The words: **Mom is home** or **Dad is here!** can either be words of joy or terror. Those words can be shouts of joy as children see mom or dad pull into the driveway. Or they can be words of terror heard by children who did not expect mom and dad to be home for quite some time. **The teacher is here!** can be words of joy for a classroom of eager first graders eager to learn on the first day of school or they can be words of terror for a student who is not done with homework or who is throwing an eraser just as the teacher walks into the room.

Jesus has promised that he will return one day. Like the parent or teacher returning at an unexpected time, so Jesus, the King of the world, will return to this world at an unexpected time. Will the words **Jesus is here!** be words of joy or words of terror for you? Jesus told this parable in text as a strong warning so that those words **Jesus is here!** might be words of joy for you and many others rather than words of terror. We can be sure **THE KING WILL RETURN IN JUDGMENT.** He will return with rewards of grace for the faithful and with punishment for his enemies.

This parable - the parable of the minas - sounds very similar to another parable Jesus told - the parable of the talents. While both parables speak of using properly what has been given to us, let's be careful not to mix the two of them up. Jesus told the two parables on different occasions. There were also different details of the parable. For example, a talent is a much larger some of money than a mina. Jesus was speaking to different groups of people. With the parable of the talents, Jesus was speaking mainly to believers during holy week. With this parable of the minas, Jesus is speaking to a mixture of believers and his enemies.

Our text begins: **As they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.**

Have you ever had your glasses up on your forehead and then spent time looking around for them? Or maybe you have spent a long time looking around for something and then found it right there in front of your nose. Jesus' enemies and many of the people there that day were not seeing something right in front of them. They were not seeing their King, the Messiah, nor the Kingdom of God, even though he was standing right in front of them. There were some who were just following Jesus along for the ride just in case he would turn into some **super avenging hero** who would kick out the Romans and establish a great kingdom here on earth for them. In other words, they really did not believe in Jesus. They were just pretending while hoping to get some earthly gain from him.

To his followers and to his enemies Jesus tells this parable about a king returning in judgment first of all with rewards of grace for the faithful.

**A man of noble birth traveled to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then to return. He called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. Conduct business until I return, he said to them. But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, We do not want this man to be king over us. When he returned after receiving the kingdom, he summoned the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to find out what they had gained by conducting business. The first one came to him and said, Master, your mina has earned ten more minas. He said to him, Well done, good servant! Because you were faithful in a very small matter, you will have authority over ten cities. The second one came and said, Master, your mina has**
produced five more minas. So he said to him, You will be over five cities.

It seems strange to us for king to go to a distant land to become king, but in Jesus' day, it was a picture that his listeners could easily relate to. You see, Herod had recently done nearly the same thing in going to Rome to ask Caesar for rule in Palestine. The king in the parable returned and gave gifts of grace to his faithful servants. The rewards of grace the King had for his faithful servants included first of all his praise: **Well done, good servant!** They were given cities to rule over. You can also just hear the joy in their voices over being in the presence of their king again. All of these were gifts of grace, they were not deserved. The servants had not done anything especially noteworthy or beyond the call of duty. They just did what they were commanded to do: **Conduct business until I return.**

The two faithful servants acknowledged that they had not done anything extraordinary when they humbly said: **Your mina has earned ten and five more.** Notice they did not say: **I have earned ten more.** The king had entrusted them with his money and commanded them to put it to work for him, to make a profit for him. They simply obeyed his command.

Just like those servants, you and I have been entrusted with a gift - the good news of sins forgiven through Jesus. It is something we have not earned or deserved. It was something that was given to us. We could not earn it. At this time of year, we seem to see an increase in the number of animals hit and killed on our road ways. Whether it is a deer on the side of the road or a squirrel or raccoon squashed in the middle of the road, you can be sure that animal is not going to be doing any more running around. That animal is dead.

So too we were dead in our transgressions and sins. Our sins had run us under God's judgment and we were hopelessly lost. **But,** as Paul writes in Romans, **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** By a miracle of the Holy Spirit, God made us alive again. He gave us the free gift of sins forgiven by his death on a cross. Because of Jesus we do not have to worry that on Judgment Day our dead spiritual carcasses will be scooped off of God's courtroom floor and shoveled into the furnace of hell forever. Jesus has endured that furnace for us on the cross.

Now out of thankfulness we want to be asking ourselves: **How can I put the treasure to work in my life more and more until the day when the King returns?** While he is away Jesus wants to be faithfully using that gift. Jesus wants us to be in his house worshiping and taking Holy Communion to be assured of forgiveness. Maybe we can use and grow in that gift by reading the Bible more and trying our best to apply what it says in our lives. As we wait for Jesus to return, now is the time to put that forgiveness into practice with others - our spouse or our children or our parents. There are many more people out there who need to hear the good news of forgiveness in Christ before Judgment Day. Out of thankfulness, let us let the good news of the Savior flow from our mouths.

The performance reviews of the king's other servant did not go so well. Nor did it go well for the king's enemies. When the king returned he also had to hand out some deserved punishment. The King returned in judgment and brought punishment for his enemies.

We are told: **And another one came and said, Master, here is your mina that I laid away in a piece of cloth.** This servant had not done what he was commanded to do. He hid the money so that it gained nothing for the king. He tried to make it sound like he had been protecting the king's property by hiding it in a nice piece of cloth in the ground. In a way though, he was just masquerading as a servant - pretending to be doing the work his master wanted him to do. Now he also comes with some excuses: **For I was afraid of you, since you are a demanding man. You take what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.**

Instead of reward, the servant received the king's anger and punishment. **He said to him, You wicked servant, I will judge you with your own words! You knew that I am a**
demanding man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Then why did you not put my money in the bank? Then, when I returned, I could have collected it with interest! He said to those standing there, Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas. But they said to him, Master, he already has ten minas! I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

Sad to say we see some of selves in that lazy servant. We have not always made the best use of treasure of the gospel which God's given us. Sometimes we have just pretended to be listening, while our minds and hearts were a million miles away. How many times have not we raced through the Lord's Prayer more concerned about the seconds ticking away before the game or the dinner table than we are concerned about coming before God with a true heart. We can come up with a million and one excuses.

But excuses and blame do not take away our sin. If we are going to be relying on our own nimble minds and quick thinking excuses, we are going to be in trouble when the King returns. Did you hear the words from the king: You wicked servant. I will judge you with your own words! Thanks be to God that because of Jesus, God does not judge us on the basis of our quick thinking excuses and blame. Jesus' blood covers all our sins. Jesus has taken away the punishment we deserved. Now out of thankfulness, let's work at not letting the hypocrite or the lazy servant show itself in our lives.

Jesus closes the parable with a glimpse of the judgment he has saved us from - the judgment the king will bring for his enemies: Now as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and kill them in front me.

Although Jesus understands rocket science better than anyone, this is not rocket science he is teaching here. You and I do not want to be enemies of the King when he returns. We do not want anyone else to be either. So until the Lord bursts through the clouds in glory, let us be about the tasks the Lord has given us - using the Good news of Jesus in our own lives and sharing it with others.

Jesus has not told us on what day he will return. That is because he wants us, his servants, to be going about our work everyday as if today is the day the King is coming back. Amen.

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