June 14, 2015

Let us Engage in the Master’s Business” Luke 19:11-27

Grace and peace to you. I will be delivering today’s sermon in Pastor’s absence. He is at the District Convention and has asked me to bring you this message.

TEXT: (Luke 19:11-21-Read here or is referred to in the Gospel reading)

It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Jesus often taught using parables or earthly pictures to describe something yet not known. In today’s text it was the Kingdom of God. Interestingly you will see direct parallel’s from the parable to Jesus’ life. The parable’s story will help us better understand Jesus, His coming Kingdom and our role in it.

Verse 1 – “As they heard these things, He proceeded to tell them a parable, because they were near Jerusalem and they supposed the Kingdom of God was to appear immediately. “ As the people were ushering Jesus into Jerusalem they thought Jesus was coming to establish His Kingdom. This was the place. This was the time! Finally God had sent His Savior/Messiah to drive out the Romans and establish His Kingdom in Jerusalem. Finally God and His people would again dwell together in this Kingdom. Jesus however has a far different message.

Jesus spoke of a “nobleman who went to a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.” My friends this is exactly what our nobleman Jesus did on Holy Week, as He rode into Jerusalem mounted not on a war horse but rather mounted upon a baby donkey, a slow beast of burden. Jesus Kingdom was not coming quickly or immediately. Secondly, Jesus Kingdom would be established peacefully not through war. Thirdly, Jesus too would have to leave going to a far away country to receive His Kingdom. He then would return later. Of course I am speaking of Jesus going to Calvary’s Cross where He entered into the far away country of death and the grave. Three days later Jesus would and did emerge victorious over death and the grave. He had abolished it!

 Do we not say in the Apostle’s Creed, that Jesus, “died, was buried, descended into hell and on the third day rose again from the dead….” This was our nobleman Jesus going to this far away country to receive His Kingdom but His Kingdom would have to be fought for …it could only be purchased through His crucifixion and death and my friends, we are the subjects of His Kingdom, Citizens and heirs of Heaven! We were purchased not with minas, talents, gold or silver but rather with the holy and precious blood of God’s own Son sent to save us. Only God’s Son could pay this price… He alone was without sin and God valued His life for ours as payment in full. Jesus’ descent into hell was to announce to the devil and all who resided there that death and the grave were under new management. Death and grave no longer holds humanity captive. We are under the reign of Jesus our Savior King.

 Jesus return, like the nobleman’s, will occur at His 2nd coming where He will receive us unto Himself and we shall live with Him in heaven eternally. Has He not told us, that He is going to prepare a place for us that where He is we might also likewise be?” But what are we supposed to be doing until His return? This is the main teaching of Jesus’ parable.

Now for the rest of the story (parable)….verse 13ff. “Calling 10 of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, “Engage in business until I come.” But his citizens hated him (the nobleman) and sent a delegation after him, saying, “we don’t want this man to rule over us.” Doesn’t this sound a lot like the delegation of Pharisees and Sadducees who had raised up against Jesus? Wouldn’t they send a delegation to Pontius Pilate asking for Jesus not to be their king? As you and I live out this story we realize that in our world there are those citizens who raise up against the rule or claim of Jesus upon their life, saying, ‘my body-my life,’ or who deny God’s claim on their life saying that we are not created in His image but are here by some cosmic accident without plan or purpose. We too however are also guilty because every time we sin we are actually denying Jesus’ kingship in our life. As Paul has said, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, none are righteous no not even one.” (Rom 3) Thanks be to God who has delivered you and me from this body of sin and death through Jesus who now deals with you and me according to His grace…He even calls us His servants, His children.

The nobleman brought forth 10 of his servants and gave them 10 minas. He told them, “ENGAGE in BUSINESS.” This amount appears to be a very small amount of money perhaps as little as $1. (Scholars say that this is 1/60th of a talent and that it would take around 20 minas to purchase a slave.) Jesus paints a picture describing something very important, it’s not the value of the gift but the value of their relationship with the master. He had entrusted them with this assignment telling them to engage in business for him. Sometimes we see the size of our gifts and think they are too small or insignificant but when put to use for the Lord they can become mighty indeed. The base to the Statue of Liberty was not a part of France’s gift to the United States and as school children heard of this quandary they decided to do something about it. Individual school children were challenged to collect their penny’s, dimes and nickels and bring them to school. Penny by penny and dime by dime the base was built and today the Statue of Liberty is setting on that base. Such a small amount for such a huge project. Think what God can do with whatever He has given us no matter how small!

What is our Master’s Business? Jesus tells us, “I came to seek and to save the lost….” In a study on missions our church has come to adopt the following statement.

**Mission is the heart of God**- Mission and outreach is something you hear a lot about in the FLGA District but why? Mission is God’s idea! It is the heart of God. God does not desire the death of sinners but that they might come to know Jesus Christ as Lord. God has skin in the game…God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever would believe on His name would not perish but would have everlasting life.” John 3:16

**God’s Mission is necessary because of sin.**  Without God’s rescue mission we would otherwise forever be separated from God’s goodness, mercy and grace.

**God’s Mission is centered in Jesus Christ** as the one and only payment for sin and through Him God has reconciled the entire world unto Himself.

**God’s Mission is empowered by the Holy Spirit** who creates and sustains in us faith and trust in Jesus our Savior. The Holy Spirit guides and directs my life as a baptized child of God using His Word and sacraments of Holy baptism and communion as a means of dispensing His grace unto me and all believers.

**God’s Mission is our mission** – this is the Master’s business - connecting people to Jesus- as a church we are to be engaged in it.

**God’s Mission is my mission** – this is the Master’s business for me, this is my personal purpose and mission for life not only being a disciple or follower of Jesus but helping others to be disciples of Jesus as well. God not only *saved* me He has *also sent* me to engage in His business.

**God’s Mission is urgent** – because without faith it is impossible to please God. Jesus has said, “I am the way, the truth and the life…no man comes unto the Father without Me.” (John 14:6) It is estimated that someone in America dies every 20 seconds or 3 people every minute, 4300 of us a day or 1.5 million each year. How sad it is when someone dies without faith in Jesus. “Behold this is the day of salvation,” we can not wait to tell this GOOD NEWS, people are dying not knowing Jesus.

Famous consultant and businessman Peter Drucker asked two questions, “What business are you in and how’s business?” My friends as Christians individually and members of His body, we are in the disciple making business .” Jesus said, “go and make disciples,” Matthew 28:19. I ask you, “how is business?” That is the question the nobleman, upon returning, asked each of his servants whom he had entrusted a mina. It’s a question Jesus will ask each of us!

The first servant reported, ‘Lord your mina has made ten minas more.’ He had engaged in his master’s business and his master was well pleased and rewarded him by putting him in charge over ten cities, something much larger. “Well done good servant!” The second servant reported, ‘Lord your mina has made five minas.’ And the master said, “and you are to be over five cities.” These servants had taken what their master had entrusted them with and had engaged in business for him. Through their faithful stewardship they multiplied what they had been given. My friends, take inventory; how has God blessed you, what has He given you, what has He put you in charge of? Think through this list in your mind. What would you put on this list? Spouse, job, house, family, health, car(s). Think it through what are the many ways which God has graciously blessed you? The question is now, how can you leverage these gifts, these minas, to engage in your Master’s business? Is it time, because you are now retired? Is it your home because it would be a good meeting place for a bible study or fellowship group, do you need to welcome someone into your home? Is it financially because the Lord has blessed you? Is it sharing Jesus at work because you know individuals who are not active in their church or otherwise connected to Jesus? Today, think through how you can use what God has blessed you with to show them the love of Jesus.

So many people believe they are unable to share their faith or witness. They don’t want to do it wrong, or to say something that might offend someone. They claim it isn’t politically correct. I invite you to look at the following examples of people who just responded to the opportunity that presented itself in everyday life. Each of them helped connect someone to Jesus.

President Walton speaks of how when they moved they had a garage full of stuff they had obviously not used. They took inventory and then figured out who in their family or neighborhood could be blessed with each of these items. They took it to their neighbor or family member and then gave it as a gift. This was a practical way of engaging in the master’s business. God freely gave to us we freely give to one another! Engaged in the Master’s Business – it’s about connecting people to Jesus!

In a mission church a needy family was discovered among the membership. An anonymous member took groceries and gift cards over to their home and left them inside the porch with a note that said, “God knew you needed this. The mission pastor said, ‘they had tears in their eyes saying, “I couldn’t believe someone cared that much about us we had just prayed for God to help us when the door bell rang.” Engaged in the Master’s business- its about connecting people to Jesus.

A young Christian had witnessed to his business associates girl friend, who was not yet a Christian. He later found out that the couple was splitting up. Knowing that this would be devastating to the girl friend the Christian took his wife and went to see how she was. She would not answer the door but they knew she was home. Out of concern they knocked louder, threatening to come in if she would not answer the door. She came to the door, crying and sobbing, darkened streams of mascara running down her cheeks and blood flowing from her wrist she wailed; “I’m pregnant …it’s his baby and now he’s left…” This young Christian couple took her to the doctor, visited and cared for this woman until they moved. She later contacted them by letter and said, “I had a baby girl and I named her after your wife. I couldn’t be happier, I am now a Christian and the bible you gave me with all the markings helped me find the important verses to follow. They were just what I needed. Thank you for being there for me. You guys saved two lives that day!” Engaged in the Master’s Business it’s about connecting people to Jesus.

What are we supposed to do until Jesus returns – use everyday opportunities to bless the people who are on our path. We bless them by showing them the love of Christ using that which He has provided and entrusted us with. It’s about connecting people to Him! If you don’t know where to begin, pray about it and believe me He will answer this prayer and duck if you pray it and don’t mean it!”

There was another servant in Jesus’ parable, the servant who had taken the master’s mina and placed it in a hanky. He said, “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.’

I am afraid that too many of us fall into this category. Instead of taking what He has given us and then engaging these in our master’s business we let these gifts sit idle, parked, unused wrapped up and put in storage. They might be; words of encouragement that are unspoken. Love that is not given. A witnessing opportunity that is missed. A helping hand that is not lent. We may have a garage- in fact a life full of blessings that are just sitting there waiting to be used….how many lives could be touched!

You know Jesus established His Kingdom differently than how the world would have. Jesus goes further! The Jewish world wanted an earthly king, Jesus came to be an eternal one. The world wanted peace on earth…Jesus came to give heavenly peace, everlasting peace. There were calls for Him to conquer the Romans but Jesus conquered a greater enemy death and the grave. He abolished death the final enemy and became resurrection and life for all who would believe in Him. As Christians we too engage in our master’s business uniquely, differently than the world; loving those who don’t love us, forgiving those who have harmed us, holding out hope to those who are dying, desperate and living in darkness. We give more than is being asked…in fact we give sometimes without even being asked, we love because He first loved us and are called to love even those who don’t love us. We ***seek out*** ways to engage in our master’s business.

The other evening I saw our grandson with his father at a restaurant. His father had fed the child, then held him in his arms, soon amidst all the noise and commotion of the restaurant you could see the baby’s eyes close as he drifted off to sleep. What a picture of us as God’s kids, fed and asleep in the arms of our heavenly Father amidst all of life and chaos of the world. We rest just knowing that we are in our Daddy’s arms and if we were to open our eyes we would see Him smiling down upon us. We rest in Him and in His grace but like the baby we will soon awaken and get back to exploring our world so that we can engage in doing our Master’s Business. Simply put, look at all you have received from your Master Jesus and then look for how you can use it to engage in the Master’s Business. May our Lord say to us when He calls us to give an account – “well done good and faithful servants! Well done!”

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