

## The Great Reversal: Rejected King Pastor Mike Stern

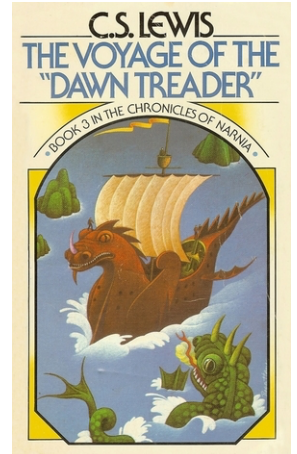
**Main Idea:** Life is faithfulness to the King

**Purpose:** To point people toward a lifestyle of allegiance to Jesus

**Passage:** Luke 19:11-27

### Message

I've been reading the *Chronicles of Narnia* to our daughters. We're almost through! Just a few more chapters in *The Last Battle*. Book three in *Narnia* is *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. In this story, King Caspian is setting out to sea to find the seven missing Lords of Narnia. He's joined by Edmund, Lucy, Eustace, Reepicheep, and some other crew members on this adventure.



After sailing a great distance, they come to the Lone Islands, which were territories of Narnia, but hadn't had contact with anyone from Narnia for quite some time. When King Caspian and his company first arrive, they discover that things are not what they should be on the Lone Islands. They are captured by slave traders (slavery is forbidden in Narnia), and sold to a mysterious man. The man ends up being one of the missing Narnian Lords, Lord Bern.

Lord Bern fills Caspian in on what's happened and about the current Governor of the Islands, Gumpas. Caspian asks, "And what is this governor, this Gumpas, like? Does he still acknowledge the King of Narnia for his lord?" Lord Bern responds, "In words, yes. All is done in the King's name. **But he would not be best pleased to find a real, live King of Narnia coming in upon him.**"

In the absence of contact with a real king of Narnia, the king's representatives at the islands have made their own kingdom and have ignored anything to do with Narnia. And the thought of a true king returning to the Lone Islands would be met with resistance.

Lewis has captured a lot of what we're going to see in our parable today—a kingdom with unfaithful subjects, and some who would even reject the king.

We're nearing the end of our series in Luke called *The Great Reversal* as we approach Easter. There's a lot of Luke that we haven't been able to look at closely, but hopefully you've seen how the kingdom of God is so very often counter to our world and the rulers or authorities of our world. When we have to make a choice between those two different things—our world or the kingdom of God—Luke will continually point us toward the kingdom of God.

Today we're going to read from Luke chapter 19 and look at a parable that's typically called the Parable of the Minas.

## PUBLIC READING

*While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'*

*"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'*

*"He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.*

*"The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'*

*"Well done, my good servant!" his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'*

*"The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.'*

*"His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'*

*"Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'*

*"His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'*

*"Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'*

*"Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!'*

*"He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.'" (Luke 19:11-27)*

### The Passage

\*How did you feel about saying, "Thanks be to God" after that last line of the parable? I was just telling a friend this week, that you can hardly read any passage in Luke without hearing something challenging or inflammatory. We're going to address that final statement in a bit, but first let's just look at what's happening overall in the parable.

It's important to get our bearings with where Jesus is feeling. It says in verse 11 that they were almost to Jerusalem. Jesus had been making his way to Jerusalem since chapter 9 in the Gospel of Luke, where it says, "*As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem,*" (Luke 9:51).



For ten chapters of the story now, he has been traveling to Jerusalem, healing people along the way, facing opposition from people, teaching people in parables; and now, with our current parable, it says that he is almost there. In fact, the next the passage of Luke's gospel has Jesus entering Jerusalem.

Now, there are two plots happening in this parable:

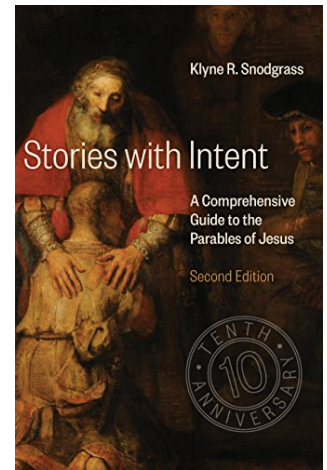
- There are the servants who are given minas—money; a fairly substantial amount—and are given a task with the minas: they are to “put it to work” until the nobleman returns. Some of them do that well; one of them does that poorly...as in, not at all
- But also, there are the subjects (or literally, “the citizens”) of the land who don't want the nobleman to become their king, so they try to stop that from happening...unsuccessfully
- These two plots are happening concurrently in Jesus' story.

In the midst of those two plots and characters (the servants and the subjects), we have the nobleman who becomes king—who seems to be described in pretty strong terms:

- he's a hard man
- someone to be afraid of
- he takes out what he does not put in and reaps what he does not sow
- at the end of the parable, he takes away all that the third servant has and he commands that the subjects (the citizens) who rejected him be executed

At this point, it may be helpful for us to address how to interpret a parable. There's a lot that can be said, because parables are used in a variety of ways, but if you want to some in-depth study for yourself, the best book that I know of on the subject is called *Stories with Intent*, by Klyne Snodgrass.

But to point out a few things that might be good for us:



## Interpreting parables

- **Understand the parable in context**

How does it fit in with what's happening in the flow of the Gospel and with Jesus' teachings? For example, Jesus is talking about someone becoming king and being rejected as king as He Himself is approaching Jerusalem.

- **Usually not one-for-one analogies**

Parables are analogies that relate to something in reality, but rarely does every aspect of the parable correspond well to reality. For example, in this parable, there is a connection between the king and Jesus, but that doesn't mean that Jesus is like the king in all ways—a hard man who reaps where he doesn't sow and has his enemies killed.

- **The most important bits are at the end**

The shocking statements at the end of the parable are the most important in understanding what Jesus is communicating. For example, the focus isn't on the reward in the parable, the focus is on the consequences for the third servant and the disloyal subjects.

- **Intended to make people think, question, and respond**

Parables aren't always teaching strict theology. Jesus uses them to get a point across, and He often does so in a shocking way. The parables are meant to raise questions in our mind so that they sit with us and eventually elicit a response. In this case, we're supposed to think about the warning at the end of the parable.

If we're not considering things like this when we come to this parable (and many others), we can come away with a pretty distorted view of God. But Jesus isn't trying to give us a description of God—He's using a parable with a specific intent that should cause us to think, question, and respond.

So, what do we have to think about with these two plots that are present in the parable?

## The King

Let's start with the king. Jesus is telling this story at a key point—verse 11 says He's approaching Jerusalem, but also that "*the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.*" The kingdom of God is what prompted this parable from Jesus. The people knew that Jerusalem was His destination; anticipation was brewing; they had

been following Him for days, maybe months, maybe a few years, and now He's arriving to claim His kingdom.

(This, by the way, relates to where we are in the church calendar right now. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, and it's the day that we remember Jesus entering Jerusalem before His crucifixion.)

**So, Jesus' parable about a king is connected to His own Kingship.**

A pretty significant clue to that fact is that Jesus is referred to as a king five times *after* this parable leading up to His crucifixion, but He's never called a king before this parable.

- One crowd shouts, "*Blessed is the **king** who comes in the name of the Lord,*" (19:38)
- Another crowd shouts accusingly, "*He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a **king**,*" (23:2)
- Pilot asks him, "*Are you the **king** of the Jews?*" (23:3)
- The Roman soldiers mocked him, saying, "*If you are the **king** of the Jews, save yourself,*" (23:37)
- And a sign was attached to the cross he died on, saying, "*This is the **king** of the Jews,*" (23:38)

So, the parable sets up the fact that Jesus is about to become king. The whole gospel has been building toward this—that *Jesus is king*. Which is probably not a big surprise to you. But even though it may not be a surprise, is it still a challenge sometimes? The question for you and me is *Do we want Jesus to be king?* This is one of the questions that the parable is really getting at.

The subjects of the king in the parable didn't really want him to become king. In the parable, it says, "*But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'*" (Luke 19:14).

Jesus, obviously, was rejected as king as well. But He wasn't just rejected in Jerusalem. And this wasn't even the first time that God was rejected as king. When the Israelites asked Samuel to appoint for them a king like the other nations, God said to Samuel, "*Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king,*" (1 Samuel 8:7).

But the problem goes back even further than that, all the way to the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve were tempted to "*be like God*". God being God wasn't enough—they also had a desire to be gods. And the problem persists today. **We want to be our own gods, and our own kings and queens.** We like to build our own kingdoms where we have control and where our desires our met, where our wills are done.

**There's comfort and security in our own kingdom.** Sometimes that comfort and security comes because of planning—we can anticipate what's coming. Sometimes it comes from wealth and resources—we have everything we could want. Sometimes it comes from control—we decide what happens in our lives. Sometimes it comes from ego—it's about me and attention on me. Sometimes it comes from things being easy—we don't like to be challenged in our kingdom.

Ultimately, it comes down to my will vs. Jesus' will.

### **Do we want Jesus to be king?**

Eugene Peterson says it like this: "*God is a rival, not an ally, in the god-business.*" He's in competition with our own rule and reign, which we daily have to contend with.

Let me ask you this question: *What does it look like for Jesus to be king in your life?*

I think when Jesus is King in my life, I'm faithfully living all His kingdom values and I'm letting more of who He is form who I am. But I have to admit that sometimes I like to sit on the throne. Sometimes I ignore what is best for the kingdom of God and instead gratify my own kingdom.

### **Faithfull Servant**

The idea of being faithful to kingdom values is very much connected to the other plotline through this parable. Let's take a look at the servants.

They are given money but aren't told specifically what to do with it other than to "put it to work" which means do some business with it—go buy and sell and trade. In other words, he's asking his servants to do the things that he would do with his money if he was still there. "*Here, manage my affairs while I'm away.*"

(Of the original ten who are given money, we only read about three of them reporting back; they're kind of the examples of the lot.) The first turns one unit of money into ten units of money—of course, the king says, "Well done, my good servant!"

The second servant is similar, but the third has taken a different approach—he buries the king's money and returns it, not having "put it to work," not having done what the king asks. The king takes the one mina away from the servant and gives it to the other who had made some extra, and he says, "*I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away,*" (Luke 19:26). This is not the only time that Jesus has said these words.

He's basically saying, "If you can't be trusted with something, it's going to be taken away from you." Kinda like when I would let my son push his little brother in the stroller when we would go for a walk and he would immediately be pushing him off the path or into other people...

The king goes away in the parable and the tension in the conflict revolves around what the servants do when the king is away. We don't actually see what they do; we only see the results. But the tension is about what they do when he is away.

The king needed people who were going to represent him well in his business while he was gone. **He needed people who were going to be faithful.** That's what he says about the first servant. He calls him trustworthy in this translation, but the word (πιστός) is usually translated "faithful". It's very often used to describe Jesus himself, but it is also a virtue that followers of Jesus are regularly called to exhibit.

Like the king in the parable, Jesus has to go away. Jesus goes into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) and He's crucified (Good Friday), raised from the dead (Easter Sunday), and then He goes away—He ascends into heaven, which we'll talk about the Sunday after Easter.

What are we doing while the king is away? This aspect of the parable teaches us that **Jesus needs faithful representatives while He is away.**

This is another idea that we can connect all the way back to the beginning of the story, when God created humankind in His image. Genesis 1 says, "*Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may **rule** over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground,"*" (Genesis 1:26).

Being made in the image of God is fundamentally about representing God's reign, His rule, to all of creation. Humankind was to rule in the place of God. Well, that didn't happen too well, so then Israel was to represent God to the rest of the world. God said to the Israelites, "*Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,"*" (Exodus 19:5-6).

Well, that didn't go well either. In fact, Jesus is probably kind of directing this parable to the Jewish leaders who have rejected Him as king and to all of Israel who haven't faithfully been that kingdom of priests.

**God has always been looking for humanity to represent who He is to the rest of creation, to the rest of the world, and Jesus is looking for that from His followers now.** Will we be faithful with what has been entrusted to us while the King is away?

So, let me ask you what I think is an important question: *What is it that we need to be faithful with while Jesus is away? What has been entrusted to us?*

Some of the challenge with this parable is that Jesus uses the analogy of money. So, there are whole theologies developed around this parable (and another one like it in Matthew) that have to do with our responsibility to make money for God and to take risks. But the money in the parable is just an analogy that helps us understand something greater, something else.

The king in the parable is an earthly king, so he's dealing with things of this world. Jesus, as a king, has authority over heaven and earth. He said to Pontius Pilot, "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" What He has entrusted to us is far more valuable than money.

What has been entrusted to us is the kingdom itself. A little bit later in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus will say to His disciples, "*I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me,*" (Luke 22:29).

Jesus was made King through His death, resurrection, and ascension, but His kingdom hasn't been fully enacted. A common phrase to express this is that Jesus' kingdom is "now and not yet." It's here; we're a part of His kingdom, but it hasn't been fully realized, not until He comes back.

We're in that in-between time where we need to be faithful with His kingdom until our King returns because it is His kingdom that He has entrusted to us. So, let me ask you this *What does the kingdom of God look like?*

I think there's a lot that can be said about the kingdom, because really, you find out what the kingdom is like by reading all of scripture. You consume it and it becomes a part of you. You meditate on it and it shapes your thoughts and actions. The kingdom of God isn't about specific to-dos, it's about embodying the life of Jesus to the rest of the world, and that's a nuanced thing. Here are just a few thoughts on the kingdom, though:

## The Kingdom of God

- **It is very Jesus-focused**

In the kingdom of God, everyone's attention is on Jesus.  
Are we pointing people's attention toward Jesus?

- **It looks like human flourishing**

The things we do in the kingdom make us and others live our full *image-of-God* self.

- **It's gracious and forgiving**

It makes a way for relationship and restoration.

- **It's sacrificial**

It includes giving of oneself to others. Following that example that Jesus gave us.

- **It's a place of trust and not fear**

We know that our King loves us and will take care of us. We don't have to wrap our treasure up; we can put it to work.

So, in the parable, what did the third servant *not* do? *He didn't participate in the kingdom of God.* The kingdom was entrusted to him, and he didn't participate in it. He wrapped it up and stowed it away. He was called a servant of the king, but he didn't actually serve the king.

In the kingdom of God, everyone has to participate. There may be varying degrees of participation—it seems like the first and second servants didn't do quite the same thing—but they were both actively engaged in the kingdom.

Eugene Peterson puts it this way:

*He intends to get us involved, our feet in the mud and our hands in the bread dough, with the living God who is at work in this world. This is why Jesus tells stories, not to inform or explain or define, but to get us actively in on the ways and will of God in the homes and neighborhoods and workplaces where we spend our time.*

How can you bring the kingdom into those areas in your life? You've been entrusted with the kingdom, and based on all your circumstances and your resources, how do you "*put to work*" what's been entrusted to you, faithfully representing Jesus.



## Conclusion

Overall, the message of this parable is that we ought to **faithfully do the work of the King until He returns**. That's the message to you and me. And there's no mistaking that the message is given as a warning. In fact, it's a pretty strong warning to those who don't faithfully do the work of the king, and certainly to those who don't acknowledge the king.

I don't think we like warnings too much. I don't like warnings. There's a part of me that cringes a bit when I read this. Honestly, I cringe when I read most of the Gospel of Luke—the guy does not pull any punches!

But there's actually some irony in the warning to the subjects who reject the king. The king in the parable says, "*But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.*" They rejected the king so he had them killed. They paid the price for their actions.

But Jesus, the true King—the King of kings and the Lord of lords—is about to enter Jerusalem where He will be rejected as King by His subjects, by His citizens, and it will be the King Himself who dies. Jesus will pay the price for being rejected rather than demanding the punishment from everyone else.

*The King would rather lay down His life than dole out the consequences for everybody else's decision.* Why? Well, just look to Hannah's sermon from last week—God pursues us and God rejoices over us. God wants you. He desires to be near you. He doesn't just tolerate you—He loves you.

So often we reject Him. Or so often we accept Him, but are too busy building our own kingdoms to be faithful with what He wants. But He accepts us, and He's faithful to us. The King who had all authority in heaven and earth laid down His life for His subjects and His servants—for you and for me.

Paul wrote to Timothy, in a passage where he's encouraging Timothy to faithfully do the kingdom work that he has been called to do and to pass on the teachings of Jesus:

*"This is a trustworthy saying:*

*If we die with him,  
we will also live with him.*

*If we endure hardship,  
we will reign with him.*

*If we deny him,  
he will deny us.*

*If we are unfaithful,  
he remains faithful,  
for he cannot deny who he is."* (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

There's no getting around the fact that our parable today is a strong warning to not reject Jesus as King and to faithfully do His kingdom work while He's away. AND there's no

getting around the fact that Jesus gave His life out of love for humanity so that you and I could be accepted.

Those two things can exist simultaneously—that you're accepted in Jesus, and sought after by Jesus, and rejoiced over by Jesus, and also that He holds us accountable for how we live our lives and what we do with what He has entrusted to us.

He'll be faithful to us even when we're unfaithful to Him, but the life that is truly life—the flourishing life in the kingdom—is all about faithfulness to King Jesus.

### **Benediction**

*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.*  
(Matthew 6:9-13)