

“THE PARABLE OF THE COINS.”

First Christian Reformed Church

June 9, 2013, 10:30AM

Scripture Texts: Luke 19:11-26

Introduction.

What a glorious week this past week has been. No doubt a bunch of you attended an outdoor graduation ceremony at Lynden Christian or Lynden High School. You heard lots of wonderful words in praise of our students and their accomplishments. And since it is only a couple of days a few of you might even be able to still remember one or two things the graduation speaker said.

I have graduated three times, high school, college and seminary, and I have no clue who spoke at any of them or what any of them said. I have also spoken at two or three such events, and I don't remember what I said.

Remembering important words is hard. Just ask Jesus. He repeated Himself over and over again to His disciples and they just didn't get it. Our text this morning says that as they were getting closer and closer to Jerusalem they were thinking they were on the edge of Jesus establishing His kingdom on earth and they would get to sit on some thrones with Him.

So once again Jesus the master story teller tells another story, warning about how things are really going to be.

Luke 19:11-27 // Matthew 25:14-30.

A certain nobleman, one well-born, highly placed, the Christ figure in the story, went to a far country to receive kingly authority. For Jesus this meant death, resurrection, and ascension where He is seated at the right hand of the Father in glory with all things in the universe placed under His feet.

As he was leaving to go to receive His kingly authority the citizens of the kingdom resisted Him and refused His kingship. There are two historic meanings here. First, when Archelaus, one of the Herods, went to Rome to be invested with kingly authority some Jews came and protested but Caesar Augustus refused to listen. And when Jesus came to Jerusalem as king many protested and refused to believe and follow and shouted crucify Him.

Before the nobleman leaves he entrusts his servants with the affairs of his kingdom and gives them resources. He is going to be gone a very long time and there is much for them to do until He returns.

The resources are more than adequate. There are no instructions given, leaving lots of room for the servants to exercise their judgment. Much responsibility and much freedom.

There is no special significance to the number of servants or the amount of money. In Matthew's telling of the parable there are three servants each given a different amount of money. In Luke's telling there are ten servants each given the same amount of money.

The different amounts in Matthew make plainer the differences between us, and the call to be faithful with whatever we are given, no matter how little or how much. We all do not have the

same gifts and abilities and talents. As Paul says, “grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift” (Ephesians 4:7).

In Luke we understand the one coin to represent every Christian’s equal reception of God’s gift of grace through faith to be used for His glory and the benefit of the kingdom.

The servants represent all those who profess to be Christians, perhaps baptized members of the church. By virtue of their baptism or profession they claim to be Christ’s servants or followers. But it will be by their actions that they are truly known.

The word talent sounds like talented. We talk about talented people, people gifted in the arts, in music, in sports, in academics. At graduations we hear about scholarships and awards various talented students have received.

But Jesus isn’t talking about special people with special gifts. He is talking about every person in the kingdom of God. We are all talented people, we have all received talents from God.

All that we have and all that we are comes from God. There is no distinction made as to one being better than or more important than. No comparison is implied.

We are the ones who make comparisons of what we have or can do and what others have or can do. But that isn’t the issue here. Luke’s telling of the story has each one receiving the same, taking away all comparison and all advantage.

Anything we have been given with which we can glorify God is our “talent.” The list is long. This can include our money, time, ability, health, strength, knowledge, wisdom, expertise, experiences, influence, words, reason, memory, affections, passions, privileges, freedoms, have I said enough that you see yourself in this list.

If you have breath, if you have a beating heart, there is something in you that is from God and that He has given you to use for His glory and for the benefit and blessing of others.

If we are a Christian we have countless gifts of God’s grace and mercy.

Each one of us is who we are and where we are and doing what we are for only one reason, it’s the gift of God’s grace given to us. All that we are and all that we have is purely by the grace of God.

I Corinthians 4:7 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?

If everything about us and everything we have is determined by the grace of God and His gift to us then why on earth do we boast and brag? And why on earth do we whine and complain? Why is it so hard to learn the secret of contentment, which is wanting what we already have, being pleased with what God has given to us?

Who you are and what you have is from the very hand of God. When I look at someone else and covet what they have I throw mud on God’s grace that He has given to me. Learn to say if it pleases the Lord, it pleases me.

There will be a final accounting, a day of reckoning.

Eventually the nobleman returns and asks for an accounting. When Jesus returns there will be a great judgment day, a day when God sets up His great white throne of judgment and all the earth, living and dead, will stand before the God who created them to know, love, serve, obey and glorify Him.

Every one of us will stand before God face to face and give an accounting of every gift He has given, of every privilege and benefit we have had, of all that we have received from His hand. What have we done with His grace.

The faithful Christian who makes diligent use of the little he has been given will receive much.

Remember who the very best Christian who ever lived is. The very best Christian who has ever walked this planet is a desperately wicked sinner who deserved to burn in hell for all eternity. He is a poor broken, sinful creature without hope except in the cleansing and redeeming blood of Jesus. The greatest among the saints is but a servant of the Lord.

The good news is the lowliest labors of the Lord's servants will be graciously and generously rewarded. We will be stunned and amazed that the Lord even noticed us and what we have done on earth. Whatever your cross now, however heavy your burden, however unpleasant the circumstances of your present situation, what is faithfully done to the glory of God will become the source of incomparable joy.

The reward and honor shown to the faithful will be a surprise to all to behold, it will utterly amazed. It will be thirty, sixty and a hundred fold more than all they could ask or imagine.

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Moses considered all the treasures of Egypt nothing compared to the reward he looked forward to (Hebrews 11:26).

The crucial point of the parable.

Having said all of this, let me ask you, what do you think is the one key point of the parable? What is the crucial moment? Jesus tells a big story to get to one point, what is it?

There are a few differences between Matthew's Parable of the Talents and Luke's Parable of the Coins (Minas), but on the critical point they are the same.

One old pastor paraphrases it well so I'm going to paraphrase him and use some of his literary license. The final servant comes to the master and says:

“Sir, here is your coin back and in mint condition I might point out. I kept it bright and shiny in a safe place in my dresser drawer wrapped up in this handkerchief. You see, I was afraid because I know you and I know that you are a severe man, a hard driving business man, making money even where others don't. So I thought to myself, ‘Ananias, watch out, the master is a tough boss, he keeps track of every penny, just think how mad he will be if you lose what belongs to him.’”

“So sir, here I am and here’s your money, returned in full and on time. I hope you are pleased with me.”

“No, I am not pleased with you. In fact, I am full of righteous wrath toward you. I will judge you with your very own words. If you knew that I was such a demanding and exacting man then why didn’t you at least put my money in a savings account? Did you think I would be mad at a measly 1 percent? Did you think I would be happier with zero percent?”

“But let me tell you something, Ananias, and this is going to shock you. You don’t really know me at all, because it’s not the lack of any return on the investment that I am mad about. I gave you something. I didn’t ask you to make money, I asked you to do something, to exercise a little trust in me. I gave you an opportunity to take some risks with the gift I gave you, to use it to do some good.

“But no, instead you decided to play it safe out of some imaginary fear. You decided to save your own neck and take the easy road and lay low and mind your own business and not care about my business or anyone else’s.

“You could have gotten yourself a nice life as the mayor of a city but now all you have is the lousy little life you started with. And as a matter of fact, Ananias, you don’t even have that because you know what I am going to do? I’m going to take what I gave you and I am going to give it to the guy over there that has more than he knows what to do with. And you know why I’m going to do that?”

“Two reasons. First of all, because when I give someone a gift I expect them to use it, to make something out of it, to spread it around or pass it on or make a difference, to just do something and not just bury it or cover it up or hid it.

“And second, I’m going to give him your gift to show everyone that I never really cared about the results. It was a gift, it was grace, it wasn’t a reward for anything, I just wanted you to have it, and by receiving it I wanted you to enjoy it and use it. There was nothing to be afraid of. You could have turned it into a million dollars or two dollars. In fact you could have risked it all and lost it, at least that would have been in keeping with my character.

“But instead you crawl in here telling me you decided not to risk, not to trust, not to have faith, afraid that I was some legalistic type. You thought you knew me, you thought you were being like me, but you missed it. You misrepresented me as some shriveled up hardhearted mean master and then you turned that into an excuse to not trust me and believe in the grace and kindness evident by my gift.

“So get out of my sight, you have shown who you really are and what you are made of. You own words and actions and lack of faith condemn you. If that’s how you treat my grace then you will live the rest of your life without any” (Robert Farrar Capon, *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment*, p. 421ff).

Brothers and sisters, young and old, don’t go into this life or live your life in fear. Don’t be anxious about tomorrow or about your neighbor or anyone or anything else. Let the words of Jesus quiet and comfort every fearful and anxious and unbelieving heart.

Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Seek first Him and His righteousness by faith trusting in His grace and everything you need will be given to you.

Application and conclusion.

What are you doing with the free gift of extravagant grace that God has given to each one of you? I leave you graduates with two challenges and the rest of you post-graduates with two reminders.

First, you aren't called to be rich or famous or successful or some other big deal. Really! I mean it. You aren't going to be judged by goals accomplished or balance sheets or awards won or praises received from man. You are called to be faithful with the grace you have been given. If you aren't faithful there will be hell to pay, literally.

Jesus doesn't say, "well done you successful servant or you fruitful servant." It isn't about the amount. He says, "well done you faithful servant. You have been faithful in little, so I will give you much."

Notice the master says to the servant he would have accepted anything, even the lowest interest rate. Be faithful to Jesus Christ your only Lord and Savior and your only hope for salvation. Do something with His gifts that will give Him glory.

Second, apart from Him you can do nothing. Apart from Him you can't be faithful. You want to do something relevant or significant or that makes a difference, then pay attention to eternity and to the Lord of eternity. Depend completely on Him.

Notice the careful words of the servant. "Lord, *your* mina *has made* ten minas more." It started out as His and as you use it in faith what it becomes is His doing. Trust Him and enjoy using the gifts He has given you knowing that they can't be lost by using them, but lost only by neglecting or ignoring or doubting or fearing them.

Jesus is not some memento, some little treasure or trinket to be wrapped up and to be brought out on special occasions, even if that special occasion happens to be once a week on a Sunday morning. Jesus is not just an absentee landlord. He is present with us and He is present by the gifts He has given us and by the faith we have in Him.

If Jesus trusted His grace with you then you can trust Him as you use it and spread it and multiply it and leave the results and the fruit to Him.

Galatians 6:9-10 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.