

# The parable of the king's servants



## Colour me!



## Luke 19:11-24

The crowd was still listening to Jesus as he was getting close to Jerusalem. Many of them thought that God's kingdom would soon appear, and Jesus told them this story: A prince once went to a foreign country to be crowned king and then to return. But before leaving, he called in ten servants and gave each of them some money. He told them, "Use this to earn more money until I get back." ...

After the prince had been made king, he returned and called in his servants. He asked them how much they had earned with the money they had been given. The first servant came and said, "Sir, with the money you gave me I have earned ten times as much." "That's fine, my good servant!" the king said. "Since you have shown that you can be trusted with a small amount, you will be given ten cities to rule." The second one came and said, "Sir, with the money you gave me, I have earned five times as much." The king said, "You will be given five cities."

Another servant came and said, "Sir, here is your money. I kept it safe in a handkerchief. You are a hard man, and I was afraid of you. You take what isn't yours, and you harvest crops you didn't plant." "You worthless servant!" the king told him. "You have condemned yourself by what you have just said. You knew that I am a hard man, taking what isn't mine and harvesting what I haven't planted. Why didn't you put my money in the bank? On my return, I could have had the money together with interest." Then he said to some other servants standing there, "Take the money away from him and give it to the servant who earned ten times as much."

## Commentary

As Jesus travelled to Jerusalem for the Passover, people expected this to be his big moment. They wanted him to reveal himself as God's special king and seize the country back from its enemies. Although Jesus had tried to warn them that it wasn't going to happen this way, – that his kingdom was not a political or earthly kingdom – their hopes were rising nonetheless. In this parable he tries to turn their attention to something more important: how they should prepare for God's coming kingdom.

Two of the servants use their money well and earn the king's 'well done', but the third does nothing with his gift. He doesn't take any risks because he knows how angry the king will be if he loses everything. But he's wrong. The king is more angry that he does nothing with what he's been given.

This story would have been very special for the first-century Christians to read as they waited for Jesus to return as king, because it showed them how to act in the meantime. The kingdom was going to come, but more slowly than they had at first expected, and this would call for patience and hard work. Those who show these qualities are the ones who will be rewarded.

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## Questions

- ▶ In this parable, who do you think are the prince, the king and the servants? What does the money represent?
- ▶ What do you think the king would have said to the third servant if he had used his money but lost it all, perhaps by giving it to charity or by building a hospital that then got burned down in a fire?
- ▶ Is there something wrong with the third servant's understanding of what the king is like?
- ▶ What gifts and talents do you have that you could use for God?



## Visual aid

Wrap some coins in a handkerchief and make this the focus for what the last servant did with his money.



## Activity idea

Imagine that everyone in the family has been given \$5.00. Talk about how each of you might use it to do something good for others. Could you think of ways of using it to make more money or to increase its value in some other way? You might even give everyone a real coin and ask them to do something practical with it over the next week.



## Prayer idea

On a separate piece of paper for each member of the family other than yourself, write these words: "God says, 'Well done...'" Fill in the name of the other member of the family, add the words "because God has given you the gift of..." and write something that this person is good at. Give the papers to each person to read. Thank God together that he has given you all so many different talents and skills to use for him.

## Key verse

"That's fine, my good servant!" the king said. "... You have shown that you can be trusted" (Luke 19:17).

## Old Testament story link

Proverbs 3:1-12: King Solomon gives wise advice about how to live a life that will please God.



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