

Well, it's good to see you this morning, church family. I'm glad you're with us. I hope you had a Merry Christmas. It's good to see you. As we said before, if you're a guest among us, we want to welcome you. My name is Shea Sumlin, campus pastor here. If you'd do me a favor this morning... If you would grab a Bible, turn to Luke, chapter 19, for me. If you don't have a Bible, we have one for you underneath the seat in front of you. Feel free to go ahead and take that Bible as a gift from us to you. We want everybody to have one.

Luke, chapter 19, is where we're going to be spending some time this morning. As you're turning there, as this morning we really transition from one holiday to the next, as we go from Christmas now to New Years... I always find New Years a bit fascinating here in America...how we get kind of a little bit crazy. How many of y'all (just self-disclosure right now) have some ideas in mind of resolutions you have for 2013? Hands up. Come on. The rest of you are liars. Hands up, all right?

It's interesting just how wild some of our kind of obsessions with resolutions can get just because of a digit change in the calendar. It's pretty interesting. The University of Scranton (no affiliation with the series *The Office*) does a statistical survey in their psychology department every year of Americans and resolutions that is really interesting. It covers what people put and the fact that 62 percent of America has some sort of resolution they come out with for the coming year, and yet only 8 percent of those get fulfilled after the first month. That's interesting.

But listen to this kind of David Letterman-style top ten. Listen to what America put for this past year. Number ten: "Spend more time with family." That's a good one. Number nine (I love this one): "Fall in love." All right. I didn't realize you could will yourself into that one. "So, 2013 is the year. I've been out of the game for a while, but you know what? Dang it, I'm going to make somebody love me this year, in 2013." Number eight: "Help others." Fantastic. Seven: "Quit smoking." Good for your life. Six: "Learn something exciting." That sounds fun.

Number five: "Stay fit and healthy." Good luck with that one. Number four: "Enjoy your life to the fullest." Only an American would say that, right? "I'm going to enjoy life to the fullest in 2013." Three: "Spend less and save more." That's good. Number two: "Get organized." And number one... What do you think it is? "Lose weight." Right? It's interesting, man, because here's what's so funny about America. Flip that on the backside, and what does that tell you about 62 percent of America?

We are unhealthy and materialistic. We are disorganized, uneducated, selfish, lonely, and living in broken homes, and cannot keep commitments. That's a fantastic understanding of our culture right there. Anyway, in light of that (or maybe in contrast to that), this morning... I thought it would be fun here this weekend as we head into the new year to really stop for just a moment as a church and really take a biblical perspective of what the one thing we should be doing is. What's the one thing that defined Jesus' ministry and Jesus said would define a follower of Christ?

Out of all of the resolutions, out of all of the things our lives can be committed to, what's the one thing that is meant to be the main thing, and how do we keep the main thing as the main thing? Luke 19 is where we're going to go for that. We're going to start in verse 11, and we're going to look at a particular parable Jesus told. It's the parable of the minas. In this parable, Jesus is going to tell a story...not only of what was most essential and really *the* purpose statement for why *he* came, but really (again) what the purpose statement is of anyone who would be a follower of Christ that would literally define your mission in life through this story.

To get there, I want to give a little context leading up to that. Luke 19 begins with a famous story that you've probably heard if you've been around a church for any period of time of a wee little man named Zacchaeus, right? Probably some old Sunday school songs come to mind for some (a wee little man was he). It's interesting because Zacchaeus, as many know, was a tax collector. In the nation of Israel, this was a really disliked position, because as a tax collector you were very divided in your interests. You were a Jewish citizen who loved the nation of Israel, but you worked for Rome, who was oppressing Israel. So you were very divided in your interests.

On top of that, most tax collectors in Israel were scandalous, and they were swindlers who would cheat people out of their money. Not only would they tax you very high taxes from Rome, but they would tax *above* what they should tax to pocket some money for themselves. So in Israel, these were considered some of the lowest of the low people for their immorality and their cheating of the nation, but something along the way shifts Zacchaeus' heart when he hears about this guy named Jesus.

He had, no doubt, heard some of Jesus' teachings; he had, no doubt, heard of the miracles Jesus was performing; and he had, no doubt, heard about the kinds of people Jesus was spending time with...lowly people whom Jesus was extending much grace and mercy to in a place where nobody else would. Something began to shift his heart, so as Jesus begins to enter into Jericho, as he's coming through, Zacchaeus hears he's coming and wants to get a glimpse of Jesus. But we know, because he's a short little man, he has to do the only thing he could do, and that's climb up the little sycamore tree so he can get an advantage point to see Jesus coming.

In the midst of this sea of people, Jesus sees Zacchaeus and is so impressed by his faith that he stops in the middle of all of the crowd that wants time with him, points out Zacchaeus, and tells him to come down and that he wants to spend time with him, that he wants to go to his house for dinner because he is impressed by his faith. This shook Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was broken instantly because of the grace and compassion that were shown towards him, enough to lead him towards repentance and to say, "Listen, whatever I've cheated people out of, I want to pay them back four times as much."

Repentance comes forth, and Jesus says, "I tell you, today salvation has come to your household, so let's head over to your house, Zacchaeus. Of all of these people who want to spend time with me, I want to spend time with you, so let's go back to your crib. Let's get some brisket and bring in the best Blue Bell that's out there, and let's just sit down and do this right tonight." Everybody else who's around just starts grumbling and complaining and starts ridiculing Jesus, going, "How can you, as great as you are, want to spend time with a sinner like that? Who would want to spend time with somebody as sinful as Zacchaeus?"

I love it, because if you look at verse 10, Jesus stops in front of everybody, and he gives his purpose for being here. In fact, if Jesus Christ had a business card, the mission statement that would be on it for his business would be verse 10 right here, when he says, "Wait a minute. This is why I want to spend time with you, Zacchaeus. This is why nobody else gets me, because the whole reason I, the Son of Man, even came to earth was to seek and to save the lost, people just like Zacchaeus."

What's beautiful is right there in that moment, in verse 11, it's almost as if Jesus just calls a time-out and says, "Zacchaeus, get over here. My disciples, you get over here. All of this crowd that is grumbling and complaining and can't even fathom why I'd want to hang out with a guy like this, y'all get over here, and I'm going to tell you a story." Jesus is going to tell a story of a nobleman, a prince who would leave to go away to a distant country to collect a kingdom for himself, and while he is gone will leave his servants behind to do a work for him that resembles the very work that defined what that prince's job was to begin with.

When he comes back, he's going to call these servants unto him and ask for an accounting of what they had done with this work that has been entrusted to them while he was gone, so in many ways, Jesus is going to use this story to say, "The very business I am committed to of seeking and saving the lost... Anyone who wants to come after me, this is to become your business too. You'd better get used to spending time with sinful people like this, seeing salvation come forth, and seeing hearts and lives changed, because that's the very reason why I came, and that's what I'm going to ask you to do while I'm gone."

He starts here in verse 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." Now we've talked about this up here before, but in Jewish prophecies, they had all of the prophecies in front of them about this Messiah who would come, and they understood there would be a Messiah who, yes, according to Isaiah 53, would probably suffer to some degree. But the main point of the Messiah coming was he would come and bring reform to the nation, he would drive out Israel's enemies, and he would set up the *shalom* of Israel, the peace of Israel, to rest on this forevermore.

He would come, he would conquer suffering, he would conquer brokenness, and he would establish his kingdom once and for all. Israel would never know the evil of the enemy any longer, ever again, and that's what they longed for. That's what they thought Jesus was coming, on his way to Jerusalem, to do. Jesus goes, "You don't understand," and what Israel didn't understand is in the midst of all of their prophecies about the Messiah, they didn't realize his coming was actually going to happen in two different times.

The first coming was Christmas. That's going to be the one where he's going to come, he's going to live a sinless life, and he's going to lay his life down on the cross so he can redeem a broken people. The first coming of Christ was to save people from their sin. Then he would leave, and then he'll come back, a day which we're still waiting for, in which he will come back, and in that day he will come as the conquering King who will save people from sickness, suffering, death, oppression, and evil once and for all. That day will come, but Jesus tells this story to change their understanding.

"Wait a minute. My goal is not to come here and just set up political reform and hook you up with a fat house on a hill with a four-car garage, a white-picket fence, 2.5 kids, and a dog...the American dream, Jewish style. That's not what I've come to do. You need to know the reason I've come now, the reason I'm here right now, is to seek and to save the lost, and that's going to be your job too. In verse 12, he begins with this story.

In verse 12, you get kind of the cast and the characters here who set the stage for the story. **"He said therefore, 'A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.'"** So right here in verse 12, you have essentially the entire ministry of Jesus Christ in one verse. The nobleman is Jesus Christ, who came, and then he left to go to a distant country (which is heaven, at the right hand of the Father right now).

Jesus said, "I'm leaving to go to a place where you cannot come, a place where I am building a mansion of many rooms which one day you'll have, and then one day, I'm coming back. I'm going, in the meantime, to gather for myself a kingdom, a kingdom that was both a geography and a people, and I'm going to grab this kingdom. Then one day, I am coming back, and when I come back (verse 13), I'm going to ask for an accounting of what I'm leaving you to do in the meantime."

In verse 13, he says, **"Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.'"** We see ourselves in verse 13. The servants are his followers, his laborers. They're us, followers of Christ. The 10 minas he gives (a mina to each of these folks) are about three months' wages. A mina was about three months' wages, about a quarter of a year's salary in an agricultural setting at this time, a tremendous amount of blessing and resource to give to these followers so they might go do business, they might go invest this stewardship he's given them, so when he comes back, he will bring to them and call to them an accounting for what they've done with what they've been given.

He says there, "Engage in business." Some of yours say, "Do business," or "Make a profit," or "Be occupied with." In the Greek text, there's just one word there. It's the word *pragmateuomai*. The root, *pragma*, is the word we get *pragmatic* or *pragmatist* from. It's a word that means business, do business. A *pragmatist* is typically a businessman or woman who, at the end of the year, really doesn't care about all of the fluff of what took place in the year. They just want to know what the bottom line is. That's a pragmatist. "I just want to know how we did. Cut through all of the fluff. Did we make a gain on this investment, or did we lose on this investment? How'd we do?"

Jesus is saying here, as the ultimate pragmatist, "I want you to do business while I'm gone. There's a work for you to do, and when I come back, I want to know you have more than what I originally left you with, you have multiplied this investment I've given you." In the business world, again, this would be like a private business investor giving somebody \$30,000 and saying, "I want you to go invest this into a new kind of Internet company, and at the end of the year, when I come back, I want to see a \$300 billion profit from that \$30,000 in this little thing called Google we're inventing, all right? We'll see how it does and then roll with it."

That's a pragmatist. "I want to see what you did with what I gave you." The question for us, though, in this parable is if this is Jesus and this is us we're reading into here, what's the business he's referring to? If Jesus has left to go grab a kingdom for himself and promises one day he will come back, and in the meantime, he has left us (his followers), and has given us great blessing and resource to go invest and do the business he's going to call to account from at the end of time, what is the business he has left us to do?

I think the answer was in the context we saw at the beginning, in verse 10. Remember Jesus' mission statement? Jesus said, "This is what I came for. If you were to define my business, what the Father's business is that he's given to me, it is to come to earth and to seek and to save the lost." Jesus says, "If that's my business, that becomes your business too. It's the family business. This is what you've been saved into."

In fact, Jesus said this in Matthew, chapter 28, when he commissioned the disciples. Before Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, he left his parting words with the disciples. Remember what they were? He said, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me," meaning "The kingdom is mine, so therefore, as my followers, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all I've commanded, knowing I'm with you to the very end of the age."

Jesus said, "Your business is my business. It is going out. It is proclaiming the gospel that saves, that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. It is discipling men and women to become followers of Jesus Christ, and there is no greater investment you can make in your time here on this earth than building into his kingdom. There is no job you can do, nothing with more purpose in life that is more fulfilling than building into something that will last for all eternity." Jesus says, "This is what I'm investing in you."

Now the other question is what is the mina we've been given? What are the resources we've been given to do that business? Well, first we can start with our own salvation, the fact God, being rich in mercy, in unending grace, gave his Son, Jesus Christ, for us, that he took upon himself the wrath and the penalty we deserved, laid his life down on the cross, and shed his blood for us, and in exchange, we get his righteousness, right? We get a resurrected life. We get changed hearts from the inside out, transformed lives.

On top of that, he then indwells us with his Holy Spirit. The third person in the Trinity, the very presence of God indwells every believer who professes faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation, and the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit takes that dead heart, regenerates it and makes it new, and over time, conforms us to the image of his Son. We'll receive that great blessing, but on top of that, he divinely enables us with gifts only God could give, and the Scriptures tell us each follower of Christ...everyone in this room...has been given a spiritual gift.

They're different from one another, and these gifts are used collectively for the edification of the church, the building up of the body, and the advancement of the gospel, that lives would be changed and saved through Jesus Christ. He has gifted us, but on top of that, he has given us differing personalities, different talents, skill sets, and abilities. He has given you providential circumstances to use as investments in his kingdom. You live in different places. Many of you have different jobs, different paychecks, and different areas in which you live. Acts 17 tells us the very place you inhabit right now, the very habitation of your existence, is no accident.

Though you may struggle in the work you're in right now, though you may struggle in the city where you live, or wherever you're at and the season you're in, God says, "It has all been divinely appointed, not so

you would grovel in it, but you would recognize it as a blessing, and you would use it as an investment in his kingdom to make disciples, to seek and to save the lost, to use all of it for his glory." That's what we have been given.

Jesus tells them in this parable, "Before you go out investing and doing that business, you need to be forewarned," in verse 14, "because there are people out there who aren't going to like you doing this business, because they didn't like me doing it either." In verse 14, he says, **"But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'"** The persecution Jesus received is interesting. On Palm Sunday, Jesus rides into Jerusalem triumphantly on the foal of a donkey.

He's heading in, and the nation who believes this is their Messiah coming is shouting and chanting, "Hosanna, hosanna on high. The Lord saves. He has come. He is here with us. He is entering in," and they're praising him. But again, they were expecting him to be this political Messiah who would overthrow Rome immediately. When that didn't happen, and all of a sudden Jesus started getting ridiculed, persecuted, beaten, and scorned, that group turned on him. Eventually, the same people who, just a week earlier, were shouting, "Hosanna," were then shouting, "Crucify him." They turned on him like that.

Jesus says, "It happened to me. You can rest assured it's going to happen to you. The people around you aren't going to like you in this business. The citizens aren't going to tolerate the fact you're going to align yourself with me. They're not going to like the fact you're going to spend your days investing in something you can't really see right now that will last for eternity. They're going to make fun of you for that. They're going to ridicule you for that. They're not going to like the idea that you're living a life that is counter to the culture they live. They're not going to like the fact you're calling them to repent of their sin and receive and enjoy the mercy and grace that is offered in Jesus Christ. They're not going to like that, because they didn't like it in me either."

Nonetheless, we are to do this business, because we know he is returning one day, and he's bringing with him a reward nothing on this earth can even compare with. "So it's worth it, so labor well for my kingdom." Now time out for just a second, because the temptation these men faced in this parable is the same temptation you and I will face as followers of Christ.

That is, "Do I believe this man is who he says he is and he will do what he said he'll do? Because if he's not, if I don't believe this nobleman is really indeed the prince who is gaining this authority and has this kingdom, and I don't believe he's going to do what he said he's going to do, and he's going to return, and he's going to ask for an accounting of what I've done with what he's given me... If I don't believe any of that is true, then I can take this mina I've been given, I can take this treasure, time, talent, and everything God

has given me, and I can spend it on myself. I can choose to build into my own kingdom and spend all of my days on this earth living as if that reality is not a reality at all, and I can just live for me.

But if I do believe he is who he said he is, and I believe he's coming back and he's going to do what he said he was going to do, then out of a transformed heart of being a son of the God Most High, I want to live my days for him, taking everything I could have spent building up my own kingdom and using it to spread his kingdom, and to invest in his kingdom. But the tension that's in that is I run the risk of looking very foolish one way or the other. If I don't believe in him, then I'm going to look great in the eyes of the world around me. I'm going to look just like everybody else. I'm going to live for the same things all of the world around me is living for.

But I run the risk at the end of time, when he does return, I'll look incredibly foolish in his eyes, and I will have wasted all of this and will lose any reward that comes. Or if I live as if he is who he says he is, then I run the risk of looking foolish in the eyes of man, but knowing at the end, there is a reward for me that nothing on this earth can compare to, and it becomes a joy and delight to live for this king who I can't see yet."

The real question, though, is, "Do you believe Jesus is who he says he is? Do you believe Jesus will return and do what he said he'll do?" It's on the basis of that belief that will determine how you live the rest of your days. In verse 15, we find out that this nobleman is who he said he was, and he did do what he said he would do. He comes back here for an accounting. Verse 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."**

He calls these 10 men in, and he goes, "Okay, I'm back. So let's see. What did you do? Did you live for me with this investment, or did you live for yourself? Did you invest your life in what I called you to invest it in, or did you choose to invest what I've given you in your own life and your own personal ambitions?" An accounting takes place here. A judgment takes place here. You need to know that biblically speaking, there are two judgments we see take place in the New Testament.

One is a judgment that is reserved for those who have rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah. It's a judgment of salvation. It happens in Revelation, chapter 20. It's called the great white throne judgment. It's a judgment at which, if you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, you don't want to be. To all of those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, it's a judgment that will never apply to you. There is no condemnation for those whose faith is in Jesus Christ. Jesus has taken that.

At that judgment, God will not see the sin of the Christian. He'll see Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is there. You won't be there, but that is a judgment reserved for those who have rejected Jesus as their Messiah. There is a second judgment described in the New Testament, in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, that is a judgment reserved for the believer, and it's not a judgment of salvation. It's a judgment of reward, of recompense, of rewarding the saint for the work they had done in the flesh during their time on this earth.

It's a judgment that will reveal the motives of why we did what we did, and for whom, so in a sense, at this judgment, it says Jesus will stand us here as the followers of Christ, bare before him, and in that moment, everything we've ever done will be exposed for whether we did it for our own glory and our own selves, or we did it for Jesus Christ and his glory. In that moment, it's as if he'll take us and just simply do this: *whoosh*. And whatever was done for ourselves will simply vanish and disappear, and whatever was done for Christ will remain.

In that moment, Jesus will then reward the saints with a reward that is unbelievably amazing for what we have done for him. The beauty of the Scriptures is we also see in Revelation that we'll simply take those crowns and throw them back at the feet of Jesus, because only he is worthy of our praise and worship. It's a beautiful, beautiful picture of a loving Father who longs to reward his children for the suffering they did for his sake and his glory, and that day is coming.

Many believe that judgment in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, the Bema seat, is what we see taking place here in this parable, in verse 15. It's the other judgment...the great white throne judgment you'll see in verse 27 at the end of this parable...for a different group of people. Nonetheless, an accounting takes place here, so let's see how these men did. Out of the 10 men who were given these minas, we're going to see three of them. You're going to see three different responses that were done with each of these minas, three responses I believe are atypical for Christianity. Watch this.

Verse 16: "The first man came before him, and he said, 'Lord, your mina that you gave me has now made ten minas more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you shall have authority over ten cities.'" Man, this guy went ninety to nothing. He lived with reckless abandon for this kingdom and for this prince. He fully believed this prince was who he said he was, and he was going to do what he said he was going to do, so he took his investment, and he spent every breath of his life giving away this investment, multiplying it so it would bring a great return for this man's kingdom.

Sure enough, when the prince arrives and sees this, that it has reproduced itself tenfold, he rewards him in proportion to the fruit that was born there. This guy lived with absolute passion, sold out for this kingdom. No doubt, during this time, a guy like this looked like a *fool* to all of the citizens around him who did not

get what he was doing. He probably looked pretty foolish, pretty crazy, living for what they felt was this imaginary king, but he lived passionately.

In many ways, he probably looked like Noah did building the ark, right? It had never rained before, and God told Noah to go build this ark, and the whole culture around him... Every day for years, Noah is out there, just hammering on this thing. They're going, "What are you doing?"

"I'm building a boat."

"What's a boat?"

"You'll see."

It looked foolish, but then when the rains came, who looked foolish now? All of those who rejected the idea that what he was doing was real and worth it. In the same way, this guy, no doubt, probably looked pretty foolish, but he lived with complete passion for it. I love a quote by Jim Elliot before he went into the mission field, before he was martyred for Jesus Christ. All of the people wondered, "Why are you giving up the life you could have had here in the States to go down into this tribal jungle and try to reach these people with the message of Jesus Christ? Why are you wasting your time?"

Jim simply responded, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." I love the fact that in this parable, Jesus says, "Well done, good servant, for you were faithful in such a little thing." Isn't that interesting? For us to be able to give up some of the accolades and stuff we could use, the money, resources, time, treasure, and talent we could pour into ourselves to make our lives comfortable and build up our own kingdom, to give all of that up so we could go serve Jesus... That seems like an incredibly costly thing to the culture around us.

You know what Jesus says here? He says, "No. It was a very little thing, because in comparison to what I have for you in eternity, you have no idea what a little thing that is just to give that up for me. It's such a little thing to be able to take the life you could have built for yourself and lay it down so you can pour into an account that will last for all eternity. In comparison to what I have for you on the other side of the grave, it is a very little thing to serve out of this passionate joy for my kingdom on this side of the grave."

How about this second guy, though? I kind of like the second guy. I relate to him quite a bit. Verse 18: **"And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.'"** It's not quite as much as the first guy, not 10, just a five-fold, but it's an investment nonetheless. Sure enough, the nobleman says, "Well done.

You are to be over five cities," so he gets rewarded. I love this, because this guy did as much as he could with the investment he had and was rewarded accordingly.

I love that Jesus injects this guy into the story, right? Because if we didn't have this guy, we'd all be comparing ourselves to Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, and all of these folks who are out there. I love the five-mina guy. I can relate to the five-mina guy. I'm kind of a five-mina guy myself. I don't know that I'm going to be the 10-mina hitter out there, all right? I'm going to play the cards dealt me, though. Here's the thing. We're all wired differently. We're all gifted differently. Some of you are going to have national, global platforms of influence for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God has just put you in a position where you're going to have huge amounts of influence for the gospel of Jesus Christ in your lifetime. Praise God for that. Some of you, honestly, are doing well if your influence could just start in your living room, and you could stand before God and simply say, "I took what you gave me, and I led my wife well, I poured into my kids well, I made disciples, I loved on my neighbors who were around me, and I used what you gave me to invest in the people around me and the sphere in which you had me." I love it.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul says not only are there a variety of gifts, not only are there a variety of ministries, but he says there's also a variety of effects of those gifts, meaning some of you two people can have the same teaching gift, and one can teach thousands, and the other can teach two, but in God's eyes, that investment is the same. Labor well. Play the hand that has been dealt you, serve faithfully, and know your reward is in heaven. I like the five-mina guy. Man, give me four, give me six... I'll play. Give me five minas and I'm okay with that. Let's roll.

But the third guy is vastly different from the other two, and I will submit before you that I think this third guy is very reflective of what we see in much of Western Christianity, and if we're going to get really honest, what we see in suburban Christianity that many of us find ourselves in right here. This third guy comes in verse 20, and he says, "Lord, here's your mina back, which I kept and laid away in a handkerchief." He's like, "What? What happened there? You didn't do anything with it. It's the same mina you started with. You're just giving it back."

Now on one side, this guy didn't take his mina and just go live it in licentiousness, and take this mina and pour it all on himself and dive into deep immorality with it. On one side, he didn't go there, but on the other side, he also wasn't faithful to go invest it and go multiply it out. What you see with this guy is he just kind of played it safe. He does what we call in Texas "fence sitting," where I'm just going to take what I have, and I'm going to tuck it in tight here, and it's going to be very private and personal for me. I'm thankful for the mina, but I don't want to do anything with the mina. I'm just going to kind of play it safe.

You tell me, do we have that all around us in Christianity? Absolutely. Folks who love Jesus, they love the fact he saved them, but if we're going to be honest, have really viewed their salvation as nothing more than hell insurance they get... They're just going to sit on it, and they're just going to protect it and cuddle it and not do anything with it. Jesus says, "You missed the whole point, the whole point that I wouldn't just save you to sit." There's a reason why God called us to be fishers of men and not just keepers of the aquarium, right?

We're called to actually go do something with it. You have to understand, folks. At the end of the day, Christianity is not God saving us so we'll simply be a safety deposit box for truth. He saved us so we'll be an investment account, so we'll take the gospel, the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, and go invest it and cast it and use every day we've been given on this earth and every breath he has given us to pour into an account that cannot fade, that will last for all eternity, pouring into the souls of men and women, seeing the gospel of Jesus Christ transform their lives. That's the beauty of it. We see the guy's excuse here in verse 21. He tries to work this classic move here and kind of blame it on the boss, right?

He says this in verse 21: "Here's the reason why I didn't do anything with it. I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man." Some of you might have the phrase *exacting man* here. It literally means harsh or hard. "You're a hard man." In other words, "I knew you were a pragmatist, so rather than living life out of a 'get to,' I lived life out of a 'have to,' and I lived life in fear that you were going to come back, and I knew you were going to call me to an account." He says at the end of verse 21, "...because I knew you take up what you do not deposit. You reap what you do not sow. I knew you were a pragmatist, and I just didn't want to mess things up, so I just kind of played it safe." He's just like, "You missed the whole point."

He says to him (and this is some harsh language here in verse 22), "I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew I was a severe man. You knew that? You knew I take up what I don't deposit, I reap what I didn't sow? Meaning you do it on my behalf. You know that? Then why didn't you at the very least take the money I gave you and just go stick it in a bank so it would draw interest, at least *some* measure of knowledge that this thing was meant to be reproduced, not just hidden and buried?"

He says, "So you did this whole thing, and you missed the point, and you ended up living a nominal life in relationship to me." Therefore, in verse 24... "He said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from this guy, and go give it to the other guy who has 10 minas.'" They respond in verse 25 with the same thing you and I would say. "Wait a minute. That guy has 10 minas already. Why are you going to give him more?" He says, **"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."**

You see, this prince is a good prince who longs to give good gifts to his followers, longs to lavish upon those who have suffered for his name's sake, but to the one who has chosen to play it safe, the one who chooses that they're just going to cuddle it in and just kind of hold it silently, the one who is not going to get out there and live for something greater than himself... Even what he has will be taken away. Now folks, don't misunderstand that. This isn't talking about a loss of salvation.

In the context of this parable, this is a believer in Jesus Christ. Believers in Jesus Christ, there is no condemnation for you. You're not at the great white throne judgment. That's in verse 27 with the enemies, who are different. And this is not a loss of salvation. I believe that because, first of all, I don't believe the Bible teaches that at all. Again, there is no condemnation for those who put their faith in Christ Jesus, but again, I believe it also because in verse 27, it differentiates between this guy and the enemies who were referenced in verse 14.

I think this is dealing with a loss of reward. At the end of the day, the king came back, and this guy had nothing to show for what he had done, and there is no reward. Now here's the question: Why is this here? Why did I take time to walk through this text? Is this meant to scare you? No. I believe the reason is the context that started this parable to begin with. What was this parable about? Remember? It was about Zacchaeus, the guy nobody wanted to spend time with.

It was about the guy nobody felt was worthy of the Savior's time, and Jesus stops them in their tracks and goes, "You don't understand me. My very *business* is to seek and to save guys like this. This is why I *came*...not to hobnob with those who think they're well, but to go invest in those who need salvation. That's why I'm here." Then he stops, and he tells a story to simply say, "If that's my business, then that's your business, too."

Folks, can I tell you what I want to do with my life? I'm going to be straight honest with you before the Lord right now. This has nothing to do with me being a pastor. I have served Jesus Christ many more years outside of working for the church than I have working for the church. It has nothing to do with being a pastor. I don't care whether I'm taking a paycheck from The Village or I'm flipping burgers at McDonald's. I really don't care.

I don't care whether I'm in a nice home in suburbia or I'm in a small apartment in the inner city. I don't care whether I'm in Texas or where I was in California. I don't care whether I'm making a ton of money or a little money. I don't care whether I am wired to influence publicly on stage or serve behind the scenes. It doesn't matter for me. All I know is my God has saved me. He has pulled me from the pit and given me new life, and like a beggar who deserved nothing and got everything, all I want to do is be another beggar who tells other beggars where the bread is.

I'm going to spend all of the days of my life taking my minas, the investments God has given me, and I want to go pour them into an account that doesn't have holes in it, and I want to spend my days making disciples, calling men and women to faith in Jesus Christ, to put their treasure into something that will last for all eternity, versus the vanishing, temporary façade that is the culture around us. Folks, that is Jesus Christ's business, and that is our business too. This isn't a "have to." This is a "get to."

You're not crazy for laboring for his kingdom. If you need help with that, if you need help discovering what your minas are, if you need help getting directed onto some pathways and on-ramps for doing this business in the time you have left on this earth, let us help you. It's what the church is here for. Stop by Connection Central before you leave. Let us visit with you and open up some lanes, whether they're here in the community around you, they're abroad, being in your home with your family, or in the workplace where you are. Whatever you've been given is an opportunity to invest for his kingdom's sake. Let's pray.

Father, we are grateful for the unending amount of grace and mercy you have given to us in Jesus Christ. I am grateful, personally, that when you told this group the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost, you had me in mind, and you had everyone else in this room in mind. I'm grateful there is not one person in this room whom your salvation cannot reach through the blood of Jesus Christ, but Father, in the meantime, between the cross and the crown, we know there is much work to be done. The harvest is plentiful. The workers are few.

So Father, I pray right now that you would raise up the men and women in this room and beyond, you would stir our affections in light of the great blessings we've been given and turn around and offer that back out, so the gospel would be multiplied in the hearts of many, and lives would be saved and transformed. Until that day when you return, Lord, keep us focused on the prize ahead, recognizing there is no amount of suffering, no toil, no labor we may endure that is not worth what awaits us. We love you. We thank you. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord we pray, amen.