

A study of Jesus' Parables

ECONOMICS

"ROI" stands for "Return on Investment." Simply put, if you invest time or money in something, the "return" is what did you get back. If I invest in a single stock from the Stock Market, the money I gain or lose is my ROI. The more complex the investment, the more difficult it can be to calculate the return.

Last week, we discussed wealth and privilege. We all have some, even if it's not much. That's especially true for the Christian in light of eternity. Today's parable picks up where we left off last week, "How are you investing in eternity?"

Every minute and every dollar you have is an opportunity, in other words, an investment. The best returns, however, are found through investing in people. It's a complex investment, and as we'll see in today's parable, it doesn't always work out. However, the ROI on a life can have generations of impact. It's an investment that can multiply beyond our imaginations. In fact, that's our hope for you.

LUKE 17:12-24

¹² Therefore he said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return." ¹³ And he summoned ten of his slaves, gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business with these until I come back.' ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to be king over us!' ¹⁵ When he returned after receiving the kingdom, he summoned these slaves to whom he had given the money. He wanted to know how much they had earned by trading. ¹⁶ So the first one came before him and said, 'Sir, your mina has made ten minas more.' ¹⁷ And the king said to him, 'Well done, good slave! Because you have been faithful in a very small matter, you will have authority over ten cities.' ¹⁸ Then the second one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has made five minas.' ¹⁹ So the king said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' ²⁰ Then another slave came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina that I put away for safekeeping in a piece of cloth.' ²¹ For I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You withdraw what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.' ²² The king said to him, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! So you knew, did you, that I was a severe man, withdrawing what I didn't deposit and reaping what I didn't sow?' ²³ Why then didn't you put my money in the bank, so that when I returned I could have collected it with interest?' ²⁴ And he said to his attendants, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has ten.'

SCOUTING REPORT

SETTING After Zacchaeus' generosity as Jesus nears Jerusalem.

NEED Crowd misunderstood the coming kingdom.

STORY A King, a country, and 3 servants.

TRUTH Faithfulness to Christ will be rewarded.

DISCUSSION

What do you think most people believe about eternity? How does that line up with what you understand the Bible teaches?

1. Where did the nobleman go and what did he do before he left? (12-13)

2. What were the reports and rewards from the three slaves we know about? (16-20, 24)

Report

Reward

Slave 1:

Slave 2:

Slave 3:

3. What does this parable teach about how Christians should use their time until Jesus comes back?

4. What are some ways you can invest in eternity starting now?

We are somebody else's investment. Our rewards are their rewards. If you need help in sharing the Gospel, or in understanding it for yourself, talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

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STUDY NOTES

COMPETENCE & COMMITMENT

Famed NFL coach, Tom Landry, once said, "Leadership is getting someone to do what they don't want to do, to achieve what they want to achieve." Every NFL player wants to win the Super Bowl. Not every player, however, is willing to do what it takes to win.

Good leadership focuses on developing people. You find committed people, teach them to do the right thing the right way, and trust that they will do it when it counts. It's the double-sided coin of competency and commitment that builds trust. The more competent and committed you become, the more trust you earn. The problem comes when the people you're developing, that you're investing in, waiver in their commitment or reveal hidden incompetence. Every leader has been let down in this way by those they've trusted to achieve a common goal.

Jesus was no stranger to this feeling. As we read the four Gospels, we continuously see challenges of commitment among his followers. Likewise, many times we witness the disciples' lack of competence in a variety of ways.

In today's parable, Jesus sets up a scenario responding to the thought *that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately* (Luke 19:22). We understand, on this side of the Cross, that Jesus was referring to himself as the **nobleman** going **to a distant country**. He crushed sin on the Cross and for that reason he was set **to receive for himself a kingdom**. And although Jesus is currently away, one day he will **return**.

Just as the nobleman **summoned ten of his slaves** commanding them, **'Do business with these until I come back,'** so also, Jesus gave his disciples a job to do. Just like the nobleman, Jesus entrusted to them a great work. This parable teaches us what we are to do with that trust, and how the work we do requires both competence and commitment.

A RESPONSIBILITY ILLUSTRATES FAITHFULNESS

Eventually, the nobleman returned, now as a king, and **summoned these slaves to whom he had given the money. He wanted to know how much they had earned by trading**. Like any investor, the king wanted to hear about the return on his investment. Although, ten slaves were entrusted with an investment, Jesus only tells us the report on three.

The first slave **came before him and said, "Sir, your mina has made ten minas more."** Doubling the investment was good. **The king responded to him, "Well done, good slave! Because you have been faithful in a very small matter, you will have authority over ten cities."**

The second slave **came and said, "Sir, your mina has made five minas."** **So the king said to him, "And you are to be over five cities."**

The third slave to report **said, "Sir, here is your mina that I put away for safekeeping in a piece of cloth."** The third slave played it safe. He didn't gain any money, but what was important to him, was just not losing it.

He went on to explain his fear of the king. **The king said to him, "I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! ... Why then didn't you put my money in the bank, so that when I returned I could have collected it with interest?" And he said to his attendants, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has ten.'**

FAITHFULNESS REQUIRES MULTIPLICATION

Why did the king get so mad at the slave? After all, he didn't lose him any money. Note, however, that safety wasn't the goal. The nobleman, soon to be king, commanded them to "Do business." Business isn't hiding your investment. It's multiplying your investment. Since this slave could have made *some* money through the banks, we know that something is fishy. This man lacked either competence, commitment, or the third ingredient that pulls it all together, character.

The nobleman didn't give the slaves the money for *their* benefit. However, he did reward their faithfulness. This is a mistake many of us make. It's not about us. Christ gave us His Spirit to change the world *through* us (Romans 10:14-15). Although Christ will reward faithfulness, our investment is for the good of people and the expansion of his kingdom.

As we said in the introduction, every minute and every dollar you have is an option. The same is also true of every relationship—every interaction. You can invest in something that will die with you, or you can invest in eternity. Someone invested in you enough for you to share. Do them the honor of investing in someone else. In the same way, develop competence in sharing (1 Peter 3:15). Commit to sharing (Matthew 28:19). And, possess the character that lives consistent with the message you're sharing (Ephesians 4:1). In this way, you will practice faithfulness through multiplication.