

The Parable of the Ten Minas (Luke 19:11-27)

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In Luke 19:11-27, Jesus gave the parable of the ten minas. A mina was a unit of money (and also of weight), which was equal to about three month's wages for a laborer at that time. Jesus began His parable by saying:

“A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come.’ But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’ When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business.” (Luke 19:12-15, ESV)

The first servant came before the nobleman, saying that with the mina he had been given, he had earned ten more minas. The nobleman commended him saying, “Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.” (Luke 19:17, ESV).

A second servant came before him, saying that with the mina he had been given, he had earned five more minas. The nobleman commended this servant also, saying that he would be rewarded with authority over five cities.

And then another servant came before him saying, “Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are a

severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.” (Luke 19:20-21, ESV).

The nobleman was angry with this unprofitable servant, and replied to him saying:

“I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest? And he said to those who stood by, “Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.” And they said to him, “Lord, he has ten minas!” (Luke 19:22-25, ESV).

Jesus concluded His parable with the nobleman’s reply to those who objected to taking the mina from the unprofitable servant and giving it to the servant who had gained ten minas. The nobleman said to them: “I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.” (Luke 19:26-27, ESV)

It is easy to see that the nobleman in this parable symbolized Jesus Himself. One of the lessons we can learn from this parable is the same lesson we learned in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-23), where the seed of the word of God bore fruit only where it fell on “good ground”. The “good ground” was the analogy that Jesus used to symbolize God’s elect, who hear the word of God, understand it, and do indeed come to faith in Him, bearing fruit, “in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.” (Matthew 12:23, ESV).

One lesson given to us from both of these parables is that there is no such thing as a genuine believer who does not bear fruit. Jesus taught in John 15:8 that we prove ourselves to be in truth His disciples by the fact that we bear much fruit to the glory of God. The unprofitable servant here in the parable of the ten minas was named as a “wicked servant” by the nobleman, and because he was unprofitable (or unfruitful), even what he had would be taken away from him.

Just as the seed in the parable of the sower symbolized the word of God, so also the mina in the parable of the ten minas could symbolize the word of God. Some hear the word of God, and by God’s grace they understand it and bear fruit (again, Matthew 13:11, 23). At the same time, others receive the word of God in

their hearing, but they bear no fruit, as was the case where the seed of the word of God fell along the path, on rocky places, or among thorns (Matthew 13:4-7, 19-22).

In much the same way, the unproductive servant in the parable of the ten minas was unfruitful because he was in fact a “wicked” servant. (Consider also Matthew 7:15-23). By the fruitfulness of the servant who had gained ten minas and the servant who had gained five minas, they showed themselves to servants approved and accepted by God, servants who were in truth, Jesus’ disciples (again, John 15:8).

We should bear in mind here that our fruitfulness as genuine believers comes about only because we “abide in the vine”, which is to say we abide in union with Christ. This speaks of our salvation which has come about because by God’s grace and His sovereign choice. We are among those whom the Father had “given” to His Son (John 6:37). We are among those who have been drawn by the Father, effectually called to faith in His Son (John 6:44), and we will all be raised up at the last day. We are those to whom it has been granted by the Father to come to Jesus (John 6:65).

We are God’s elect, Jesus’ sheep. In His time, He calls each of us out by name, and we all do indeed follow Him (John 10:3-4). We have been given eternal life and *no one* can snatch us out of His hand or His Father’s hand (John 10:27-30). All the rest do not believe because they are not His sheep (John 10:26), and it has not been given to them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:11, Colossians 1:27).

The parable of the ten minas is very similar to the parable of the talents, which is given to us in Matthew 25:14-28. A talent was a unit of money roughly equal to about twenty years of wages for a day laborer. In the parable of the talents, a man was going on a journey and he entrusted his property to his servants while he was gone. To one servant he gave five talents, another was given two talents, and another was given one talent, “to each according to his ability” (Matthew 25:15, ESV).

When the master returned, he settled accounts with his servants. The servant who was given five talents earned five more. The servant who was given two talents earned two more. Both of these fruitful servants were commended as “good and faithful servants” (Matthew 25:21,23, ESV), and both were rewarded by their master.

However, the servant who was given one talent earned nothing, but came forward saying: “Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.” (Matthew 25:24-25). The master replied to him saying: “You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.” (Matthew 25:26-28).

Therefore, we see the same lesson taught in both the parable of the ten minas and the parable of the talents. ***In each case, the fruitful servants were named as “good” and “faithful” servants, and they were rewarded. By contrast, the unfruitful servants were named as “wicked” servants, and they were punished.***

We see a similar lesson regarding spiritual fruitfulness in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). The wheat, which symbolizes genuine believers, bears fruit. However, the tares, which symbolizes professing but unregenerate individuals mixed in among genuine believers, cannot bear fruit.

We see another similar lesson in Matthew 7:15-23. In this passage Jesus warned us to watch out for false prophets. He said that we would know them by their fruits. The false prophets in this passage were those who professed to be genuine believers but were not. They were bad trees that could bear no good fruit (Matthew 7:18), and they would one day hear from Jesus: “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.” (Matthew 7:23).

One other thing that we should learn from all of these very similar passages is that every time we see the word “servant” or “disciple” in the Bible, it does not necessarily represent a genuine believer. (Consider also John 6:66, I John 2:19.) There are tares mixed in among the wheat; there are wolves in sheep’s clothing. There are professing but unregenerate individuals mixed in among genuine believers in most every congregation who will receive the word of God in their hearing, but because they are unregenerate, they will bear no good fruit. (Hebrews 6:4-8).

In every case, genuine believers will bear fruit (John 15:8), while the professing but unregenerate individuals will not bear fruit because they cannot. They cannot bear fruit any more than the tares of the field can produce wheat (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). ***All genuine believers will bear fruit to the glory of***

God, and God Himself will work in our lives to bring these things to pass, according to the principle that Jesus taught us in John 12:24-26.

One final lesson that we can glean from the parable of the ten minas is that there are degrees of reward for “good servants” (Luke 19:16-19) and degrees of punishment for “wicked servants” (Luke 19:20-27). The “good servant” who gained ten minas was given charge of ten cities, and the one who gained five minas was given charge of five cities. By contrast the wicked servant who gained nothing lost even the little that he had, and those who were openly hostile toward the noblemen, he ordered to be brought before him and slaughtered (Luke 19:27).