

11 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. **12** He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. **13** So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’

14 “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’ **15** “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.

16 “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’ **17** “Well done, my good servant!” his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’

18 “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’ **19** “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’

20 “Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. **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.’

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

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

25 “Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’

26 “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. **27** 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.’”

One of our members recently sent me a video of one of my latest sermons. I hadn’t watched myself preach in some time, and it was good for me to actually look at myself and listen to myself so that I could do some self assessment. I could look to see where I may have developed some bad habits or repetitive actions that could be corrected. Sometimes, self review isn’t even enough because we have sinful blinders on ourselves. We are too lazy or too sensitive to see the obvious. So it’s good to have other people critique you as well. It’s good to have what we call “accountability.”

Accountability is not always pleasant, especially when you haven’t been doing a great job. It can also be miserable when you have a boss who is harsh or who likes to nitpick. We’d rather get the job done at our own pace and in our own way. Nonetheless, when someone is paying you to do your job they have the right to review your performance whether you like it or not.

Judgement Day brings this whole concept of “accountability” into view as God raises all of the dead to stand before Him. God does not just let everyone into heaven because He loves everyone. That’s just not true according to the Word. Most don’t hear the terrorizing verses of 2 Thessalonians where God says that Jesus will be **“revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting**

destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. God's Word makes that Final Judgment seem more more intense! He is going to call people to account! That includes you! You must be ready!

How? "**Obey the Gospel**", Paul writes. What does that mean? The Gospel puts Jesus on the cross. It tells us that He is hanging there because our sins. God had to punish. He did that when Jesus, true God, took on flesh to die on the cross. How do I obey that message when it tells me to do nothing? I bow down to that cross. I recognize myself as a filthy sinner who needed Jesus to die for me. I find mercy and grace and forgiveness in what Jesus did for me there, and only there. Jesus was held accountable for me. There is no other place to hide. The book of Ezekiel pictured these believers with a mark on their foreheads and with repentant attitudes. We would point to baptism as God's mark upon us and repentant faith in Jesus as our only way to face a holy God on the Day of Judgment.

In today's Gospel, Jesus pictures Himself as the man of noble birth who goes off to receive His crown and then returns. Perhaps we could think of this as the time between Jesus' ascension and His final return on Judgment Day.

In the meantime, he hands out ten minas to ten servants for them to use while He is gone. One mina per servant. A mina was literally a pound and a ¼ of silver. In Biblical times, most commentaries I read said that it would have been worth about three months of wages. That's a fairly sizeable amount of money to do something with. He told his servants to put it to work and to get to work with it. He wanted them to be busy with the money that He gave them.

This is how we view our lives here. God gave me this body. God gives me this time. God gives me my family and my ability to work. He expects me to use the gifts He has given me to the glory of His name, to achieve the purpose for which HE sent it. He doesn't just put money in my pocket and bread in my pantry. He gives me the ability and the responsibility to work for it, and He tells me how to spend it. These are my mina, my treasures from God. That's different than looking at this as MY time, MY body, My children, MY job. This is a gift from God that He wants me to do something USEFUL and beneficial with. I need to be accountable to God in how I use them.

If you think about the mina that you have been given, what is the most precious thing you have? I would hope that you would say it is Jesus. How are you using this mina? Jesus is the priceless treasure that gives your relationship patience and strength. Jesus is the hope that when He is given to your children you will be with them forever in heaven. Using the Gospel means baptizing your children and your grandchildren and telling them about who their loving God is. It means bringing them up in God's Word, praying with them and bringing them to church. That is how you use God's mina to you in the spiritual sense. It means treating all that you have as His precious and temporary gifts to you.

Three servants are noted for having been given one mina each. One was very industrious and made ten more minas! The master said, "**Well done, my good servant!**" He then commended him for his faithfulness. The next man made five himself. He was happy with him as well. He gave the one man ten cities and the next man five cities, along with letting them both keep the minas that they had earned. Ten cities for just over three years

of wages? That's more than generous! Five cities for only a year and a half of wages earned? Again - who could complain? The nobleman was very generous and excited about what they had done with their minas and he was more than generous in his response..

It is hard for us to imagine a holy God being happy with what we've done. But we are His adopted children. We look holy in His sight through faith in Jesus. The reward of clinging to Christ and using His gifts to His glory will be great in heaven, and those glories will last forever! A part of your harvest will be the joy of seeing your family and friends who also believe in Christ in heaven. Don't forget about the final reward of heaven, especially when it doesn't seem "worth" coming to worship or praying for someone. I see young parents bringing their children to worship. One cries a lot. The other just can't seem to sit still and is crawling all over the place. You get all frazzled and leave worship wondering, "What in the world am I doing?" You're still bringing your child to Jesus. The word and song are still being proclaimed. You are being faithful.

God sees the sacrifices you make, the time and effort you make into spreading the Gospel and keeping in the Word. He also sees the sacrifices you make for your family, the things you do to the glory of God's name. For whatever sacrifices or losses you must face in this world, you will receive so much more in heaven and nobody will be able to take away what God has given to you. Think about what an honor it will be to have Jesus acknowledge you and welcome you into heaven. The returning King will be generous with his faithful servants, whether they've done much or little with what He's given them. This is what Jesus will do for those who believe in Him and are baptized.

Then there was the third man. He wasn't looking forward to the nobleman's return. As a matter of fact, he didn't seem too thrilled with being given his mina in the first place. He wouldn't even touch the mina - wrapping it in white cloth. Why, because he had the nobleman pegged. He just KNEW that he was a hard man. The word in Greek seems to infer that this man was stern and strict with all that he gave out, that he wanted a firm accounting with all that was used. He also seemed to say that the nobleman claimed things that he didn't even work for. He didn't want to give any of it back. His safest bet was just to try to keep his hands off.

This man is prototypical of the polite person who "believes in God" and "has nothing against religion," but has no interest in really delving into who this God really is. He doesn't want to be "obligated" to come to worship or donate his Sunday mornings to worship. You see, when you don't dig into the law you can't really see what a sinner you are. You don't have to read about hell or damnation. Then you don't really need Jesus dying on a cross either. If you really came to terms with who you are and what Jesus did for you, then you'd have to acknowledge that you owe God your very life and soul. If you really understood what Jesus went through for you, you'd be overwhelmed with pure joy. But that's just too much for many. It is easier just to put Jesus in a napkin and keep him at a politely healthy distance. When you think about it, isn't that part of the reason why so many are straying from church as well. They don't want accountability. They don't want a pastor "worrying" about them or a church "nagging" them. They would rather just be left alone and get by on their own. That way they won't have to owe anyone anything. It's like saying, "Jesus, you can just keep your mina. I don't want to owe you anything. I don't like your regulations. I'll earn my own."

Then again, some are terrified of what they read and that's why they try to keep away from God. Some of the Bible seems mean and judgmental and unloving. God's law is very demanding! When you read in the Old

Testament about God ordering men, women and children to be put to death, maybe you wondered the same? Or how about Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, who described hell as being shut out from the presence of God in eternal destruction. Even in this parable, the nobleman takes all of his enemies who didn't want him elected as king and he has them slaughtered right in front of him. It is scary to think about being under the wrath of God. Some don't want anything to do with Him.

The problem is that Jesus didn't allow this hands off approach to the mina. When he thought of the nobleman as strict, the nobleman became just that for the man as he took his mina from him and condemned him for his wickedness for not doing anything with the mina he had been given. He wasted precious time and generous treasure he had been given because of his narrow view of the nobleman. He tried to treat the nobleman with respect, yet his attitude and actions did nothing to absolve him of his responsibility that he had been given. It was even worse off for the rebellious citizens who tried to stop the nobleman from being king. They were put to death right in front of the nobleman.

There were seven other servants who were not mentioned in the parable. Perhaps you could think of yourself in that empty slot. How will you respond? Obviously, it will do no good to try and keep Jesus from being King. He's already been crowned. Nor would it do you any good to try and ignore the fact that He is Lord or to try to politely wrap Him up in a napkin. He is a hard man in that respect. He wants more. He expects more. You weren't given your mina just to leave it in a napkin.

So how are we to live in light of that fact that this King is coming back? Don't forget to look at the generosity of this Nobleman. He didn't have to give His servants anything. When they earned what they earned, He could have kept it. He didn't have to give them cities, but He did. He was generous. He gave them the opportunity and the gifts to do something with what they were given, and he recognized and acknowledged them for it. He wasn't just a "hard man." Nor is a Lord only a "hard" Lord. He also willingly took on flesh to suffer and die for our sins. He chose to give us salvation through faith, and not by works. He is also a generous and gracious Lord who came to save us, who wants to call us from our trees of shame and beckon us to the tree of salvation on the cross. The forgiveness and grace of Christ frees us from being fearful of failure. We use the minas God has given us. We want to be faithful. Whether we with ten or five or two, that's not the most important point. Live by faith and trust of the graciousness of God in Christ. Be faithful with what you've been given, and trust the LORD of justice will be just that.

As I review this sermon and finish it off, there will be some of you who enjoyed it. Some of you will have grown in your understanding and faith in Jesus. There may be others who felt it was too strict or too boring. After I conclude a week's worth of work and preparation, I hope that you were convicted of your sin. I also hope that you were pointed to Christ crucified for your forgiveness. I also hope that the Holy Spirit helped to strengthen your grip on Jesus as your Savior, along with motivating you to use your mina wisely. If so, then God be praised. Then you will be prepared for that Final Day of accountability, with Jesus as your defense. Amen.