certain number of hours? Please explain.
3. Rewards and future responsibilities are not determined by the size of a bank account or ministry, but by how well I have used what God has given me and how large a percentage of return God gets on my investment. How am I currently being faithful with the minas that God has entrusted to me? In what area(s) am I exhibiting an indifferent or lazy attitude? What can I do to challenge myself to break out of this pattern?
4. The third slave had a warped view of his master that affected his faithfulness (19:20-26). How does my view of God affect my service for Him? Where is the balance between seeing His grace and His judgment? Most Christians tend to go to one extreme or the other. Why is it so hard to balance these tensions? How would I interact with a believer who emphasizes God's grace with no accountability? How would I dialogue with another believer who emphasizes human works without God's grace?
5. The focus of Jesus' parable is the third servant who is called a "worthless slave" (19:23). Can there be such a thing as a non-serving believer who lives for himself or herself? Consider 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 along with Luke 19:20-26. Have I ever been such a slave? If so, what will I do today to maximize the rest of the time and potential that the Lord has given me?

Notes

¹ Bruce Goettsche, "Using What God Has Given" (Luke 19:11-27; Matthew 25:14-30): www.unionchurch.com.

² This is the one place in the NT the office of "chief tax collector" is noted. Zacchaeus would organize the other tax collectors and collect healthy commissions.

³ This is a first class condition in the Greek text. It virtually confesses fraud. See NET Study Notes.

⁴ Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1985 [1987]), 59.

⁵ This parable ends the long part of Luke's gospel that deals with Jesus' ministry as He traveled to Jerusalem from Galilee (9:51-19:27). Luke's narrative highlighted Jesus' lessons to the multitudes and the disciples in view of His impending passion. This parable also concludes the section dealing with the recipients of salvation stressing their responsibility (18:9-19:27). See Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Luke* (<http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes.htm>, 2005), 221.

⁶ Bock writes, "The parable is largely a warning since so much of its attention is focused on the unfaithful third servant." Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53: ECNT* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1525.

⁷ This belief stemmed from the Jewish conviction that the Messiah's earthly kingdom would appear in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14; Acts 1:6). Even after the resurrection, they asked Jesus, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) The disciples finally came to clarity on this matter (Acts 3:19-21), but at this point they did not yet understand. They fully expected Jesus to establish His reign over Israel in the immediate future. Jesus wanted them to understand that there would be a delay. In the future, the King will return and will rule in power and glory.

⁸ There is both a present form of the kingdom, while the king is away and a future full sense of the kingdom when the king returns. Jesus has already spoken of the present sense of the kingdom, that it is in their midst because He, the King, is in their midst (Luke 11:20; 17:21).

⁹ Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: Luke 12-24* (Kent, England: Sovereign World, 2000), 86.

¹⁰ The NIV has translated this wrong. The nobleman is not "appointed" king. He already is king. He was born king. But He is going away to receive a kingdom.

¹¹ See C. Marvin Pate, *Luke: Moody Gospel Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 355.

¹² The minas (*mnas*) are called "pounds" in the KJV and RSV. Hence, the familiar title "The Parable of the Pounds."

¹³ The NIV's "three months wage" (footnote) slightly underestimates the value, assuming a six-day work week.

Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 486.

Cf. Matt 25:14-30 where a "talent" is worth about 50 times as much (cf. NASB marginal note at Matt 25:15).

¹⁴ Ralph Wilson, "Parable of the Pounds" (Luke 19:11-27): http://www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/19_11-27.htm

¹⁵ Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 63.

¹⁶ The marginal notes in the NASB, both in Matthew 25 and in Luke 19 seem to suggest that these two accounts are parallel. While there are some obvious similarities, the differences are far greater. Plummer is the most detailed in his description of the differences between the two texts. He writes, "Here, Jesus is approaching Jerusalem, but has not yet entered it in triumph: apparently He is still in Jericho. In Mt. He is on the Mount of Olives a day or two after the triumphal entry. Here He addresses a mixed company publicly. In Mt. He is speaking privately to His disciples (xxiv. 3). Besides the difference in detail where the two narratives are parallel, there is a great deal in Lk. which is not represented in Mt. at all. The principal items are: (1) the introduction, ver. 11; (2) the high birth of the chief agent and his going into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, ver. 12; (3) his citizens hating him and sending an ambassage after him to repudiate him, ver. 14; (4) the signal vengeance taken upon these enemies, ver. 27; (5) the conclusion, ver. 28....Even in the parts that are common to the two parables the differences are very considerable. (1) In the Talents we have a householder leaving home for a time, in the Pounds a nobleman going in quest of a crown; (2) the Talents are unequally distributed, the Pounds equally; (3) the sums entrusted differ enormously in amount; (4) in the Talents the rewards are the same, in the Pounds they differ and are proportionate to what has been gained; (5) in the Talents the unprofitable servant is severely punished, in the Pounds he is merely deprived of his pound. Out of about 302 words in Mt. and 286 in Lk., only about 66 words or parts of words are common to the two." Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), 437.

¹⁷ Kent Crockett, *Making Today Count for Eternity* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2001), 48.

¹⁸ David Jeremiah, "Turning Point Daily Devotional," 1-3-06.

¹⁹ God was gracious to Israel and gave the nation nearly 40 years of grace before judgment fell (Luke 19:41-44).

²⁰ Bob Deffinbaugh, “The Nobleman: His Slaves and His Citizens” (Luke 19:11-27):

http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=1127.

²¹ The King is seeking to learn of the gain, the increase, and the fruit of his servants’ labors. We see three words in these verses that relate to increase or gain: “Gained” in 19:15b is Greek *diapragmateuomai*, “gain by trading, earn.” “Earned” in 19:16 is Greek *prosergazomai*, “make more.” “Earned” in 19:18 is the common Greek word *poieo*, “do, make,” here with the idea of “to produce something material, ‘make, manufacture, produce.’”

²² Jesus will return having received authority to reign on earth from His Father (cf. Dan 7:13-14). After His return and before He begins to reign, He will call His servants to give an accounting of their stewardship. Later New Testament revelation indicates that Christians, believers who have lived between Pentecost and the Rapture, will have to give their accounting at the judgment seat of Christ following the Rapture (1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:1-10). Other believers, mainly those who have lived in Old Testament times and the Tribulation, will give their accounting at the judgment in view here that precedes the Millennium. The basis of the judgment is not their saved or lost condition but the profitability of their lives for the Master’s benefit. See Constable, *Notes on Luke*, 223.

²³ PreachingNow Vol. 5, No. 27 (8-22-06).

²⁴ Robert N. Wilkin, *The Road to Reward* (Irving, TX: GES, 2003), 38.

²⁵ This is evident from a hermeneutical principle called the “law of proportion.”

²⁶ Keeping money in a scarf (*soudarion*) was a common practice in Jesus’ day, but it was unsafe and unproductive.

²⁷ Probably the bank in the parable represents a safe investment with comparatively little risk.

²⁸ Bruce Wilkinson, *A Life God Rewards* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2002), 70.

²⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According To St. Luke: The Tyndale Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974 [1986]), 276.

³⁰ The language of slaughtering one’s enemies occurs in both the OT (1 Sam 15:33) and NT (Rev 14:10).

³¹ Pate, *Luke*, 358.

³² Crockett, *Making Today Count for Eternity*, 50-51.