Text: Luke 19:11-27
Title: The Kingdom Delayed
Truth: While we await the King's return, He has commanded us to serve Him faithfully.
Date/Location: Sunday February 9, 2025 at FBC

Introduction

The journey of Jesus to Jerusalem began at Luke 9:51 and occupies the middle section of Luke's book:

1. Birth of John Baptist and Jesus and Background, 1:1-4:13
2. Ministry of Jesus in Galilee, 4:14-9:50
3. Ministry of Jesus Enroute to Jerusalem, 9:51-19:27
4. Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem, 19:28-21:38
5. Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus, 22:1-24:53

Jeus was about to enter Jerusalem after traveling in that direction for months and after doing many miracles and much teaching. Some people thought that a climactic event was about to happen. They were right, but it was not to be the beginning of God's promised kingdom.

The Lord tells a parable in response to a very particular expectation. It was this: the crowds thought—mistakenly—that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. Earlier, some people wanted to take Him by force and make Him King (John 6:15)! But something else had to happen first.

I. The Background of the Parable

A. It is almost certainly the case that Jesus had in mind the recent history (about 30 years earlier) of Herod Archelaus. It was a useful event to transform into a parable to teach some important lessons to the disciples and to warn those who hated Jesus.

B. Herod Archelaus (23 BC – c. 18 AD) was the ethnarch of Samaria, Judea, and Edom from 4 BC to 6 AD. He was the son of Herod the Great (Matt. 2:3, 7, 13, 15, 16, 19) and Malthace, the brother of Herod Antipas, and the half-brother of Herod Philip I. Archelaus received the kingdom of Judea by the last will of his father, though a previous will had bequeathed it to his brother Antipas. He was

proclaimed king by the army but declined to assume the title until he had submitted his claims to Caesar Augustus in Rome. This was what his father had done and was a regular procedure in the Roman empire since Rome was the real power over the region.

Before setting out for Rome, he quelled a sedition of the Pharisees, slaying nearly three thousand of them. In Rome he was opposed by Antipas and by many of the Jews, who feared his cruelty; but in 4 BC Augustus allotted to him the greater part of the kingdom (Samaria, Judea, and Idumea) with the title of ethnarch until 6 AD when Judaea was brought under direct Roman rule.[1]

The Jewish encyclopedia notes that Augustus decided to divide Herod's extensive empire into three portions to limit the power of any one of the smaller domains. So, Archelaus was appointed ethnarch—not king—of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, and Antipas was made tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and Philip was made tetrarch of the other lands east of the Jordan.[2] It was this Herod Archelaus that is mentioned in Matt. 2:22 as the reason that Joseph settled in Nazareth in Galilee instead of in Bethlehem. "Upon his return Archelaus rewarded his supporters with certain cities and took vengeance on his enemies. Josephus says that his great palace was built at Jericho, perhaps not far from…where the parable was first spoken."[3]

II. The Message of the Parable

A. Notice the characters in the parable:

1. The king represents Jesus.

2. The servants. The number ten is not important. They represent Christ's disciples. Some have more skill than others. The ones that showed care and diligence, regardless of skill level, give evidence that they are real followers of Christ. They are rewarded. Others are fake, like the servant who misjudged the

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_Archelaus, accessed August 2007.
[2] See http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1729&letter=A&search=Herod%20Archelaus.
[3] McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom*, p. 340.

nobleman and did nothing with the money lent to him. These are punished and do not represent true Christianity.

3. The citizens who hated the king represent people who do not want Jesus to rule over them (Psalm 2:1-3). They are bold enough to say so aloud and they work to prevent the king from being invested with power by the supreme authority. In the first century Jewish setting, that was Rome and the emperor. They are willing to stake their lives on this venture, but in the end, it proves to be a failure, and their quest ends with deadly consequences.

B. After we ponder for awhile, the message of the parable becomes plain. Jesus is teaching to us the following:

1. The kingdom will *not* appear immediately because the king is going to a distant place to receive authority to rule over the kingdom, and there is a time of testing of the servants while he is gone. He will be gone for a while.

2. His servants are responsible to carry out His instructions until He comes. The details of those instructions are not given in the parable, so we must find them elsewhere in the Bible. But whatever they are, they are something like "do business using stuff the future king has given to you."

   Their service was made possible by the resources He gave when He left (the money, a *mina* was worth about three months of wages). Our resources are not merely monetary but include the Spirit of God (John 16:7, 15:26, 14:26), the authority to proclaim His heavenly message, the instruction about what that message is, His presence (Matt. 28:18-20), and the completed Scriptures. Nothing more is needed that you do not have to do God's will.

3. He will return at some unknown future time. His coming will not only bring with it the inauguration of a great kingdom but will have a more personal dimension (next).

4. When He returns, He will judge His servants based on the diligence of their service. Depending on their faithfulness, the servants will be judged favorably, and some unfavorably.

5. The reward they will receive is authority to rule over several cities in the kingdom. This is appropriate to the new role assumed by the king. Since he has authority over a territory, he delegates pieces of that authority to other faithful people. They are not given the cities to own; rather they are assigned over them to rule.

6. Good stewards will be given more, and bad stewards will have their stewardship taken away. The time of his absence amounted to a time of testing and training.

7. The new King will punish those who did not want Him to rule over them. No one will have the power or right to question Him.

III. How this Parable Applies to Us

A. Christians are *not* supposed to waste time debating the timing of the kingdom, because it did not appear immediately, it is not operational now, and it will not be operational until the king returns. It is not given to us to know the times or seasons that the Father has put in His own authority (Acts 1:6-7). Instead, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to testify about Jesus in our homes and to the ends of the earth. *That* is our main assigned task. It happens in the context of the ministry of many decentralized local churches over the face of the globe.

This "business" is not entirely divorced from the kingdom, however, because it outfits *us* for the kingdom, and it brings more people into its citizenship and awaiting its arrival.

B. Bible teachers have often over-simplified this parable by saying that it is about how to use money, with a focus on financial stewardship. That is only part of it. It is more correct to grasp the broader application to general stewardship over the resources and tasks that God has given to us. We spent a good deal of time last year considering this theme. But in an even bigger picture view, this is about stewardship of those tasks and resources *while we await the King's return*, which lends a sense of real urgency and importance to the matter.

C. On that stewardship issue, notice that Jesus has given us two good examples about financial stewardship in chapters 18 and 19. Go

back to Zacchaeus and see that he gave away many of his possessions to the needy and paid restitution. Back a page or so more, and Jesus told the rich ruler to sell everything and distribute to the poor. *That* is one way to be a good steward.

D. There is another stewardship concern, and that is with our life and time. The blind man was healed upon his exercise of great faith in Jesus—and he then followed Jesus. In chapter 18, Peter and the others reflected on how they left everything and followed Jesus. Following Jesus closely is good stewardship, and Jesus promises a reward for all who do so.

E. It remains that we ask the question of ourselves if our stewardship is truly what God desires—considering the truth that Jesus is coming back and will evaluate us. Are we going to scramble at the end to try to get our life's "homework" done, or are we going to keep plugging away consistently, diligently, persistently, serving the master?

Sure, we do not do so to gain his saving favor; but we do want to show Him that we are serious about His concerns and thankful for His grace, not just taking His benefits and spending them on our own pleasures (James 4:3).

This could require a serious realignment of our priorities, our time, but not just our time, our money, but not just our money, and all the things we love the most.

F. This means that we are not doing 13 years of school and then 4 or 5 or 10 more just for ourselves or to pursue money and experiences. It means we are studying because we are aiming to use our skills to advance God's work—some how, some way.

G. This means that we are not working for 40 to 50 years for ourselves, climbing the ladder, clawing for promotions and more money. Alternatively, we are not avoiding work as much as possible during our adult years, making the excuse that life is not all about work and we are more important or whatever. We exist to live for God, to serve God, to point people to God.

H. The time we have on earth is a test of our loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord. Without Him being present, He wants to see if we are

genuinely for Him, or just surface-level only, or not at all. Our reward will depend on that. See 2 Cor. 5:9-11.

I. Not everyone is excited about the direct rule of God over people. The Jewish people rejected Jesus as their king. Many today, Jews and Gentiles alike, do the same thing. The consequences of this are dreadful.

J. The parable reminds us of our future hope. The kingdom's arrival in the future is certain. The Kingdom is not yet, but it WILL be. One of the fundamental truths of Christianity is the second coming of Jesus Christ. Our hope is not in this worldly system, but many of us may live as if it is. Dan 2:44 shows that the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom that will not be destroyed, but it will destroy all previous kingdoms.

K. The parable reminds us that laziness and lack of focus, or worse yet scorning of responsibility, have no place in our service to the king. All of this is very out of place for a faithful servant. Productivity is called for.

IV. A Significant Sub-Point—Stewardship, 15-26

A. One dictionary defines stewardship as personal responsibility for taking care of another person's property or financial affairs. For our purposes, I would broaden this definition to include other affairs as well, like "religious" responsibilities. The parable's emphasis on stewardship is obvious. It is so clear that many believe this is the main point of the parable. In fact, the Zondervan NASB study Bible has this parable entitled "The Parable of Money Usage." As we already said, the Bible makes clear that this is not the case (19:11). However, there is a point about stewardship that we must not ignore, but one that we must also not misconstrue.

B. Caution – Do not eliminate stewardship of money entirely.

1. Good financial stewardship is an important concept in the parable. The money given by the prospective king was "put to work" by most of his servants and so it earned more. Note that a mina is about three months' salary. Let us suppose a salary of $4000 a month, so this would correspond to about $12,000.

2. The wicked servant did not even put the money in the bank to earn interest. The Lord, by so saying, points out the need for wise financial management. At least give the money to someone else if you cannot handle it properly!

3. Notice that the servants invested the money not for themselves, but on behalf of the king ("your mina" in v. 16, 18, 20; "my money" in 23).

C. Real Point: stewardship of everything, not just money

1. The secondary truth being conveyed by the parable is not about investment banking or giving finances to the church. The truth being conveyed is the carrying out of general responsibilities that the king gives in his absence. The parable illustrates the truth in terms of economic responsibilities. Only one part of our duties has to do with money.

2. The reality is that God, through His Word, gives us a complement of responsibilities upon which we are called to act as we wait for our Lord's return. By the way, if you are spending no time on your own in the Bible, then you are almost certainly not up to speed on what your responsibilities are.

3. Each servant is given the same amount of money in the parable, so we should not think that these monetary amounts represent spiritual gifts (which are distributed somewhat unevenly on an individual basis) or some other detailed explanation that is unfounded by a plain reading (for example, one interpreter says that these minas represent general grace, and saving grace, and spiritual gifts, and …). Rather the point has to do with general responsibilities.

4. What the king asked his servants to do, he expected them to do while he was away. What God asks us to do in Christ's absence, he expects us to do as well. How disappointing it is when you ask something of someone, and they even agree to it, only to not follow through.

5. The accomplishment or non-accomplishment of those duties becomes a basis for judgment.

Conclusion

So, to restate the point: financial stewardship is not the main point of the parable, for two reasons. First, financial stewardship is only a vehicle used in the parable to convey a larger issue of general stewardship over our "religious" responsibilities. And second, the real main point is the delay in the kingdom's inauguration and the corresponding test that sets up for us. This delay is key because it sets our responsibilities in an urgent context—as a test of faithfulness to a King whose direct presence is not with us but who will certainly return. And there is limited time to carry out His assignment!

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