

While they were listening to this, he 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.<sup>12</sup> He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.<sup>13</sup> So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’

<sup>14</sup> “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’

<sup>15</sup> “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.

<sup>16</sup> “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’

<sup>17</sup> “ ‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’

<sup>18</sup> “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’

<sup>19</sup> “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’

<sup>20</sup> “Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth.’<sup>21</sup> 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.’

<sup>22</sup> “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?

<sup>23</sup> Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’

<sup>24</sup> “Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’

<sup>25</sup> “ ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’

<sup>26</sup> “He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.’<sup>27</sup> 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.’ ” (NIV84)

Theme: Thankfulness leads to Faithfulness

Before Jesus left to go to heaven he told his disciples what they should do while he is gone. All four Gospels record Jesus giving these instructions to his disciples, but the Great Commission, the last words of Matthew’s gospel, is probably the most well-known, **go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** It wasn’t long after this that Jesus ascended into heaven in front of his disciples. As they were still looking up into the sky some angels came down and told the disciples that Jesus would return the same way he came—on the clouds of heaven. And when he returns he is going to judge the living and the dead. The basis of his judgment is simple: Those who believe will be saved and taken to live with him forever in the glories of heaven; but those who do not believe will be punished with an everlasting death with the devil in hell.

Of course, we don’t know when Christ will return—he could come at any moment; he could come later today or 1000 years from now. And while we wait for his return, we have jobs to do. The disciples were the leaders of the Church at the time so what God told them he is really saying to the whole Church—our job is to make disciples of all nations. And there are two ways this is accomplished: 1. By baptizing and 2. By teaching everything found in God’s Word. In other words, we spread the gospel throughout the world so that the Holy Spirit can work through that gospel and make disciples. Simple directives; but not so easy to accomplish. This means that the gospel has to actually be spread around the world to share that gospel. That requires people who know God’s Word, are able to teach it to others, it requires the study of languages, and so on. All of this takes time, all of this takes money, and a lot of hard work. And God doesn’t want anyone to be condemned, but all to come to the knowledge of the truth. So he gives us gifts and abilities to help us spread the gospel throughout the world and to be able to baptize people of all nations.

In the parable that Jesus told in our text for today a nobleman goes away to a distant country but before he leaves he calls together 10 of his servants and gives them each a mina and tells them, **Put this**

**money to work until I come back.** He doesn't tell them exactly what to do with the money; but he expects them to conduct business with it—buy, sell, trade, and so on. Do something useful with the gift I have given you, do something with the money to make more money. A Mina was a Greek form of currency worth about 100 days of wages for a common laborer, to put it into today's money, let's say about 10,000 dollars. Jesus told this parable called, "the Parable of the Ten Minas" right after he met with Zacchaeus, a few days before Palm Sunday. About four days later, in Jerusalem during Holy Week, Jesus told a similar parable, recorded by Matthew—the "Parable of the Talents." In that parable a master gave three different servants all different sums of money—all substantial gifts. Both parables make the same point. Jesus is the noblemen who leaves to be crowned king only to return at any time. The gift of money represents the gifts and abilities God has given to us in order to do what he has commanded us to do. When the master returned there are two servants who did well. One made 10 minas, the equivalent of 100,000 dollars in today's money. Another servant made 5 minas, the equivalent of 50,000 dollars. The master was pleased with them both. But then a third servant came in. What did he do with his gift? Well, nothing. He was afraid because his master was a harsh man, that he would do something wrong with it so he decided to keep it hidden. He didn't even bother putting it into a bank to collect interest. This servant wasn't faithful in the least with the gift he had been given, and he would be judged accordingly.

Right now Jesus is up in heaven and while he is gone he has given us, as a Church, a job to do—spread the gospel. And he has given us gifts and abilities to do that job. The sum total of those gifts, you can say are similar—the master gave each servant a mina. But those gifts that he gives us are varied—the master in Matthew gave each servant a different number of Talents. And we certainly see that play-out in our lives and the lives of others. It takes a lot to spread the gospel—to baptize all nations and teach everyone everything found in God's Word, it is no small task that the Lord has given us while he is away. And so he gives us all different sets of gifts and abilities so that together we can spread the gospel. Some are good at teaching young children God's Word, others are better at leading adults. Some know God's Word well and can teach people of all ages, some would rather

visit shut-ins. Some have the gift of time, while others are able to support the spread of the gospel financially. Some are "people-persons" who can relate to just about anyone and are always friendly; others serve the Lord behind the scenes, maybe it's watching our finances, or making sure God's house looks the best it can, whether it's mowing, cleaning, or fixing something. There are some who have no problem traveling to the other side of the world to tell complete strangers about their Savior, others are more comfortable sharing the gospel with a good friend they have known for years. The point is we all have different gifts and abilities—what someone is good at, you may not be; where you excel, others may struggle. We are to use these varied gifts and abilities to make disciples of all nations by spreading the gospel. All of us can find at least one thing that we are good at—and probably multiple things, to spread the gospel. Paul talks about this in Romans 12, **We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.**

We all want to tell ourselves that we are like the first two servants, but the problem is that many times we act like the last servant—we fail to make use of the gifts God has given us. And we'll have our own reasons—we are too busy to make use of the gifts and abilities that we have—you'd like to volunteer more but you simply have too many things going on. Maybe you don't want to share your faith because you are afraid of how people are going to react? You don't want to anger someone or alienate yourself from your friends, you find it easier simply to keep your mouth shut and your faith to yourself. Perhaps the problem is that you simply love the things of this world too much. You simply can't give that much to the Church because you need that money to buy that new gadget or to save up for that something big. Some are hesitant to do anything because they don't think they are capable—they don't see what gifts God has given them; perhaps you don't think the gifts that you have apply all that well to the Church and the spread of the gospel. Or, you're afraid that you'll mess up—that you'll say something that will cause a mess of

everything—you tell yourselves, it's better to stay away and not do anything than to say something wrong or anger someone. In the end, we make all these excuses as to why we don't make use of the gifts and abilities what we have. But they are just that, excuses—like the wicked servant, but those excuses don't work and the gospel suffers.

But let's not focus on the one wicked, lazy servants, instead, look at the two faithful servants. There was no fear of their master, there wasn't any complaining that he had given them a job to do while he was away. You can imagine their excitement that their master had given them the opportunity to put his gifts to work. That is our attitude as well. Thankfulness leads to faithfulness. The past two weeks we have talked about the gifts God has given us. Yes, there are all the physical gifts that we have—we have all that we need to live, and countless number of things that we don't need. Even those poor in our country are considered rich in the eyes of the rest of the world! Then he blesses us with friends who love us and family who provide for us—people we know that we can lean on and rely on. We could talk for hours on end when talking about all the blessings he gives us day after day. But on top of it all—and far more important than any other gift we have, is our salvation. Jesus gave up his life for you, shedding his blood on the cross. He paid for your sins and credited you with his perfect life, a gift his righteousness. Three days later he rose from the dead and gives you the sure hope of eternal life with him in heaven. Before the creation of the world he chose you to be his own, so he brought people into your lives to share the gospel with you and adopted you as his dear child through the waters of baptism. He brought you to faith and through faith you receive all that he has done for you. In the past someone or a group of Christians used their gifts and abilities to share the gospel with you and you were brought to faith and kept in that one true faith.

As Christians we are overwhelmingly thankful for all the blessings God has given us—blessings that we don't earn or deserve, blessings that are worth any amount of gold or silver. And how do we show our thankfulness to the Lord? By being faithful to the gifts God has given us. Like the two faithful servants, like those who shared the gospel with us, let us use the gifts and abilities the Lord has given us faithfully. Let do all we can to help spread the gospel and show others the love of Christ. Of course, when we fail—which will happen often,

we look to Christ and his forgiveness. And we use that forgiveness for motivation. We all have different gifts and abilities—but no matter what those are, we are all richly blessed by the Lord! And no matter what gifts we have or don't have there are two things all of us, regardless of age or ability are able to do to help spread the gospel: 1. All of us are able to speak, and all of us know who the Savior of the world is—therefore, all of us can tell others about their Savior, and the reason for the hope that you have. 2. All of us can pray for the spread of the gospel, all of us can pray that the Lord would work through that gospel and bring many to faith. And that is a prayer that the Lord will always answer!

Soon our Savior, Jesus Christ, will return to judge the world. What will he find when he returns: faithful servants, or lazy and faithless servants? We won't always be faithful to God and in the use of our gifts and abilities, but that is why Christ came in the first place—to save us. Therefore let us use our gifts and abilities to help do and support the job of the Church. To spread the gospel, that others may believe and join us in heaven with Christ on the Last Day. Amen.