



INVESTING FOR JESUS

Part 79 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 19:11-27 | June 26, 2011

LUKE 19:11-27

¹¹ As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. ¹² He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. ¹³ Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' ¹⁷ And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' ¹⁸ And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' ¹⁹ And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' ²⁰ Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; ²¹ 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.' ²² He said to him, '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? ²³ Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' ²⁴ And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' ²⁵ And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' ²⁶ '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. ²⁷ But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"

INTRODUCTION

Alrighty, we're in Luke part 79, "Investing for Jesus." We're in Luke 19:11-27. And as you're finding your spot, one of the things we like to do at Mars Hill is see Jesus as Prophet, Priest, and King. These are big titles that we find commonly in the Old Testament. They're offices of leaders that God raised up. And Jesus comes as the ultimate fulfillment of all three.

THE ROLES OF PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

And I tell this to you because we've been in Luke now for almost two years, and as we're going through Luke, some of you are gonna have your favorite stories, your favorite sayings, your favorite events from the life and ministry of Jesus as recorded in Luke. And which ones are your favorite are likely indicative of maybe what kind of person you tend to be, a little more priestly, prophetic, or kingly. Those of you who really love Jesus as prophet, as we've gone through Luke, you're gonna gravitate toward those occasions where Jesus is preaching and teaching and proclaiming the truth, where he's rebuking error and correcting false teaching and quoting the Old Testament and arguing passionately and boldly and compellingly for the truth of the Bible.

Those of you who are more prophets, you're going to really gravitate towards those scenes. Those of you who are priests, you're gonna love those occasions where Jesus feeds those who are hungry, heals those who are sick, includes those who are outsiders and marginalized, and loves those who are suffering and hurting. You're gonna have a real affection for Jesus' acts of compassion. This is how Jesus is our priest. He mediates between us and the Father. He brings love and grace and truth and mercy to us, and he brings us into the healing hands of God.

For those of you who are more kingly in nature, you're gonna really appreciate the stories where Jesus is organizing his ministry, where he is showing fruitfulness, where he is commending faithfulness, where he is talking insofar as practical matters go about issues of stewardship and money and talent and treasures and possessions and investments and return on investments because that portrays Jesus as King.

So, again, which are you? Are you more prophetic? You love it when Jesus is preaching and teaching the truth. Are you more priestly? You love it when he's helping the hurting, the suffering, and the poor. Are you more kingly? Do you really love those occasions where Jesus is organizing and leading and fund-raising and talking about efficiency?

A VERY KINGLY MESSAGE

What we need to do is understand the fullness of Jesus and appreciate the totality of his ministry. And so today we come to a section of Luke's Gospel that is exceedingly kingly. Some of you who are more prophetic, you won't find the kind of huge theological controversy that maybe you sometimes

like. For those of you who are more priestly, it's not a story about a suffering person; it's a story about some stewards.

So today, we're going to learn a lot about Jesus as King. And as we learn about Jesus as King, I need you to think in your own life about your own investments because the big idea here is about investing. Do you have a college fund for yourself or your children? Do you have a retirement account? Do you have any equity in your home? Do you have a life insurance policy? Do you have a disability insurance policy? Do you even just have credit cards that you're wanting to get a good interest rate on so that you might be a good steward of your wealth? If so, that's the kind of mindset we need to have going into Luke 19, thinking like kings, thinking about efficiency and effectiveness and investing and stewarding.

Jesus starts by revealing himself as a King, and he wants us to begin by understanding the kingdom of God. So we read this in Luke 19:11-14, "As they heard these things," and in context it's about Zacchaeus, a very rich man whom Jesus saved and he became a repentant man who then became very generous toward the poor and repaying those he had ripped off. That happened in just the prior section of Luke. So, "As they heard these things [about Zacchaeus], he proceeded to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He said therefore, '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,"'" very kingly language, ""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."'"

JESUS IS A KING WITH A KINGDOM

Jesus here is saying he is a King. And he is a King with a kingdom. And as Jesus reveals himself as a King, he wants to understand the nature of his kingdom. And so he teaches us about himself as King and his coming kingdom in a form of what is called a parable. And we've looked at many of these in Luke's Gospel, but a parable is a little story that teaches a big idea.

Here, Jesus gives us a parable where there's a nobleman. You get the impression, perhaps, of a young man who is loved and respected by some, but hated and opposed by others, because he's growing in power and influence. He is the rightful heir to the throne of a kingdom. He is to be coronated as king. So before his inauguration, he has to go away from his people to then be received and appointed as a king so that then he can return and assume the throne and rule and reign. That's the big idea of the little story that Jesus teaches. And it said that he teaches this while he's on his way to Jerusalem.

So in context, Jesus is saying that he's like that. He's about a week away from his crucifixion in Jerusalem where he's going to die on the cross in our place for our sins. He then, a few days later, would rise from death, conquering Satan, sin, death, hell, and the wrath of God for those who turn from sin and trust in him. He then would appear over the course of some forty days, evidencing his resurrection from death. And then ultimately he was going to ascend back into heaven.

So he's about seven weeks away, roughly speaking, at this point in his life, from his return to the kingdom of heaven where he had come from as eternal God, entering into human history as a man. And what he's saying is, "I am a king and I have come to establish a kingdom, but before I occupy the throne and I rule and reign, I need to go away. And I'm going to go away for a while. And while I'm gone, there will be some who love me, there will be some who hate me, but I will return and I will assume the throne and I will rule and reign as the King of kings with a kingdom that never ends." That's the big idea of the parable.

In this, Jesus is a king, and his rule is a kingdom. And his going away is an opportunity for us to be those faithful citizens and servants that are spoken of in the parable. It is told that as the king-to-be-appointed is away, his faithful servants and citizens are serving the cause of the king and serving the cause of the kingdom.

That's exactly where we find ourselves in the history of the world. Jesus has come, he has atoned for sin, he has risen from death, he is King of kings, Lord of lords, he is away for a season, returned into the kingdom of heaven, and he will bring with him the kingdom of heaven to bear on earth, and he will rule and reign, assume the throne as King over all. In the meantime, the church is to be serving him. The church is to be citizens of his kingdom and witnesses among the kingdoms of the earth. That's why Mars Hill Church exists: to plant churches, more places where people meet Jesus, and make disciples, help people grow to be better followers of, servants to Jesus Christ as our King, as our point of ultimate, our person of ultimate allegiance and alliance.

INVESTING FOR JESUS

What he says then, in the meantime, is that the opportunity we've been given is kind of like a servant. And he tells the story that before the nobleman went away, and prior to his return to rule and reign as king, he gave gifts, investments, and opportunities to each of his servants, just as God has done to every Christian and to every Christian church. And while he is away he wants us to be investing those opportunities well so that when he returns he gets a good return on investment.

This is the same kind of thing that you and I want. We give our money to a college fund, to a mortgage company, to a retirement account, to a disability account, and we would all be very disappointed if we found that that money was mismanaged and that our wealth and our investment was squandered and misappropriated. We'd be very unhappy to discover when all of a sudden we did our investigation that, in fact, an opportunity had been missed or perhaps many opportunities had been missed.

And so Jesus tells us to view our lives as investors, that we only have so many hours and so many dollars and we need to invest them in such a way that when our King, the Lord Jesus, returns and he calls our whole life into account and examination, that he would be pleased with the way in which we have stewarded all of the time, talent, and treasure that he's entrusted to us.

So the big idea is investing for Jesus. And we just read previously that he, in the parable, tells the story where the nobleman gives to each of his ten servants one mina. Now, one mina, we don't know what that means, but it is the equivalent of about three-months' salary in our day. So think of it this way. Think of someone receiving, let's say, \$15,000. If you take the average household income from all the locations of our campuses, it averages out to about \$15,000. So you get the picture in your mind that \$15,000 is handed out, and there is a season in which investments can be made, and then all of a sudden the nobleman returns, it's ultimately the Lord Jesus, and here's what he uncovers and discovers.

We read this about investing for Jesus in Luke 19:15–17, continuing with the parable, “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. The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’”

So the first steward who is spoken of in the story as a person who was given roughly \$15,000. The nobleman goes away, returns home, meets with this investor that he had entrusted his resources to, and asks, “How did it go? Tell me about my return on investment.” And he says, “I took your \$15,000 and I turned it into \$150,000.” Unbelievable investment. Unbelievable investment. And so the response is, “Well done, good servant.”

The same thing we all want to hear from the Lord Jesus on the last day, “Well done, good servant. You took the money that I gave you, the days that I entrusted to you, the spiritual gifts that I, in fact, put in you, and you invested them well, and there's a good return on investment.” You need to know that Jesus is returning, and that we will have to give an account for our lives, either when we die or when he returns, either one, whichever comes first. And we all want to hear, “Well done, good servant.” And then he goes on to say, “Because you've been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.”

LEADERSHIP STARTS WITH STEWARDSHIP

Jesus here is teaching a principle. For those of you who aspire to leadership and to influence and to impact, you need to start small. No one gets to start off as the CEO of a company. Nobody gets to start off first day playing football as the quarterback on the team. Nobody gets to be the general manager of the franchise. You don't start there. You start in a simple place, a humble place, a lowly place, and you take the small opportunities that are given to you and you become, by the grace of God, a good steward of them, making a good return on investment, doing the things you're supposed to do, and over time your influence grows.

Pride is when we want to be in a position of leadership, but quite frankly we just have not proven ourselves to be competent and qualified for. The result is that some of us will get into positions of leadership and then fail miserably because we don't have the experience, we don't have the humility, and we don't have the wisdom to sustain the office or the opportunity that we've assumed.

The key is to start small. And this is true with everything. This is a true principle in business. This is a true principle in ministry. This is a true principle in every single aspect of life. God gives you a little opportunity, you make the most of it. As you make the most of it, God gives you a little bigger opportunity. As you make the most of that, he'll give you another opportunity.

Life is to be a series of humble, ongoing opportunities and lessons, successes and failures, but as we prove ourselves to be faithful in little things, we can be entrusted with even more things. And this is absolutely true. And he says that ultimately here this servant, this steward, would be given opportunity to rule over ten cities.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

This is speaking ultimately about the kingdom of God. And some of you have a very erroneous, inaccurate view of the kingdom of God. And we've debunked it earlier in Luke, so I won't belabor the point, but some of us have a picture that we'll just be, you know, real chubby babies wearing diapers with small wings that can't really transport us, sitting on clouds, plucking harps, and that's heaven. That's not heaven. (To me, that would, in fact, be hell.)

The kingdom here is one where it really is the world as God intended it. See, when God made the earth and everything on the earth, he said that it was all very good in Genesis 1:31. And then we see in Genesis 3, early on in the Bible, in human history, where sin comes in, and it infects, corrupts everyone and every thing.

And the kingdom of God is where the Lord Jesus Christ rules and reigns as King. And there is no power that is contrary to him and there is no one who sits alongside of him in equal authority. He rules and reigns over all peoples, times, places, cultures, and circumstances. The curse is lifted, death is no more, suffering, injustice, evil, oppression are forever banished, and the world is as you and I truly would want it to be—one where people are loved, God is honored, and life is valued. That is the kingdom of God.

And that the picture of the earth is that it would be renewed, that it would be made new, kind of like our resurrection bodies. There will be a similarity, but also a dissimilarity. We'll look the same when we rise from death, but at the same time our bodies will be made, the Bible says, incorruptible, completely transformed. So it will be with the earth. But the earth will be perfect as God intended, perhaps even superseding the first creation in its magnificence and glory and beauty. And on the earth there will be cities. There will be glorious, fantastic, beautiful cities, where the people of God dwell together in harmony. There will be culture, there will be art, there will be eating and drinking and feasting and laughing and singing and joy.

Think of this world without sin, Satan, death, the curse, all of its effects, and with the presence of Jesus over all, filled with nothing but believers who

love him and serve one another. That's a good picture of the kingdom of God. And so in the kingdom of God there will be cities, and Jesus will appoint certain people to rule over certain cities. And it won't be ruling as an overlord, it'll be ruling under the risen Lord. It'll be with humility and love and affection. But friends, it's not a bad thing to say, "I aspire to leadership. I wanna make a difference. I wanna help people. I wanna make this a better world." Those longings in our heart are ultimately only fulfilled, completely fulfilled, in the kingdom of God.

Here's what we want some of you to aspire to: by humility and the grace of God, a life of greatness. We want you with your family, with your business, with your ministry, with a life that God has given you, to use those opportunities to make a good return on investment so that you could hear, "Well done, good servant." And then, perhaps, even when you enter into the kingdom of God, that Jesus would say, "I want you to rule over this city, over these ten cities. I want you to love and serve and help these people." And this is what Jesus wants us to aspire to. Not arrogance, but humble leadership, humble service, and kingdom compassion. That's the first person and their return on investment, ten-fold.

DIFFERING DEGREES OF FAITHFULNESS

There is also a second, in Luke 19:18-19, "And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' And he said to him, 'You are to be over five cities.'" So he says, "Lord, I took your \$15,000 and I turned it into \$75,000." Again, what a great job, what a great steward, what a good investment. Jesus says, "You will now rule over five cities."

I want you to see here, friends, that everyone who is a Christian does enter into the kingdom of God, but there will be differing, varying rewards for degrees of faithfulness. For the person who lovingly, faithfully, humbly, fruitfully invests their life for Jesus from a young age until they die, as an elderly person, there will be greater rewards for them than for the person who was a Christian but was lazy, inconsistent, irresponsible, proud, selfish, wrongly investing their life, and wasting their days.

See, Jesus here is talking about investing your life and getting a good return on investment, a good eternal reward on your earthly life's investment. And he's doing so again on his way, literally, to Jerusalem where within the week, roughly, he's going to die on the cross in our place for our sins. Jesus is not wasting his life. He's investing his life for the glory of God and the good of his people.

DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE

Jesus here is teaching us not to waste our life. Yes, some of you, at this point, would still go to heaven, but your rewards would be minimal or negligible. You've really not done a great job with your life. And some of you would say, "No, it doesn't matter. I have sound doctrine." Well, that's what the prophets say. Or, you know, "I love God in my heart and I'm a nice person." Well, that's what the priests say. But this is what the King is telling us.

Some of you don't like to think in terms of dollars and days and hours and investments and return on investments. Some of you would even, in a way that sounds pious, but is really now, we find unbiblical, say, "Well, you know, Christianity's not a business and church is not a business and ministry's not a business. It's not all about the money and it's not all about the results. It's only about the heart." And Jesus would say, "It's really about both." It's really about both.

As prophet, Jesus wants us to believe the Bible and defend the truth. As priest, Jesus wants us to love and serve people. But as a king, he wants our lives to count. He wants our lives to make a difference. He wants our life to be a good investment. He wants us to be good stewards of the opportunities individually, with our family, and collectively, as the church that he's given to us.

MAKE YOUR LIFE COUNT FOR GOD

This sort of rung true in my ears. I was on a preaching tour in South Africa and I met some men in Durban, a wonderful church, great pastor, I really loved it there, was very encouraged. And the men that I met there, very strong, aggressive, South African men, they kept saying to me, "We want our lives to count for God." That was kind of this statement that I kept hearing from many of the men in the church, "We want our lives to count for God." That's exactly what Jesus is talking about. Make your life count for God.

Like my friend John Piper says, conversely, "Don't waste your life." Don't waste your life; invest your life. Yes, first with your family. Don't neglect them. Yes, in your business. Yes, in your church. Yes, in your community. Yes, in your neighborhood. Yes, in your city. Yes, on our world, in our world. Yes. Invest, invest, invest. Some of you are returning ten-fold investments. Some of you are returning five-fold investments.

SOMETIMES SIN IS NOT DOING ANYTHING AT ALL

And perhaps, I hate to say it, some of you are like the third man in the parable. Luke 19:20-23, "Then another came, 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.' He said to him, '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?'"

The third man hands him back the original investment. Says, "You gave me \$15,000, I know you've been gone, here's your \$15,000 back." And when asked, "Why didn't you do anything with it?" The man blames the investor. He says, "Well, I was scared of you. You're a severe man. I was intimidated and I didn't wanna do anything wrong, so I didn't do anything at all."

Let me say this, friends, sometimes sin is not doing anything at all. Sometimes sin is not doing anything at all. You can be so paralyzed by fear of failure that you do nothing, and that, in and of itself, is your failure. This man took the money, wrapped it up in a handkerchief, maybe put it in a drawer or

under his bed, and then handed it back.

My question to you would be this: Is that essentially what you've done with your Christian life and faith? Say, "Well, I go to church sometimes." Wrapped in a handkerchief. "I don't really go to Community Group, I'm not involved with other believers." Wrapped in a handkerchief. "I got baptized, but I really haven't become a member, I'm not learning and growing, I'm not regularly reading my Bible, and I'm not giving generously to the cause of the gospel." Wrapped in a handkerchief. "Well, when I get married I want it to be in a church, and when I die I wanna be buried in a church. And if I have a family, maybe I'd like my children to grow up in the community of a church so they can get values and friendships, my spouse as well. But I really don't give, I really don't serve, I really don't invest. I'm not really pursuing anything. I'm not trying to figure out my place in the body. I'm not trying to discern and ascertain my spiritual gift and who I am and what I have to contribute and how I might invest myself in the church and the ministry of the gospel. I'm more of a taker than a giver."

Maybe it even sounds spiritual. "Well, I don't believe in organized religion." Or, you know, "It's a personal relationship between me and Jesus. It doesn't need to involve other people." Or, you know, "Big churches are always greedy. They're in it for the money. Or they just are always trying to take from you and I'm not gonna let them do that to me 'cause I'm really a holy, smart person so I just say no so that I can maintain my integrity."

All of which is your life in a handkerchief doing nothing. It's not holy, it's unholy. It's not humble, it's proud. It's not giving, it's taking. It's not faithful, it's unfaithful. Is that you? Is that you? So you'd say, "Yeah, but I'm busy or I'm afraid to fail or I'm afraid that it won't go well or I've been hurt in the past." Your life in a handkerchief.

Think of this. Think of taking money. Let's say, for example, you received an inheritance. Someone in your family gave you a large inheritance. You took that money, you wrapped it in a handkerchief, and you stuck it in a sock drawer or you put it under your mattress. And years went by and you didn't do anything with it. You would be a fool.

Now, through the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Bible actually says we've received a great inheritance. The Holy Spirit lives in the people of God. We have the good news of the truth of the gospel of the death, burial, resurrection, the salvation, love, and affection of Jesus Christ as our God. We have knowledge of the coming of the kingdom of God. We have knowledge of eternal rewards that this life matters, that there will be rewards for those who are faithful. And those rewards last forever. And they glorify God who loves us well. We know that there are people who have needs—needs for love, encouragement, service, and most of all a need for a relationship with Jesus and his people. And so we have all of these opportunities to invest our life.

Imagine if we just take our life and stuck it in a sock drawer or put it under a mattress and did nothing with it. And that's what some people are doing. That's what some of you are doing. Some of you'd say, "I'm not doing a bad thing." No, you're doing nothing. That's a bad thing. You're doing so little [with] this opportunity of a life that has been entrusted to you. Just wrap it in a handkerchief, stick it in a sock drawer, wait for Jesus to return, resurrect from death, stand before him and say, "I didn't do much. In fact, I didn't do anything."

Do you feel that? Jesus says the least this investor could have done, financially speaking, is put the money in the bank, get a little return on the investment. I mean, the least you can do is give a little bit. The least you can do is serve a little bit. The least you could do is read your Bible a little bit. I mean, if you're not gonna make your life count for God, anything is better than nothing. Even though minimal effort, minimal return investment, is unimpressive, at least it's something.

BE FAITHFUL AND GET STARTED

I would encourage some of you, start with something. Start with anything. If you've never served, serve somewhere. If you've never been to a Community Group, go once. If you've never been to church twice in a row, we'll see you next week. If you never read your Bible, read it this week.

Because what? If you're faithful with a little, God can entrust you with much. That's what Jesus has already said. Some of you say, "Well, I'm never gonna be, you know, this grand and glorious." Perhaps not. But the goal is to be faithful and to get started. The longer you wait, the worse it is.

Now, Jesus is going to summarize all of this in Luke 19:24–27, "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.'" State the obvious. "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," Jesus does have enemies, "who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me."

Notice in this sermon you're not getting a lot of jokes and it's not a real ha-ha-ha funny. This is really serious. This is Jesus being very sober. So he's using these three people, stewards, investors in the story as examples. The first one gets a ten-fold return on investment. Turns \$15,000 into \$150,000. He says, "Well done, good steward—good servant. You're gonna rule over ten cities." The second one, he says, "Well, I gave you \$15,000 and you gave me \$75,000. You get to rule over five cities. You did a good job."

The third, he says, "I gave you \$15,000, you didn't even put it in the bank to get negligible, minimal interest. You didn't do anything and you're gonna blame it on me. You don't even take responsibility for your own failure and oversight. You gave me \$15,000 back. I'm gonna take that from you and I'm gonna give that to him." All the people are watching saying, "Well, he's already got ten times what he's got. That's not fair!" It's not fair; it's wise.

IF YOU'RE FAITHFUL WITH A LITTLE, GOD CAN ENTRUST YOU WITH MUCH

See, Jesus is not a complete socialist who says everybody should make the exact same amount and we all should have the same standard of living. If

this person is good steward and this person is a bad steward, then more resources are going to go to the good steward. Now, to be sure, there are people who are crooked and greedy and, like Zacchaeus, they're unrighteous rich and they rip people off. But there are also some people who are righteous rich. The reason that they have is because little by little, just like Proverbs says, they made it grow. They weren't wasting their money; they were investing their money. They weren't wasting their life; they were investing their life.

And what Jesus is saying here, as we apply this to our lives and our church, there are certain churches that do a lot. And there are certain churches that don't do much at all. There are certain ministries that do a lot. There are other ministries that don't do much at all. There are certain Christian families who do a lot. There are others who don't do much at all. There are certain Christian individuals who do a lot. There are others who don't do much at all.

And Jesus looks at it like you would look at someone running your retirement account. And you say, "Well, if I took my retirement account and I put it between multiple portfolios, and one was making massive money and the other wasn't doing anything, I would shift all my resources into the profitable portfolio because I'd be a fool not to."

Jesus is like that. If you're not faithful with a little, he's not going to give you more. If you can't do the simple, humble things that he's asked you to do, you're never going to graduate into greater responsibility. If you're wasting your life—let me say it another way—if you're essentially wasting your life, why in the world would Jesus give you more opportunity and more responsibility if all you're going to do is waste that, too?

It's a stern word, isn't it? It's a hard word. It's a convicting word. It's like Jesus opens our life and says, "Let's just examine how it's going. Let's examine what you're doing. Let's see what the return on investment is. I made you, created the earth, I'm here as God, I'm going to the cross to die for your sins. I'm going to rise. I'm going to go away. One day I will return to establish my kingdom. In the meantime I fill you with my Holy Spirit, I give you the word of God, I gift you for ministry, I put you together as the church, I give you the good news of my love and power and grace. And I'm coming back and I want to know what you're doing." You can't say, "Very little" or "Nothing" and expect to hear, "Well done, faithful servant."

YOUR LIFE COUNTS

Your life counts. It's not just the doctrines you believe and the people you help. It's the fruit that you bear. It all counts. It all matters. It's not just how many hours you put in. It's whether or not those were strategically invested to help the right people to do the right things. It's not just how many checks you write; it's, did you actually write them to organizations, to ministries, to people in need, where there would be a good return on investment?

YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF YOUR WHOLE LIFE

And Jesus here is saying that for those who are faithful, they get bigger opportunities. For those who are unfaithful, their opportunities get taken. And for those who are enemies, they get slaughtered. Jesus is really strong here. He uses these words: "enemies slaughtered." Friends, not everybody's going to heaven. Not everybody's sins are forgiven. Not everybody will be really excited when Jesus returns. In the parable, both at the beginning and the end, Jesus says that as the king is away and returning to establish his kingdom, he has enemies who are resistant to his reign. They don't want him to be king. They don't want to do what he says. They don't want to listen to his commands. They don't want to obey his decrees. Those are non-Christians. Those are people who don't even want to go to heaven.

See, some Christians say that everybody's going to heaven. That's not true. Jesus never said that. Jesus spoke of hell more than anyone in the whole Bible. Here he uses the language of "my enemies will be slaughtered." Not everybody's gonna make it into the kingdom of God. Not everybody's gonna be friends with God forever. Not everybody's gonna have all their sins forgiven and enjoy eternal life with the people of God in the kingdom of God. That is not happening for everyone.

And you and I need to be loving and brokenhearted, but honest and clear. Just because someone dies, we can't say they're in a better place. We don't decide who goes to heaven and hell, Jesus does. But Jesus is the one who tells us that simply by dying you do not get to be in the presence of God in a loving way, enjoying an eternal kingdom. That he has citizens and enemies, that's exactly what the parable says. The citizens are servants of Jesus; those enemies are opposed to Jesus.

Which are you? Which are you? See, I even get frustrated with Christians who would say, "Well, I think God should take everybody to heaven." That's not what enemies want. People who are enemies of Jesus and don't love his rule and reign, they will not be happy in his eternal kingdom anyways. In the same way, I don't want to be ruled over by someone who I hate.

Now, I love Jesus, and so the thought of being under his rule sounds like the best, most glorious, safest place I could possibly be. But if I hated Jesus, if I despised him, if I disagreed with him, if I disregarded him, I would not find myself rejoicing forever because he was my Sovereign King.

Jesus has enemies. Some of you are his enemies. Some of you are his enemies. You don't love Jesus, you don't know Jesus, you don't trust Jesus, and you don't belong to Jesus. You're going to be slaughtered. You're going to stand before the Creator God and give an account for your whole life. And just like there are varying degrees of rewards for Christians in heaven, there are varying degrees of punishment for non-Christians in hell. The punishment always fits the crime.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

But, here's the good news. It's not too late. And I don't say this to scare you, but I say this to warn you. It's not too late.

See, according to the story, while the king was away being crowned before his return to assume the throne, there was a season of opportunity where

citizens and servants of the king and the kingdom would be giving and loving and serving and investing their life, anticipating and awaiting the coming of their king, and inviting the enemies to become citizens, to invite those who were opposed to the king to receive his love and to live under his care. They were inviting people to have a change of heart and life.

Friends, that's exactly why Mars Hill Church is here. Until Jesus returns, we want to invite people to not be enemies of God, [but] to be friends with God through Jesus Christ. To not disagree with God, but to trust God in Jesus Christ so that when Jesus does return or we do die and stand before him, whichever might come first, we would hear, "Well done, good servant. You get to rule over cities forever," rather than, "Slaughter them." But those are the options.

And so you, friend, have a choice to make. Are you going to belong to Jesus or not? And some of you would say, "I don't really believe this." That's because the King has not yet returned, and this is a season of patience and love and kindness and invitation and grace. If you have questions, we want to answer them. If you have problems, we want to serve you. We're here to help you meet Jesus. We're here to invite you to be citizens of the kingdom of God.

And again, Jesus at this point in the story, he's on his way to the cross. He's going to make his life count. He's going to die in our place for our sins. He is going to actually endure the wrath of God and the death, which is payment for sin, though he is without any sin. He's going to do that for us because he loves us.

You need to know that's what our King's like. Our King is loving. Our King is gracious. Our King sacrificed himself. Our King shed his own blood so that we might be loved and blessed in his presence forever. Our King is not a cruel king. He's not a malicious king. But he's also not an unjust king. And he invites you to relationship with him and to invest your life, making it count for God, so that you could reap an eternal reward.

INVESTING FOR JESUS IN MARS HILL CHURCH

And so, in the providence of God, Mars Hill, all of this section of Luke, which has a lot of kingly discussion about finances and investing and generosity and stewardship and making your life count for God, it all comes in the providence of God at the end of our budget year. You probably didn't even know this, but our budget here goes from July through to June. I didn't plan any of this.

We've been in Luke for almost two years and in the providence of God we find ourselves in this section. So I wanted to give you a report because I want you to rejoice with me regarding what God has done through the gospel and through the people of God here at Mars Hill Church. And it's remarkable. I mean, here Jesus says, "I gave you this, and here's what you've done with it." Let me tell you what has happened with what God has given us. And we don't take any credit for it, but we want to rejoice in it.

So here's the question I want to answer about investing for Jesus in Mars Hill Church. So we're fifteen years old, coming up this October. We've gone from roughly ten people a week to roughly 10,000 people a week lately, and as many as 19,000 people a week. And during this, you're welcome to clap wherever you feel happy. That was our huge Easter Celebration. To go from ten to 10,000, that's a great return on investment, right?

From a few baptisms to 1,246 baptisms in the previous twelve months. That's an unbelievable return on investment. From one location to ten locations. And in the past year, every single Mars Hill location grew. Some grew a little, some grew a lot. All grew. From one to ten locations. From fifty-two services the first year—we just had one service a week—to over 1,500 services in the past twelve months. That's an unbelievable return on investment.

From roughly \$90,000 given our first year to a projected targeted annual budget this year of about \$15 million. We've still got a few weeks to clean up all the numbers and get you all the reports and get all the receipting together, but everything that comes in through the end of June then counts for our fiscal year. To go from \$90,000 the first year to \$15 million, is an unbelievable return on investment.

And it didn't happen all at once. I mean, all of these you can look at the charts and it was a little bit, try to do your best with it, try to do the best with what you've got then. And just little by little, step by step, like climbing stairs, fifteen years, one foot in front of the other, by the grace of God progress is made.

From no Acts 29 churches to nearly 400 U.S. churches and 175,000 people a week. Let me explain this. Acts 29 is a network that I had the privilege of co-founding. We use it as our missions department where we help plant churches, start new churches. Right now Acts 29 has almost 400 churches in the U.S. and has church-planting going on in thirteen other nations. We give ten percent of our dollars to help church planting; this includes the Mars Hill campuses.

And furthermore, we now have upwards of 500 potential pastors that are in the queue being assessed as possible church planters just for the U.S. And just in the U.S. alone, the combined Easter attendance for the Acts 29 churches this year was 175,000 people. And you can clap if you like.

We've gone from a few sermon downloads to over seven million a year. Early on we had a website at Mars Hill in the mid-'90s. It was way back in the dial-up days. And we started putting sermons out for free. We were, I think, one of the first churches to do so. And there were a few downloads. Well, this last year, over seven million downloads as people are getting access to Bible teaching for free about Jesus. And let me tell you this, nothing is free. Somebody else paid for it. So thank you for paying for it.

We also rejoice that we have plans to open, in the grace of God, Mars Hill Portland, Orange County, Everett, and Rainier Valley. Those are the next Mars Hill church plants that we anticipate to be coming up, with Portland, Orange County, and Everett projected for January, Rainier Valley later next year. We've also had to open up more seats for Mars Hill Shoreline as they've outgrown their building and entered a new space. Mars Hill Bellevue, in

the grace of God, will have a new location open up this fall, doubling their seating, downtown Bellevue right next to the Rock Bottom and the Starbucks and right by the mall and right by Barnes & Noble, amazing location. The Albuquerque campus has outgrown their building so we're looking at relocating them, as well. The Downtown campus has gone to fully five services. They're out of seats, we've gotta figure out what to do for them next. And the Federal Way campus has two morning services that are absolutely at and over capacity. We've gotta find more seats for them.

Isn't that great news? I don't know what Jesus is going to say to us, Mars Hill, when we stand together. We've still got a lot of years left and a lot of things to do and we want to be humble, we want to be good stewards, and we want to be faithful. But man, we really want, in the grace of God, to hear "Well done, good servant." We want to hear that. We want to hear, "I gave you an opportunity and individually and collectively you were a good return on investment." And it's not so that we would get glory, but it's because we love Jesus. And it's not so that we could boast in what we've accomplished, but we could rejoice in the number of people that Jesus has changed the life of.

QUESTIONS ABOUT INVESTING FOR JESUS

So let me close with a few questions about investing for Jesus in your life. These are things to think about personally, to talk about with your family, to discuss with your Community Group. And if you're not in one, get in one. We'd love to have you. They meet all over, many different times and locations and groupings of people.

1. WHICH FAITHFUL SERVANTS HAVE YOU BENEFITED FROM?

Number one, which faithful servants have you benefited from? Which people really have paved the way that you might meet Jesus and grow? I know for me I'll always be so grateful for my first church in college. I showed up there as a brand-new Christian with a ton of questions. They had a building; I hadn't paid for the building. They had chairs; I sat in one. I hadn't bought any of those chairs. They had a pastor. I'd never given any money to pay his salary. I hadn't picked him either. They did. He was a wonderful man of God. Taught the Bible and I learned about Jesus. They had classes; I didn't organize them, but I went to them. They had groups, and I got involved in them and I met people who became friends and some are still friends to this day. Wonderful things were happening. I didn't build any of it. I didn't create any of it. I didn't fund any of it. I just showed up and benefited from it 'cause other people were so generous with the investment of their life.

Who has done that for you? Just think about all you've received. Do you download free sermons from our ministry, others, classes, books, attending church, musicians serving, preachers preaching, people helping, Community Group leaders investing, Redemption Group leaders caring? Think of all the things that have been given that you have benefited from.

2. DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE JUDGMENT OF BELIEVERS VERSUS THE JUDGMENT OF UNBELIEVERS?

Number two, do you understand the judgment of believers versus the judgment of unbelievers? Unbelievers, non-Christians, will stand before Jesus to give an account and have varying degrees of punishment in hell. Christians will stand before Jesus to give an account, have our life judged for varying degrees of reward in heaven.

Friends, Christians are judged. Now, our salvation was judged at the cross of Jesus, but our life will be judged at the end. We'll stand before Jesus and the judgment won't be heaven or hell—that was decided at the cross for the believer who trusts in Jesus—but rather, what will be judged is whether or not we have stewarded and invested our life well. Some people think, "Well, God doesn't judge me. I'm a Christian." He will judge your life. It does count. Don't waste your life. Make your life count for God.

3. IF JESUS RETURNED TODAY, WOULD HE BE PLEASED WITH YOUR INVESTMENT?

Number three, if Jesus returned today, would he be pleased with your investment of your time, your talent, and treasure that he has entrusted to your stewardship? If Jesus showed up right now, you were standing before him, would he say, "Well done, good steward, good servant"? Would he say, "Well, that's a five-fold return on investment"? Or would he say, "You've sinned. I gave you time, but you pilfered away your days. I've given you talent, skills, and abilities. You can do things. You're not doing much. Your treasure—the way you spend your money, the way you give it, what you do with it, that's really not right. You wasted it. You were an unfaithful servant"? I don't know.

To some of you, Jesus is going to say, "Well done, good servant." Some of you are fruitful, generous, faithful, and amazing. As leaders we're blown away. We have some of the most amazing people who do the most extraordinary things and are generous in every way, and part of that is why Mars Hill is experiencing such joyous fruitfulness. Some of you are like the person who got a five-fold return on investment. You are a solid, steady, faithful, helpful, generous, gracious, we love you, God bless you, you are a positive contributor.

Some of you, man, give nothing, do nothing, and contribute nothing. Some of you say, "Are you judging me?" I'm not, but the Holy Spirit is. That's why you now feel awkward.

4. DO YOU WANT TO HEAR, "WELL DONE, GOOD SERVANT"?

Number four, do you want to hear, "Well done, good servant"? Do you want to hear that? Is that what you want to hear? If so, you've got to position your whole life to on one day hear that refrain, hear Jesus say, "Well done, good servant." That's it.

See, friends, for the Christian, that should be everything. Everybody's gonna have their opinion, everybody's gonna give their input, everybody's gonna try to judge us along the way. Ultimately we labor for the approval of Jesus. We want to stand before him. And it'll all make sense, it'll all be worthwhile if we hear, "Well done, good servant."

5. WHAT CHANGES DO YOU NEED TO MAKE?

And then number five, friends, what changes do you need to make with your time, with your talent, with your treasure? See, again, the nobleman has not yet come back to sit upon the throne and to rule as king. Jesus isn't here yet. Now, we don't know when he's coming, but Jesus isn't here yet.

So until he comes, I have good news, non-Christian: it's not too late, you can become a Christian! I have good news, bad steward, bad servant, you can become fruitful. You can become faithful. You can have your life count for God. You can make a good return on investment. The whole point of the story is nothing gets sorted out and no judgment is made until the king returns. So here's the good news. It's not too late. Don't let the shame, don't let the condemnation, don't let the humiliation cause you to be stuck. In the grace of God, if you're faithful with a little, he'll give you more. That's exactly what Jesus says.

For those of you who are non-Christians, it's not too late. You give your life to Jesus today and get started as a Christian. For those of you who are Christians, find a simple, humble way to get started. Be faithful with that and see what momentum builds, see what God does.

PRAYER

Father, thanks for an opportunity that I have to teach the Bible. And God, I thank you so much for this word of investment. God, just as we want a good return on investment, you want us to be a good return on investment. And God, it's not something that you just make us do. You give us the Holy Spirit and the power of the gospel and the community of believers to compel us forward by the power and the truth of the Word of God.

God, I thank you that Mars Hill Church, by your grace, we wanna say this humbly but gladly, it seems to be a real good return on investment. The time, talent, and treasure that's been poured in here has really turned a remarkable return. We rejoice in that.

And we pray that Lord God we'd now take the opportunities that we'd have, and that we wouldn't be scared and cowardly. Just because the economy's down or things get complicated, that we wouldn't take Mars Hill, wrap it up in a handkerchief and stuck it in a sock drawer and just anticipate that this is enough. May we continue to wisely take risks and press forward, to have a sense of great contentment, but not a sense of entitlement.

May we rejoice in what you've done, and may we press forward for much, much more. In Jesus' good name, amen.