

In Business with Jesus

Luke 19 v 11-26

Context:

The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) have one single aim in their mission, namely, to encourage and equip churches in the UK to help their members understand that, whoever they are and whatever they do in their daily lives, they are on mission with Jesus – what they do matters to God. For too many years Christians have believed that serving the Lord means being a Vicar or a missionary or maybe a youth worker, and have consequently ignored the significance of other jobs, occupations and professions. However, here at St James our motto is **'ALL OF LIFE FOR CHRIST'** – we believe that Jesus is interested in *everything* we do as Christians, whether we are a full time parent or carer, a teacher, an architect, a road sweeper, a barrister or a barista – it all matters to God! God has liberally showered his gifts and talents upon us and Jesus urges us, warns us even, to make sure we maximise our potential for his glory. In today's study we will explore one of Jesus' parables that picks up on this important theme.

Observation:

1. Why did Jesus tell this parable, according to v 11?
2. How does the story begin in v 12?
3. What did he do before he left home (v 13)?
4. What was the initial reaction of his subjects and why, according to v 14?
5. What did he do, however, on his return home (v 15)?
6. What was the outcome for the first subject and what was the response (v 16-17)?
7. What was the outcome for the second subject and what was the response (v 18-19)?
8. What was the outcome for the third subject and why (v 20-21)?
9. How did the master respond in v 22-24?
10. What was the by-standers reaction in v 25 and what was the moral application of the story in v 26?

Meaning:

NOTE: In telling this parable, Jesus seems to be drawing on an historical event well known to his hearers. It was common at the time for local client kings of the Roman Empire, including those in Israel/Judea such as Herod the Great and his successors, to have to travel to Rome and seek official permission to become the local ruler, as they would be governing under Roman authority. One such ruler, Archelaus (mentioned in Matthew 2 v 22), made this journey himself when his father, Herod the Great died, in an attempt to gain the throne and become 'puppet' King of Judea. However, he was so unpopular among the people, that a Jewish delegation followed him to Rome to resist his appointment. Caesar Augustus did in fact approve his appointment but reduced the size of his territory in recognition of the people's objections.

1. What do you think is the connection between the expectations of the people mentioned in v 11 and the parable Jesus told? Why would Jesus have told a story like this to address their expectations?
2. What does the fact that the nobleman entrusted his subjects with his money with the command to 'put the money to work' while he was away, and the fact that his subjects hated him, indicate about their relationship and their opinion of each other?

3. How do the rewards for the first and second subjects relate to the reason the rewards were given (see v 16-19)?
4. What do you think was the motivation behind the third subject's behaviour (v 20-21)?
5. What do you think of the nobleman's reaction to the third subject in v 24? Do you think this was unfair and unduly harsh or a just punishment for the man's behaviour?
6. Jesus gives the moral and spiritual punchline to the parable in v 26. What do you think he means and how do you feel about it?

Application:

1. Jesus told this story because people expected the kingdom of God to appear at any moment, followed by God's final judgement of rewards and punishments. The Bible teaches that this judgement day will one day happen when Jesus comes again. So, how do we reconcile the biblical teachings that we are saved by *grace* and not by our own *works* (e.g. Ephesians 2 v 8-9) and yet that God will expect *evidence* of our good works on that judgement day (e.g. Ephesians 2 v 10)?
2. What do you think the money in the story represents and what are the implications for us today?
3. In the story, the nobleman rewards the trustworthiness of two of his subjects by giving them more responsibility. Why do you think he does this and what might this teach us about the way God works?
4. What are some of the reasons we might fail to use the gifts God has entrusted to us? How can we overcome these barriers?
5. How would you sum up the moral and spiritual point of this story and what are the main lessons Jesus wants us to learn?

Pray:

- Thank God for his future coming kingdom.
- Thank God for the gifts and responsibilities he gives us and pray that we might use them well.
- Pray for God's grace to serve him better.