

Put the Gospel to Work

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[0 : 00] Well, who is right with God, and how can we become right with God? Those are the two questions that we have been asking and answering together over the last few weeks as we've looked at Luke chapter 18 and 19 to see how the Bible says that unrighteous, sinful people can be right with a righteous and holy God.

What have we seen in these chapters with Jesus? Remember, it was the tax man who simply confessed his sin to God and asked for mercy, who went home right with God, not the religious man who boasted in his own goodness.

Remember, we saw it was the children who had nothing to give to Jesus, who received his kingdom, not the rich man whose hands were already too full to receive from him.

Remember, last time we saw it was the blind man who simply asked Jesus that he might see him, who followed him and praised God, and not the disciples who were blind to Jesus, who looked past him, who looked past his agenda.

Remember, in short, we have seen with Jesus, haven't we, that we are only coming rightly to God to be right with him when we see Jesus rightly, that he came to seek and save the lost.

[1 : 34] When we come to him confessing our sin before him, asking for his grace, saying that we need him to save us, and have open hands before him to receive from him what he came to give, forgiveness, a new heart, eternal life, the kingdom of God, salvation.

We do not come to him boasting in what we can do, what we can give to him. And we've seen, haven't we, that we would prefer in so many ways to think of ourselves as people who have something to do and have something to give, as if we were the very religious person, the Pharisee, or as if we were the rich man, or as if we were a very upright and decent sort of person, rather than thinking of ourselves like a helpless sinner, or a baby, or a blind beggar.

We don't like to think of ourselves like that, but Jesus says, unless we come to him like that, we will not enter his kingdom. And today, Jesus wants us to think, what do we do with that?

What do we do with what we've heard from him in these chapters? How do we respond today to the good news of God's kingdom? We've received good news, haven't we?

We can come in, we can know him, be right with God as we are, simply by coming to Jesus like that. How do we respond then? Well, sometimes a story can capture an idea much better than explaining it, can't it?

[3 : 10] And that is what Jesus does for us today. Look, he went on to tell them a parable or a story because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.

So he said, a man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. See, this whole parable is in the context, isn't it, of people thinking that we have to respond now or never.

The kingdom of God is coming. What will we do? Well, what is Jesus saying? He's saying, no, it's how we respond when the king is away that counts.

How do we respond to what the king has said when he is not yet here, before he returns, before the coming of his kingdom? So let's hear this story.

And as we do, let us weigh up our response to what we've heard in the good news of God's king and his kingdom. What will we do? Well, firstly, Jesus tells us that we have been entrusted with a deposit.

[4 : 18] He said, a man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called 10 of his servants and gave them 10 minas.

Put this money to work, he said, until I come back. So a soon-to-be king gives his servants money to look after while he's away.

And it's not a small value of money. I had a look this week. A mina was about 100 denarii, and a denarius was about one day's wage.

So 100 days wages. Imagine three months wages in advance. Whatever that would be for you, that would be quite a bit of money for somebody to come and put in your hands right now, wouldn't it? It's quite a bit. And 10 times that, okay, 10 minas, 10 times 100 days wages, 1,000 days wages. Okay, the king is dispensing, isn't he, nearly three years wages in advance.

[5 : 22] This is a great value, immense value, isn't it, that he is giving to his servants. But notice he's not giving them the money. What does he say? Put this money to work, he said, until I come back.

So it's not a gift as such, is it? He's entrusting it to them. It's an investment. He's putting this great sum of money into the care of his servants to do something with it while he's gone.

Now, the Greek word there for put to work is a word that you actually know, but you don't know that you know it. Okay? It's pragmatuomai.

We know that word, don't we? Pragmatic. Pragmatism. That's where those words come from. What is pragmatic? It's somebody who is able to do something, isn't it?

Somebody who does something. Here's a definition from the dictionary, pragmatic. It says, dealing with things sensibly and realistically in a way that is based on practical rather than theoretical considerations.

[6 : 33] So the instruction that the king gives to his servants is as broad and as blunt as this. Do something with it. Do something with it.

Hence the variety of translations that you get here. Invest this for me. Engage in business. Trade with it. Put it to work.

Those are all things that they could do with the money that they have been entrusted while he's gone. But the instruction is as simple as this. Do something with this money.

Be practical. Be pragmatic about it. Don't theorize about it. Don't overthink it. Do something with it.

The king doesn't want, does he, an economic paper when he gets back.

He wants a return on his investment. And friends, this is designed by Jesus to be a picture of what he has left us with.

[7 : 33] Out of the infinite riches of his grace. Our king Jesus has placed something in our hands of immense and infinite worth, hasn't he?

His gospel, the good news of his kingdom, that we can come in for free as we are when we come to him on his terms and not ours.

That is something of eternal and infinite worth, isn't it? What brilliant news. And he's instructed us, hasn't he, to do something with it.

What does he want us to do with the good news? Well, he wants us to believe it. To invest ourselves in it.

To put it to work in our hearts. Work it out in our lives. To make it our business. To understand it.

[8 : 29] To grapple with it. To grasp it. To live it. Hasn't he? He wants us to get our hands dirty in it. He doesn't want his gospel, does he, to sit on the shelf gathering dust.

He doesn't want it put in a drawer for us to take out occasionally to look at. He doesn't even want our learned thoughts on it. He wants us to put it to work in our lives.

For our hearts to grasp it and work it into ourselves. Put my gospel to work, he says. In your heart. In your life. And that is messy work.

And it is hard work. Paul says to Timothy in his second letter, listen. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

We cannot do something with the gospel without the help of the Holy Spirit. What does that tell us? That it is something that is impossible for us to do on our own.

[9 : 34] We are to grapple, do something with God's help to do it. And it is risky to do that. I don't know. I get pop-up ads sometimes on my computer for different sort of investment groups.

I have no idea why. But the small print sometimes says, doesn't it, capital at risk or something like that. It's risky. You could lose, he's saying. How?

Because, look, it's a hostile trading environment in the city. That city where the servants are to be trading, investing, working. There are people who don't want that king on the throne.

Look what they say. Verse 14. His subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, we don't want this man to be our king. So here's the situation.

The servants are trading and investing the king's money in a city where the king is hated and opposed. And it would be the easiest thing for them, wouldn't it, to therefore put off doing anything with what the king had left them.

[10:40] Or to look busy. Let's make a plan. And let's form a committee. And let's write a paper. And let's come back to it in a month. But not actually do what the king said, which is put it to work.

Go and do it. Go and invest it. Go and trade it. And now we're going to see in a minute what they did. But let's just pause and recognize that King Jesus does want us to do something with what he has told us.

He does want us to do something with the good news that he has given us, doesn't he? Where we live. We've heard the gospel of Jesus. But we live in a place where people don't want him to be king.

And it is the easiest thing to do for us, isn't it? To put off really doing anything with it. Whether for you that is believing it today. Or owning it publicly.

Or living it out in your place of work. In your home. In your classes. Wherever. Friends, what are you doing with the gospel? King Jesus calls us to put his gospel to work in our lives where he is opposed.

[11:54] He calls us to love and serve his kingdom. When his kingdom is not of this world. It is different. And so if we have heard the good news of King Jesus today, we could learn something from the people of Aberdeen.

The people of Aberdeen in 1308. That might seem strange. Let me ask, why is there no castle in Aberdeen? The whole region where we live is covered in castles, isn't it?

Why isn't there one in the city? Well, do you know, in 1808. Well, not that recently. 1308. Okay.

Aberdeen was under English occupation. But the people of Aberdeen secretly sided with their true king, Robert the Bruce.

And when their king came to recapture the city and they heard that he was coming, he was drawing near. Do you know, the people of Aberdeen did something with that good news.

They got to work. They laid plans. That was a big risk. They were in a hostile city. They could have been stamped out. But they worked with the news they had.

[13:03] Do you know, they used a secret password to do their work. Do you know what the secret password was? Bon Accord. Do you know that? That's why our city has its motto.

That's where our church gets its name. Bon Accord, they said, as they worked for the good news of the coming king. And there's no castle in the city today because while the king was away, his people put that news to work, and when he came in 1308, Robert the Bruce took back the city and destroyed the castle.

The work worked. And so, friends, the good news has reached us, hasn't it? That our gracious king is coming. He wants us to come into his kingdom.

He wants us to do something with the good news. Because King Jesus is coming back. And we will be asked for a return on his investment.

He will ask us what we have done with the news. This is our second point, that we will be asked for a return. Despite the opposition, Luke verse 15, he was made king, however, and returned home.

[14:17] Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money in order to find out what they had gained with it. So the king comes back and he asks the servant, how has his investment got on?

And the responses of the servants show us, don't they, that we must have something to show for his investment. Now, the three servants have three different results.

Luke, the first servant, says, here, your mina has earned ten more. The second servant, your mina has earned five more. The third, here is your mina.

He has earned nothing more. So three different returns. But notice that the king only has two responses. He rewards both, Luke, of the servants who have something to show for his investment. But he penalizes the one who has nothing to show for his investment. Let's just see that. The first servant, Luke, what does he say?

[15:20] Well done, my good servant, his master replied. Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter. Take charge of ten cities. Then the second servant, you take charge of five cities.

So these servants are both rewarded, aren't they? In proportion to their return on his investment. And so just notice that the king's approval isn't actually based on how much they have gained. But the fact that they have done what he told them to do. They have done something with his investment. They've put it to work and therefore have gained something from it. But the third servant gets a very different response.

Luke, verse 22, his master replied, I will judge ye by your own words, you wicked servant. Now why the difference? Friends, it's not because he had less to show.

As if he hadn't done enough or hadn't done well enough. It's because he had nothing to show. What had he done with the king's investment?

[16:26] What does he say? Here is your mina. I kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. Was that the king's instruction? The king said, didn't he put it to work until I return?

But this servant hasn't done that. He has disobeyed the king's word. Therefore, he has gained nothing and has nothing to show because he didn't do anything with what he'd been given.

Why is that? I was afraid of you, he says. Because you were a hard man. You take out what you didn't put in. You reap what you didn't sow. Now here's a question.

If you knew somebody was hard to please, he was going to come back and look for a return on something, he was maybe hard and difficult, what would you do?

You would think at least, wouldn't you, that the fear of that person would drive you to do something, to do more than you otherwise might have, not to do nothing.

[17:29] The king says, at least, if you knew, then I am a hard man, taking out what I didn't put in, reaping what I didn't sow. Why then didn't you at least put my money on deposit so when I came back I could have collected it with interest?

But the servant did nothing with what he knew. Knowing what he knew, should he not have done something?

That is the problem that the king finds with the servant, isn't it? Not that he hasn't done enough, but that even though he knew who the king was, even though he knew what the king had said, he hasn't done anything about it.

His investment has been wrapped up, put in a drawer and forgotten about. It has gathered dust, while the others have gathered gain. And that is what the king wants from us, friends, brothers and sisters.

He wants a return on his investment. When King Jesus returns, he will send for us who have heard the good news, those who know who he is, who know what he has said, to find out what we have gained with it.

[18:44] Have we put it to work as he has commanded us to do? Has it gained and grown in us as it should? To be clear, putting the gospel to work in this sense, in this story, is not to do with what we think of as Christian work or gospel work, as if Jesus is going to judge us by how many people have become Christians through our witness, or how many lives have been affected by our living.

Look what the king says in verse 17. He doesn't say, because you were fruitful in a little, but because you were faithful. Faithful, trustworthy in a little.

The king is rewarding faithfulness, not fruitfulness. So the return that he wants to see is, how much has the gospel changed who you are?

How deeply has the gospel shaped your daily living? How much fruit has the gospel borne in your life? How much are you conformed to his image?

How much do you love his kingdom? How much do you love his kingdom? Brothers and sisters, we know that that change, that gain in us, isn't always to do, is it, with how much we know, or how much we share, or how much we do.

[20:09] The gospel grows and gains in us by simple devotion to Jesus. Loving him, listening to him, trusting him, obeying him.

That is what we are called to, faithfulness, to what we have received. Don't overthink it. Just do something with it, he says. Don't put it off.

Now, I've never seen this until this week, but interesting, isn't it, what the servants say, they don't say, I have gained ten more, or I have gained five more. What do they say?

They say, your mina has earned ten more. Your mina has earned five more. It is as if the deposit itself has earned, and gained, and grown of its own accord.

So this isn't work as we think of it, is it? It is investing in something, and trading with the gospel in our own hearts, our own lives, so that the gospel itself will work in us.

[21 : 14] So that the gospel, the deposit itself, will grow and gain in us. The gospel itself is God's power to save all who believe. So this is not work as we think of it normally, is it?

And yet, and yet, this parable urges on us, doesn't it, that we should be in no doubt that to the extent that we have traded and invested the gospel in our hearts and lives, to that extent, it will grow and gain in us.

And to that extent, we will be rewarded. We won't gain from the gospel more than we invest in the gospel. The king will not reward us for more than we have gained for the king.

Friends, Jesus will come and ask us what we have gained from what he has given, and we will be called to give an answer. So do not let it be, I didn't gain anything from it because I didn't do anything with it.

Do not let that be your answer. What does it mean not to do anything with it? To know the good news, to even know that it's true, but not to let it change your life.

[22 : 35] To know that the king is coming, but not to believe in the king who is coming. To have heard the good news, but not to have put your trust in it.

In short, to have been given the gospel, but to leave it wrapped up, lying in a drawer, gathering dust, and not worked out in your heart your life. Why did the third servant do that?

Well, there was nothing wrong was there with the investment. Only in his own heart, he feared the king, but he did not love the king. He didn't want to please the king because he did not love him.

Friends, what return will you make on the king's investment? Because finally, Jesus tells us that we will be judged on our response. We've already seen the reward that is given to the servants who did what the king asked, but he still has two judgments to make.

First, on the servant who did not put his money to work. He said to those standing by, take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.

[23 : 46] Now, we might think that's cruel as the servants did in the story. Why are you doing that? But remember whose money it is. This one mina is what the king put in the servant's care in the beginning.

So the king is only taking back what belonged to him in the first place. Instead, he gives it to the one with the ten minas. Again, the servants complain, don't they?

Sir, he already has ten. Isn't that unfair to give something to somebody who has a lot and take away from somebody who doesn't have very much? But remember why that servant had a lot and the other one has nothing.

Because the servant who had a lot was faithful with a little. They both started, didn't they, with the same investment. But the response of the first servant was one of faith and faithfulness to the king. The servant who has nothing has nothing because he was unfaithful with what he was given. So is it wrong for the king to take back his investment from an unfaithful servant and instead entrust it to a trustworthy and faithful servant?

[25 : 00] Is that not wise and good and right and fair? In the end, friends, that is how King Jesus will settle with us. If he has given us his gospel and we have not believed it, it will be taken back and its benefits will be withdrawn.

It will not be open to us anymore. It will not be there for us to look at and admire. It will be gone for good. And whatever benefit you might have gained from it, he will give instead to those who have faithfully believed his gospel and put it to work in their lives.

And if that is you, you won't be able to complain about it because it's a fair judgment on the way that you have responded to the gospel and to the King who has given it to you.

We don't get to keep what we haven't faithfully put to work. But those who have been faithful will be entrusted with more. And so, if that is you today, you know of Jesus, you know why he came, what he came to do, and what he came to give and your faith is not yet in him, do not sit on it for too long. That might seem like a wise thing to do, to wait and put it off, but the saying in the end will be true, if you don't use it, you will lose it. Let that not be you.

[26 : 32] Don't lose what you have given. Don't do nothing with it. Hear the command of the King Jesus, put my gospel to work. Or one day that opportunity will be gone.

Notice the servant isn't invited into the kingdom, is he? He's not welcomed by the King. We are meant to understand he is not saved. And so, friends, it doesn't matter how long or how many times

you've been in church or how many times you've heard the good news of Jesus or people speak to you about the Lord.

If you have not put your trust in him, you are not saved. the King will come and you will give an answer. So don't leave it for another day because another day might not come.

But there's another judgment here, isn't there, for those who hated the King and didn't want him to rule over them. The story ends in a shocking way, doesn't it? Verse 27. The King says, those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and kill them in front of me.

And that is meant to shock us. That's meant to wake us up. It's so final, isn't it? And we can't get around this. However much we want to skirt around it, we cannot get around it that there is a punishment for those who do not want Jesus to be their king on the last day.

[27 : 57] We cannot live in his kingdom if we do not want him to be our king. And so, if that is you today, you are saying to Jesus, outwardly or inwardly in your heart, I do not want him to be my king.

Know that you do face this judgment. It's shocking, but it is true. So, how must we respond?

That is the question we started with, isn't it? We have heard the good news of the kingdom. We have heard the king. We have seen him. What must we do? Well, whoever you are today, if you've heard this a thousand times, or this is the very first time that you're hearing it, the good news is that we can be saved simply by coming to Jesus empty-handed to receive his forgiveness and his grace and be right with God.

There is nothing that we can give to him, nothing we can do for him, but confess our sin, put our trust in him to save us and we will be welcomed. He has done everything that is needed for us to be right with God.

So, even if you came thinking today that you didn't want Jesus to be your king, even if you came today having heard that and not having done anything with it, do not leave here without doing something different.

[29 : 22] Today is your opportunity. Hear the king. Put it to work. Hear the good news and believe it. Take it to heart and leave here changed by it to live instead for a different king and a new kingdom because out of the riches of his grace, he has put an infinite investment into your hands.

If you have heard his gospel, a treasure of infinite worth, do not squander it. Do not drop it. Do not leave it here.

Put your faith in him so that you will not face his punishment but instead be welcomed into eternal life in his kingdom forever. Let's pray for that together now.

Let's pray. God, our Father, how we praise you as holy.

will not the judge of all the earth do you what is right and only what is right. Father, we pray you would forgive us when our hearts deceive us, Lord, as to what is right and true.

[30 : 38] Father, we have such a dark and a low understanding of what is right for us to do and so how we thank you for the words of the King Jesus to us today. Lord, help us to live by them.

Lord, let them change us by your Holy Spirit. By the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to guard and to work the good deposit of the gospel in us. Father, how we pray that nobody, Lord, connected with this church would not be saved on that day.

Father, we have heard how you desire for none to be condemned and all to be saved to turn to you in repentance and faith. So, Almighty God, we pray that ye, by your Spirit, would turn hearts to Christ even now.

Lord, we have heard him. Lord, let his word change us, we ask. Keep us faithful until the day of his coming. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen..