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**The Ten Minas / Coins - Risking all for Jesus****Julian Doorey - Sermon - Cavy Bap - 7-4-19**

(Luke 19:11-27, Matt 25:14-30)

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**Luke 19:11-27: The Parable of the Ten Minas / Coins**

11 While they were listening to this (Jesus calling Zacchaeus the tax collector), Jesus 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. *a* '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 those who have 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.' " (TNIV)  
*a v13 A mina was about three months' wages.*

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**Prayer****Introduction**

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I've found this a difficult text to understand with deep layers of ambiguity. As a Christian committed to justice and peace-making, who believes in a God of grace and love, I don't cope easily with Biblical texts which *seem* unfair and include killing people. As a country we've been rightly shocked to our core by the recent ChCh killings. Words, ideas, texts and narratives can inspire love or hate. There are wildly differing interpretations of this parable depending on the worldview of the writers. Today I'll present several different views and hopefully a few useful applications. Who says the Bible is boring? Who says following Jesus is boring?

**Sound familiar? - Parable of the Minas vs Parable of the Talents**

The 1<sup>st</sup> thing to clarify, is that this Parable of the Minas (or coins) is very similar to the Parable of the Talents in Matt 25:14-30. The basic story is the same, although there's enough differences to make it unclear if they're the same story. It's worth reading the 2 parables, noting the similarities and differences. I think Matthew's Talents parable is more pleasant and easier to interpret.

**Story-line**

The parable follows Jesus calling Zacchaeus the tax collector who ripped people off. Both stories involve how people use money. Zac's story has a happy ending. As a new Jesus follower, Zac promises to give 50% of his wealth to the poor and repay people 4x the amount he cheated them.

We read in v11 that Jesus told the parable because he was approaching his death in Jerusalem and needed to stop his disciples' belief that he would soon establish his earthly kingdom. He knew he would be absent for a time - 2000 years so far. The servants being told to invest or trade the minas (coins) in the absence of the master, reduces any expectations of a quick 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus.

The basic story-line is that a nobleman (rich prince?) puts 10 servants in charge of his money while he's away in a foreign country to be crowned king. Each servant receives 1 mina (coin) - 3 months wages, worth about NZ\$12,000. Upon returning, the king evaluates them according to their return on investment. The king rewards the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 servants who made big returns, with more responsibility. The 3<sup>rd</sup> servant who protected the mina (coin), making no return, is punished by losing his mina.

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Then the king kills everyone who does not support him. Sounds like a tyrant. The Bible was written during a time of tyrants. Most of history has been ruled by tyrants. In ancient times (and some places today), life was often nasty, brutish and short (Thomas Hobbes 1651). Modern rights-based liberal western democracies such as NZ are relatively new. Note the similarity between the parable killing and 1<sup>st</sup> century history. Josephus (1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish historian) recorded that Herod Archelaus (son of Herod the Great) travelled to Rome to be crowned king by Emperor Augustus in 4 BC, about 30 years before Jesus telling this parable. The Jerusalem Jews sent a delegation saying that they did not want Archelaus as their ruler. When King Archelaus returned, he had 3000 Jews slaughtered in the Jerusalem Temple. Perhaps this was a source for this parable - we don't know.

#### **Problem - who do the characters represent?**

The biggest problem in interpreting this story is deciding who the characters represent. Some say:

- The nobleman / king represents Jesus - he departs to be crowned and then returns to judge.
- The subjects who hated the nobleman represent the Jews (especially leaders) who rejected Jesus.
- The 2 servants who earn 10 minas and 5 minas represent exemplary disciples of Jesus.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> servant who earns nothing represents an unfruitful disciple of Jesus.

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However, if the nobleman / king represents Jesus, this presents us with huge problems about the nature and character of Jesus...

1. The 3<sup>rd</sup> servant was afraid of the king (v21)... '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'. Sounds like Jesus?
2. The king calls him wicked, but admits to being hard and corrupt (v22)... 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant!... I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow?'. Is this theft or taxation? How was the servant wicked?
3. The king implies the servant is lazy (v23)... 'Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'. This raises all sorts of issues. We're not talking about modern rule-based banking systems... but local money lenders, often infamous for ripping people off. Investing with a money lender could be seen to support corruption and poverty. Plus, how did the 2 servants achieve a 1000% and 500% return in an honest way? This sounds suspicious. What would have happened if the 2 servants had lost on their investments? Should the 3<sup>rd</sup> servant be judged because he was afraid and cautious?
4. The king punished the 3<sup>rd</sup> servant (v24)... 'Then he said to those standing by, take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas'. Is this justice for the poor?
5. When the on-lookers complained (v25-26)... 'The king replied, I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away'. Is this rewarding the rich and stripping the poor?
6. The king's final ghastly order (v27)... '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'. This doesn't sound like Jesus. This makes Christianity sound like a violent religion... just as other religions are accused of.

This is all incredibly harsh... winners vs losers, rich vs poor, elite vs marginalised, living vs dead. Another interpretation to consider... perhaps the nobleman / king is not meant to represent Jesus?

Could the nobleman / king be an evil ruler or the devil?

In John 12:31, John 14:30, Eph 2:2 and elsewhere, we read about the 'ruler / prince of this world'. He is opposed to God. He is ruthless and promotes those who are like him. In a worldly sense, those who are rich become richer, the poor receive nothing and those who cheat move up the ladder. The poor Palestinians of Jesus' day (in fact of any day, anywhere) understand these things. In Bangladesh, rather than wealth trickling down to the poor, wealth trickles up to the rich.

Could this parable be a social critique?

A liberation theology tries to understand why there are poor and rich people (social analysis) and how God wants us to respond. Perhaps the nobleman / king is like an absentee landlord... a hard person who profits by exploitation and the sweat of the poor. The 3<sup>rd</sup> servant is rightly afraid of him. He blows the whistle on the king, speaking truth to power, and is punished, while the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 servants desert him. From a liberation theology perspective, people must act in solidarity with others when confronting social, political and economic injustices.

Does the nobleman / king represent Jesus, or represent a corrupt tyrant? I see problems with both.

**Application**

Where do we go from here? While being aware of the ambiguity that exists with this parable, I want to present some general learnings and applications... as best I can...

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1. Living between times: We're living between Jesus coming the 1<sup>st</sup> time, and Jesus returning... just as the people in a parable were living between the king departing and returning. We describe this as the 'already / not yet' of God's kingdom. Jesus introduced God's kingdom (rule and reign of God), but it's not yet operating in its fullness. Jesus will return to fully establish his kingdom, but we don't know when.
2. Work for God: We're called to work for God, extending God's kingdom as much as we can. God doesn't need us, but chooses to work through us. We're called to love God, love people, love enemies, share the good news of Jesus, assist the poor, care for creation etc. God gives us resources to do the work, just as the king gave resources to the servants in the parable. Our resources belong to God... we're investing God's resources. This includes our knowledge, skills, experience, time, wealth and health. We're called to look for and make opportunities.
3. Take risks for Jesus: We're called to risk all in following Jesus, just as Jesus gave all in coming to earth and dying on a cross for our sins. Investing in anything is risky, sometimes dangerous and often very hard work. We don't know what the outcome will be. Investing in love or justice or humanity or the gospel or mission or co-working with God in jobs is risky. Saying yes to following Jesus, involves saying no to something else. High kingdom returns are possible. The 1<sup>st</sup> 2 servants had returns of 1000% and 500%, outrageous figures in a human market-place sense, but possible in a God's kingdom sense. Disciples of Jesus who are good stewards may be rewarded with further opportunities, just as the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 servants were.
4. Use or lose gifts: We're called to use our gifts for God or lose them. As Peter Parker's Uncle Ben in Spider Man (and others in history) said... 'with great power comes great responsibility'. To whom much has been given, much is expected. Just as the 3<sup>rd</sup> servant lost his gift, so we too lose our gifts if we don't use them. People blessed with the gift of the gospel are expected to share the gift with others. Just as we can lose our musical, sporting and job skills, so we can lose our spiritual and missional skills, just watching as churches decline. We're accountable for stewarding the gifts God has given us. If you won't invest time and resources in God's work, God will find someone else who will.

5. Always choose life: We have a free-will choice to choose life. God sent his only son Jesus, who lived and died for our sins, making it possible to restore our broken relationships with God, each other and the earth. We're invited by faith to believe in Jesus as saviour... to follow Jesus during our time on earth... and to look forward to eternal life with Jesus after we die. Alternatively, we have a free-will choice to ignore God's gift of Jesus and forfeit eternal life.

### **Conclusion**

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Jesus was famous for communicating through parables - defined as 'short / simple stories used to illustrate (teach) an idea, a truth, a lesson, a moral or spiritual principle' - often about God's kingdom. This parable is not simple. However, probably 95% of the Bible can be easily understood, while 5% contains mystery. And maybe that's the way it should be for God to be God, and we to be humans. Don't let the 5% of difficult scripture or difficult questions about life and faith put you off having faith in and a relationship with the God that made and loves you, as expressed clearly in the other 95% of scripture.

Caleb Davies has demonstrated his relationship with God today through Baptism. He has responded to the 95% of scripture which is straight forward. I've enjoyed watching Caleb's life and faith grow with a sense of meaning and purpose over the last few years. To Caleb I want to say:

- You're living between times
- You have work to do for God
- Take risks for Jesus
- Use or lose your gifts
- And always choose life.

What about the rest of us? Are we willing to respond to the 95% of scripture which clearly describes God's love for us? Are we willing to risk all for Jesus in response to his giving all for us on the cross - offering us a relationship with God? If anything has challenged you this morning, and you wish to discuss things, or feel you need to make a response to Jesus, come and talk with me after the service. Thank you.

End.